



THURSDAY 6/18/20

SERIES: FAMILY DONE GOD'S WAY

Speaker: Nat Crawford (w/Arnie & Cara)

Title: Family Done God's Way: The Power of Love Pt. 2

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13, beginning in verse 3 (ESV), "If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. ⁴Love is patient and kind..." And then he says...

Love does not envy. In other words, Love isn't jealous. Love has nothing to do with how well someone is doing and how you compare to them. This is hard at times. This was a problem for the Corinthian church.

Look back at chapter 12. Here Paul is talking about the body of Christ and the gifts that God gives believers. Paul says, stop being jealous of the gifts of other believers. Rejoice in theirs and your own. Listen to Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 12:21-26: "The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²²On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together."

Love frees us to celebrate the blessings and grace to those around us. Celebrate and lean into how God has given you a helpmate who is different than you. You can make it alone, but you can't thrive alone. Rejoice in your spouse's differences and gifts.

The same is true for your kids. They're all so different, but as Scripture says, they are each *fearfully and wonderfully made* (Psalm 139:14). Never ever...ever, ever say to your kid, "why can't you be more like your brother or your sister?" They're not supposed to be. God wired them differently, and if they're a believer, they've been gifted differently. Celebrate and don't envy it. When you love someone, you rejoice when God blesses them and they are doing well. Love isn't jealous.

Paul goes on to say, *Love does not boast.* In other words, love doesn't brag. Remember, love is not about politicking or trying to raise your value. It is not based on your performance compared

to anyone else. Love isn't about your past or current accomplishments. Love rejects the notion of making others jealous because of what you've done. Love doesn't say "love me, because I *have* this, or I *did* this, or I will *accomplish* that." Love doesn't boast.

Love is not arrogant. Love isn't prideful. Paul called the Corinthian church on this in Chapter 4 of this letter. Paul wrote, "For who regards you as superior? **What do you have that you did not receive?** And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" (1 Cor 4:7). Everything you have is because God has either given it or allowed it. Whether it is spiritual gifts, financial blessings, health, joy, or fill in the good things in your life, they are from God. Don't fool yourself and think you are the key to your success. It is God who is in charge. It is all grace and it all comes from God. Period. Because of this, we cannot be arrogant.

Love is not rude. If I were to write this, I'd say, love doesn't act like a jerk. Why is it that the people we love the most, can be the biggest jerks too? It's sad, but true. Well in those moments of jerkiness, we need to come back to the Bible and remember, love isn't rude. It's not jerky.

Let me take a moment and talk to the **men**. Men, it is true, God made many of us to be rough, and at times gruff, but men, God never desires us to be jerks. Regarding your spouse or future spouse, Paul said, you are to love your wives as Christ loved the church – giving Himself up for her – that selfless action. That sounds the opposite of being a jerk – it sounds like kindness. I have seen this gross trend in couples today: a man will put down his wife or girlfriend as a form of humor, and it isn't cute. It's destructive. Men, love isn't rude.

Ladies, you aren't getting off the hook. Paul also wrote that wives, you are to respect your husband or future husband. I've seen this trend in TV, movies, and everyday conversation, where women are tearing down their men. Men are painted as dumb and useless. That's not love or respect. Paul says respect them. Build them up – don't be rude.

Now let me speak to **everyone**, remember that our behavior – our willingness to love – impacts our witness. Professor and Minister William Barclay translated this section of Scripture this way: "*Love does not behave gracelessly.*" It is continually offering grace – not just to Christian brothers and sisters; It extends and should stretch to those who are far from God.

I have seen Christians act quite rude to non-believers because of their behavior. Think of what's happening today ... rioting. Well, Christ was never turned off by the behavior of sinners. He met them where they were at, and He was gracious to them. We all should love those who are far from God with such amazing grace.

Love does not insist on its own way. Simply put, love isn't selfish. Friends, how will the world know we are Christians? By our words and our actions. We can love in a way that is foreign to the world, but so desired by the world. Frankly, it needs it – it craves that selfless love.

If you are going to love, you don't always have to get your way. You don't always need to pick the show, the restaurant, or the house project. You do not always have to be the focus of every conversation.

A while back I was having coffee with a person at a local gathering spot. I spent an hour listening to this person talk about themselves, their desires, their goals, and so on. The only talking I did was asking questions. I truly gave away my time. About 30 minutes after that conversation, I received an e-mail from this person. The e-mail said, "Thank you for the conversation. It was one of the best ones I've ever had." I had to chuckle. That person loved it because it was all about them. They loved themselves.

Love is not that way. It is not self-focused, it's others-focused. It gives your time, your attention, your resources away.

It's what happens when you're dating. You say, "What do you want to do?" And the boyfriend or girlfriend say, "I don't care, babe. Whatever you want to do."

