



SERIES: FAMILY DONE GOD’S WAY

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Title: Family Done God’s Way: The Power of Love Pt. 1

What is love? Such a simple question, but yet so hard to define.

In preparing for this message, I watched people’s responses. I heard comments like, “It’s complicated.”

“It’s a form of God.”

“A great marketing campaign.”

“Love is acceptance.”

“Love is giving up your desires for someone else.”

“Love is a feeling.”

“Love is really good sex.”

“Love is a big ‘ol kiss on the lips.”

As you can see there’s no clear answer to the question, what is love?

I bet if I were to survey each of our listeners, there wouldn’t be a singular answer either.

One thing I have figured out is the world’s definition of love is not the same as a Christian’s definition of love. At the end of the day, love, for the world, is defined as a feeling. But love based on feelings is completely self-centered and self-absorbed. Love of the world says, “I will love you as long as you make me feel good.” It’s selfish to the core.

But what are people basing their feelings on? How do they recognize love? Well, I can summarize it in one word: performance. Performance is what love is all about for the world. Why? Because it’s all about how much you do – how well you perform. How well you perform increases your value with someone. They will feel loved because you are doing so much.

And why do you perform for them? Why do you want to make that person feel loved? **You do it, so you appear deserving of that person’s love.** You see, you are not performing free of charge. You perform to be loved in return. You see, it’s not really love. Again, it’s selfish to the core.

So what is it that makes the love of a Christian so different? What is it about our love that identifies us as a follower of Christ? This is what we want to wrestle with.

To answer these questions, we’ll need to turn to God’s Word. And we’ll spend our time in 1 Corinthians 13.

Before we begin, let me just say a few things about this passage. The Corinthian church had a problem with spiritual pride. In fact, at the end of chapter 12, Paul is addressing their fighting over spiritual gifts. They wanted the more miraculous gifts – **They wanted to prove and improve their spiritual value.** This is why Paul states at the end of chapter 12: “But earnestly desire the greater gifts.” What does he mean? The word gifts here is the Greek word for grace. It’s undeserved favor. Grace. What is the greater expression of grace? What is the greater evidence of our salvation? It’s what Paul will teach us in chapter 13. It’s our ability to love. Let’s now begin in chapter 13, verse 1.

1 Cor. 13:1-3 (ESV) “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”

Paul begins this chapter with very impressive acts of performance. He says, “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels...If I have prophetic powers and incredible knowledge...If I have faith so great to move mountains...and if I give away all I have – even my own life” These are pretty impressive abilities and actions.

Let’s be honest with ourselves: If any one of us met someone with this reputation, we would pull out the red carpet for them. We’d buy them dinner. We’d take a selfie with them. We’d post about them on Facebook. We’d be tweeting at them all day. Why? Look at all they do. Look at their perceived value. They are the best communicators. They have 10 PhD’s. They have insurmountable faith. They are the most generous philanthropists. If you and I had to rate someone with just one of these traits, we’d probably give them high 8 or 9. If one person had them all, they’re a 15 or 20 on the 10 scale!

But Paul puts us all in our place. He says, without love, these incredible actions and abilities are nothing. The faith that moves mountains is nothing without love. Giving away all your possessions without love to the most destitute is meaningless. It’s nothing. Each person’s score card would read 0.

You see, **love is essential.**

Friends, no matter what we do, our motive has to be right. If our motive of loving people – a spouse, a child, a parent, a friend, a colleague – you name it, if the motive is not love, it is nothing. Loving out of obligation is nothing. Loving out of a desire to be loved is nothing. Only love out of grace is of value.

Galatians 1:10 says “For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.” You and I as Christians, we don’t love and perform for the love or validation of others. When we

serve, act, and love, it is to be the outflow of the grace of God. We love because God loved us first. Our love is the natural outflow of His love.