In fact, 18 years ago, my wife asked me to take her to a show – she wanted to go to the ballet. I said, let's just go to pro wrestling. Slight difference, but because I loved her, I went to the ballet.

Love gives itself away.

Love is not irritable. This means easily angered or easily bothered. Things simply don't get to you. Love lets things just roll off your shoulders.

The world's version of love says, "Get angry when people don't treat you right. When you don't get your way, make a scene. Get noticed! Let them know you mean business. Get a lawyer if you need to, but do what it takes if you're not happy and don't feel loved."

Friends, this isn't love. Love is patient, remember. It will put up with a lot. You're not focused on yourself when you truly love. When this is true, you're not easily provoked to anger.

Last week, I had one of these moments. Did you know pastors aren't perfect? I was leaving the house. I was rushed, had to get to the office. Tiff requested that I put items away after I use them. My response, was "Haven't I done enough for you?" I got angry and in essence I said, "Look at my performance! Give me a break!" I got defensive and angry. Here's the truth of the matter. It wasn't a Tiffany issue, it was a "me" issue.

Friends, when you get angry, it is honestly not a "them" issue. It's a "you" issue. It's an issue because you are so focused on yourself. Counting to 10 isn't the solution. The solution is for you and I to become more like Christ: To daily obey Him and what God says in His Word. To remember that your value – your worth - is based on who God is and His grace, rather than on your accomplishments or your actions. Daily we need to just pause and extend grace to those around you. Love isn't irritable.

Love is not resentful. You could say that love doesn't hold a grudge. The world says, "Keep a log book of everything wrong people do to you" It says Post it on FaceBook; post it on Twitter. It says, "Write an e-mail to everyone the wrongdoer knows, and make sure they are humiliated for their wrong doing." People do this as an insurance policy. It's a leverage to get what they want. It's manipulative. But friends, this isn't love. It's a relational death sentence.

As far as I'm concerned, the epitome of this kind of love is my wife. Tiffany has every reason in the book to keep a record of my faults and the ways I have intentionally and unintentionally wronged and hurt her. The early years of marriage were quite painful at times. I was a lousy husband. Yet, Tiffany has never brought up my past faults. She has never shoved my face in them. They are in the past. The past is not what defines me or our marriage. Your past is not what defines you. Love lets go of the past – it's not resentful.

I think this is a good rule of thumb for our children. I've got young children, so I'm not in that phase where they've really stepped out on their own and made life-impacting choices. Your children don't need to be defined by their past. We can forgive and love them for who they are, regardless of decisions.

Does this mean we endorse bad choices, or non-biblical lifestyles? No, of course not. Does this mean we have to bail them out when they make poor choices? Absolutely not. What it does mean is that we communicate to them we see them as our kids. We see them as people created in God's image, who deserve compassion and respect. Nothing they do can change that. And if necessary, we communicate necessary boundaries for their good and our own. That's love.

Love isn't resentful.

Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love doesn't celebrate when others fail. The world does, because it's all about performance. It's all about raising your value at the devaluing of others. Love does not celebrate when an enemy fails and falls – even when it's justified. Our response to the demise of people – friend or enemy – is that it's sad, and they need salvation and restoration in Jesus Christ

As believers, we cannot rejoice in wrongdoing. When we do, we endorse it. Isaiah wrote, "[What sorrow for those who say that evil is good and good is evil, that dark is light and light is dark, that bitter is sweet and sweet is bitter](#)" (Is. 5:20). You see, Christians shouldn't rejoice in wrongdoing.

If you truly love someone, you won't endorse evil. You won't encourage the behavior that is offensive to God.

I have seen friends sit silently as they watch marriages crumble due to selfishness and affairs.

I have seen parents join in sinful behaviors with kids, to be liked instead of being faithful to God.

I have watched families sit idly as their family members walk away from their faith, because they don't want to make them upset.

Friends, this endorsement is not love. It's hate. A friend loves at all time – even when it's hard and uncomfortable.

Love acknowledges truth and follows truth, even at the expense of being unpopular and even despised.

Love bears all things. In other words, it protects and supports. Love isn't about tearing down, but building up. Love wants to protect people from the evils of this world. Men, husbands, fathers, listen up. Your job isn't to win a popularity contest with your spouse or your children. Your job is to love, respect and protect them. We are to support them in godly ways. So don't try to be their friend first. So be careful what you endorse, celebrate and reward. What kind of movies and shows do you engage in with your family? And let's be honest, when you're alone? What kind of humor and activities do you display and endorse around and for your family? We are called to protect and support.

And of course when people sin, the goal is to love the sinner and deal with the sin. Love doesn't enable, but it does walk with them towards repentance and healing without shame. Love bears all things.