Proverbs 21:2 says “Every man’s way is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts.” In other words, you may try to fool everyone else around you. You may do some amazing acts of service and love, but guess what – God knows your heart – your motive. If it’s not the outflow of grace, God knows it and it’s nothing.

Friends, Love. Is. Essential!

DISCUSSION:

N: Well, let's now hear from Arnie and Cara. What was your description of love before you were a Christian? And how did that change after you became a Christian?

C: It shows you, if I were to tell you our backstory, versus us today, how much Jesus has just glued us together into a bond that no one's going to break it down. So we're in good shape because of Jesus. And that was the change after meeting the Lord.

N: Well, that's exactly the way it's supposed to be, right? Jesus is supposed to be the glue that holds us together, and it does change our definition of love. So what about you, Arnie? How did you change your definition of love before and after Christ?

A: Remember, I come from the hippie era. There's this guy named Fritz Perls. And you know, he said, “you do your thing, I do mine and [if we] come together, hey, great; If we don't, great” [paraphrased], you know, and my attitude was, nothing lasts forever. Get over it and move on, if it doesn't work. I mean, there's no...sure you're committed for the time being, and happiness is just a perception anyway.

N: But how did it change?

A: It's just like Cara said, Jesus works wonders in your life, and the Holy Spirit prompting, and forgiveness from the other person. It just, over time, you see, wow, you know, that love isn't a cheap word. And it really does mean something. And I see love by what's given to me from my wife, that which is so good for me to model back to her.

Our topic today is the power of love. Now Paul transitions from the necessity of love to what love is in the next few verses. Look at 1 Corinthians 13, starting at verse 4.

(1 Cor. 13:4-7) ⁴Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

These 4 verses could honestly be preached on over 12 weeks. But we won't take twelve weeks.

But before we look at each phrase, let me make this brief point.

Notice what Paul did in just 4 verses. He has debunked the idea that love is a feeling. There is nothing in his list that points to love being tied to our emotions. **You see, Love is action.** Love is action. But it's not just any kind of action.

You find two Greek words for love in the New Testament: *agape* and *phileo*. Phileo love is brotherly love. Phileo love has the idea of unconditional affection and friendship for life.

Agape love is different. Agape love is sacrificial love. It is a love that is willing to give it all away. Agape love is what you find here.

This Greek word was not in common use before the New Testament. It occurs 116 times in the New Testament, 75 being in Pauline letters. One commentator put it this way: "This love is a love for the utterly unworthy, a love that proceeds from a God who is love. It is a love lavished on others without a thought whether they are worthy or not. It proceeds from the nature of the lover, not from any attractiveness in the beloved. Now he sees people as those for whom Christ died, the objects of God's love, and therefore the objects of the love of God's people. In his measure he comes to practice the love that seeks nothing for itself, but only the good of the loved one. It is this love that the apostle unfolds."¹

But it is really selfless action. It cares nothing about value rising performance or earning the love of someone else. It is the opposite of the world's definition of love which is self-seeking.

Biblical love – Christian love is selfless action.

Let's study at the new few verses to see how love acts.

Paul says **Love is patient.** That one is pretty self-explanatory. The Greek is long-suffering or long-tempered. It has the idea of being exhaustively patient with people. It's not talking about patience with a situation. But surely when dealing with people, it will impact your view of the situation you're facing.

But when Paul says love is patient, it's long-tempered. It is the ability and willingness to be inconvenienced or even taken advantage of continually. Simply put, love is putting up with a lot of the junk from people.

We have the perfect example of patience from our Heavenly father. God is patient. People unfortunately paint God in the Old Testament as a vengeful, angry God. It is true that God is just. He will not tolerate injustice forever. And though He did enact Divine judgment upon the world through the flood in Noah's time, and through the armies of Israel at various times, it is ignorant to say that God is not patient.

¹ Morris, L. (1985). [1 Corinthians: an introduction and commentary](#) (Vol. 7, p. 174). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Peter writes in 2 Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” Wait, Nat, that’s the New Testament. Yep, you’re right. It is.

But what was that claim based on? Well, it’s true that the flood happened, but that was over 2500 years ago. Not only that, but consider the Old Testament. Think about Jonah. He was angry with God not because of his vengeance and quick temper. He was frustrated with God because of his mercy and patience. Jonah 4:2 says, “And he prayed to the LORD and said, “O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.”

Jonah was so frustrated with God because he was patient.

Isn’t it funny how we want justice for those around us, but demand mercy, grace, and patience for our own lives? We need to carry that same patience into our marriages and our families and life in general.

Part of that patience is as I said putting up with a lot. It’s praying for your spouse and their flaws. It’s praying to God to change their hearts. It also means praying that God will change you and give you the divine patience you need. It means working on yourself and living a life of obedience to God, regardless of what our spouses do. Allowing our lives to be a natural and supernatural influence on the lives of our spouses, no matter how messed up or frustrating they can be. But patience also means just being there for our spouses in their struggles and in their deficits.

Let me give you a real-life example. My wife is technology impaired. I am home project impaired. But Tiff has this knack of touching a device and it just seems to break. TV’s, computers, smart phones, you name it, she struggles with it. My default posture is get frustrated and just ignore it or fix it. But she desires to learn how to use technology and fix it when it breaks. That takes a lot of patience on my part, but she deserves it and I need to flex to help her learn.

On the other side, I was raised by a single mom inside of her hair salon. That meant we didn’t have time or the know-how for home projects. So we hired them out. My wife’s family are construction people. They flip homes and reinvent space. It’s really cool. Because of this Tiffany loves a good house project. I hate it, but part of her patience is waiting on me to come around to the idea of home projects. But then she has to be patient in the learning curve. I mean, she asks for a hammer and I give her a can of peaches.

It’s not that bad; we’ve flipped two homes in our marriage, but it was because love was put into action through patience.

So love is patient. Paul says...

Love is kind. This is the counterpart to patience. Not only will you put up with a lot, but you will also give a lot. You will be gracious with what you have. Love is kind not just to those near and dear to you. No, love offers grace and generosity to your enemies as well. There is no barrier to whom you show love to. Remember, while we were yet sinners – God’s enemies, Christ died for us.

God again is that perfect model for kindness. Titus 3:4-6 says, “[But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,](#) ⁵[he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,](#) ⁶[whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.”](#)

A privilege of marriage is to be a grace-giver to our spouses and families. Remember, grace is never earned. It’s a gift. This is why loving as God loves His children is so counter-cultural. It’s grace-based. It gives freely.

This needs to be true in marriage. When we do this, we avoid the crazy-cycle. According to Dr. Emerson Eggerichs, when we withhold love from our wives because we feel disrespected, we’ve hit the crazy cycle. When wives withhold respect from their husbands, because they don’t feel loved, they’ve hit the crazy cycle.

We need to love and respect freely and often. My wife on occasion will write a little note on the bathroom mirror just because she loves and respects me. I love words of affirmation. When she does it “just because”, that’s a taste of grace.

My youngest son has the love language of gifts. I know that on occasion, he values a small gift. Nothing crazy. But on occasion, I’ll bring home a pack of Pokémon cards or a favorite candy. The point is that as children of a kind King in Heaven, we get to share that same kindness, that same grace to those around us.

Family life is great and it has challenges. Part of our role as Christians is to ease the burden. Not remove the obstacles, but to ease the burden. The same word Christ used in Matthew 11:30, “[For my yoke is easy, and my load is light](#)” the word easy here is the same Greek word for kindness. When we show kindness to our spouses and to our children and those around us, we make their burdens easier. We graciously give of ourselves and our lives because we love them and we want to imitate our Lord and Savior.

N: Now let me turn to Arnie Cole and Cara Whitney, and ask a few more questions. We've talked about patience and kindness. How has the Lord changed you in those areas?

C: Patience definitely, because I've realized that he's going to teach me something in the waiting. And so I'm a better listener in the waiting part. Kindness, I find it very easy to be kind to people I like. People who are difficult, I physically, I have to sometimes go to Scripture and

remind myself, to be kind to them. It's sometimes, I hope it's, I mean, it's genuine. As you can see, I need some more work.

A: Yes. I'll second that. Patience and kindness, I'm very, very good at, or I'm very, very bad at. It just seems like, you know, you strive to be patient. You strive to be kind, and 90% of the time, it just works real nice and dandy. And maybe it's as you get older, you know, and you have health issues, you get grumpy and all of that. And it's like, it's a little harder to be kind, and forget your wife, in public. You know, you're rude to the youngster that has messed up your order, or, you know, the young pastor, who's trying to tell you how to live your life, and just all of that stuff. [I hate those guys.] Yeah. Yeah. Tell me about it.

C: I don't think it's anything you have mastered. I think as soon as you think you've got a handle on it, a situation comes that you never saw coming. So, you know, just like you say, Nat; I mean, you stay in the Word and you know, you go back to Daniel, who we talked about before, and just try to keep going in your routine, and getting fed the words. So when something comes up, we don't change our routine. We become patience and kindness.

A: Well, and I need to tee off of what Cara said. I know for me, that if I start thinking, wow, Arnie, you sure were patient or kind today. You're starting. If I think that thought, that's a huge red flag that something's going to happen, that I'm just going to make that the biggest lie in the world. Matter of fact, even now, after we're talking about this, I'm going to be careful tonight, because we've talked about it, you know. We're all, you know, and then something happens. You stub your toe and then you see how patient and kind you are.

N: That's what the Word of God is there for. It's to keep us, you know, sharp and engaged. And whether we're going through it before the message, during the message, or after the message, don't worry, you're going to experience it. And I think especially patience, which we said is putting up with a lot, and kindness, which is giving a lot. There is ample opportunity in today's marketplace to show both, and it is getting harder than ever in my opinion. So let's talk about love and inclusiveness, because we live in a time where being inclusive is a value. And people also say love is a value, but how does the world's definition of love and inclusiveness differ from what we know about love, as defined in God's Word?

C: Well, I say that love and inclusiveness by what the world tells you it is, is a sham. Love and inclusiveness are words that really sound good, but they really don't practice that themselves, because when you cheer people on, as they destroy themselves, it's super satanic. I mean, people that promote unhealthy lifestyles, aren't really looking for love or acceptance. They're trying to validate and normalize their behaviors throughout society. And I think to support that is extremely unloving. I don't want to see anyone destroy themselves.

N: That is definitely the opposite of the world's definition. What about you Arnie? Any other thoughts?

A: It's just bizarre how the world has turned everything around and under the name of inclusiveness. It's just crazy, absolutely crazy.

C: And if you say you're a church, and people come to you because they're hurting, because they have a missing piece in their soul that only Jesus can fit into, and you're a trusted person. And as a pastor of one of these progressive churches, and to tell them that there's another way to Heaven is extremely unloving. It's hateful and it's satanic.

N: Well, how I've described, this love, according to the world, has no boundaries, but I think love, according to Scripture, it does have boundaries. And because there are boundaries, there is love. There are expectations. There are rules. I mean, what marriage would we say is loving, when there are no boundaries and no restrictions; we would say, that's not love. That's anarchy. It's unfaithful. And it's destructive. The same is true with any other area of life. True love has boundaries and judgment. I would not want my children running out to the street. If there are cars there, that's why we put up fences. I love my child, so I put up the boundaries. Because I love my wife, I have boundaries put in place for my own life, and we made vows that set up boundaries. Again, that is a key difference between what the world says is love: love has no boundaries - it is inclusive to all. But Christian love, godly love, says, wait a second, because there is love, there are restrictions and there are boundaries. And within that restriction, there is great freedom. And I think that's something we need to both demonstrate and preach as we live.