Love believes all things. Love isn't suspicious or pessimistic. Love doesn't suspect the worst of people or of their motives. Love believes in people. Yes, we know the human heart is desperately wicked and no one apart from the Holy Spirit pursues God. But we can still believe in the possibility of salvation for the lost, and still believe in the Christian's motives. And if rebellious, believe in their repentance.

We all would do well to believe in people, rather than assuming the negative motives or outcomes.

Love hopes all things. Very similar to believes. When faith is struggling, when you see a loved one struggling, falling away from their faith, love will always hope.

Love endures all things. The Greek here has the idea of a military holding its position at all costs. Love endures – it remains – it will stand firm, no matter the situation, the heartache, the disappointment, or the betrayal. It endures.

Life will be an adventure if you lived like only you can as a Christian. It'll stretch you like no boot camp can. You see, love – Christian love – is not only essential – it's not only action. It's also grace; **Love is Grace.**

It gives love without expectation and without strings. It's grace.

Friends, if we are going to live a life on purpose, if we are going to live out the Great Commission of Jesus Christ, if we are going to make the mission of our church reality – to

introduce people to Jesus Christ; to develop them into full-devoted Christ followers; to equip them to impact our city and world, we have to do it in love. Selfless love. Gracious love.

Jesus said, “love one another” John 15:17 – as brothers and sisters in Christ. Jesus said, love your neighbor (Matt 22:34). Jesus also said, Love your enemies (Matt 5:44)

This is only possible if you first love God with all you have. When you do this, you’ll remember and model the necessity of love, the action of love, and the grace of love. No more performing to receive love. No more performing to increase your value. No more requiring others to perform to get love. Why? Because as a follower of Christ, you do not perform for God’s love. You perform from it. Let’s love others just like this.

N: All right. Let's turn back to my discussion, partners, Arnie Cole and Cara Whitney. Love doesn't suspect the worst of people or of their motives; love believes in people. Arnie, how hard is that to do in today's world?

A: It's hard to love your neighbor sometimes when they're not lovable, especially if you try to be Christ-like, where Jesus laid His life down for people He didn't know. It's a tremendous challenge.

N: Yeah. The Bible has some very troubling teachings, especially ones when you see a passage like, *love your enemies*, and you're going, what? I mean, and sometimes that even becomes a challenge for our spouses, when we've declared war on them, but for sure it is, I would almost use the word complicated Arnie. [Wow]. You know, love isn't about tearing down, but it's actually about building up. Cara, there are a lot of conversations with friends and acquaintances that can go south pretty quickly. What do you do when conversations start to tear someone down?

C: You know, there's a lot of things going on on the social media right now, versus the mask wearing and the not, and with the rioting and those things. And I mean, I have my opinions, but I just try to spread Gospel instead of my opinion. I mean, if you ask me, I'm going to give it to you, but... I mean, I had my son to the orthodontist this week, and of course, you’ve got to wear a mask going in there, and there's just all this weirdness, and your attitude can get real, real, crappy, really quick. And I told my son, I said, whether we agree or not, it doesn't matter. And these people in the orthodontist [office], people taking your temperature, asking you all those questions, they don't have anything to do with it. This is all State stuff. So why are you going to give them a hard time about it? Just do what you're supposed to do, give to Caesar what’s Caesar's, and spread the Gospel.

N: It's like you and my wife have been talking on the side, saying the same thing.

C: Well, Nat, I'm going to tell you something. I had to talk myself into this belief.

N: Yeah. Well, but I think what you are trying to do and demonstrate, is the fact that we are called to be Christ ambassadors, and wherever we go, we need to carry ourselves in a posture that does not deter people from Christ, but rather helps them see Him more clearly. And so let our words be seasoned with salt, and let us represent Christ as He is, and as He has begun to change us, no matter what the situation is: masks, riots, no cottage cheese, you fill in the blank. We are called to live in a way that brings God glory. And also that helps people see Jesus more clearly. Well, and that's a great segue for this. Arnie, speak to the listeners who are loving people. They are sharing Christ with people, whether it's a family member, friend, or a neighbor, and they keep doing it. I mean, they are doing all the right things, but they're being ignored, or maybe they're even being rejected. What encouragement do you have for them to keep on loving them as Christ would love them?

A: The rule of thumb, and I tell my wife this, with, because we still try to help people as much as we can. And I'm sure Cara, you know, the people you help the most, expect the least from, or even the worst kinds of things can happen. So rule of thumb, you help people out of love, not because of any other reason, because the odds are 99% of the time, the more you invest in someone, the odds are they're going to turn, and it's not going to go the way you think they should, whether it's a scholarship, whether it, whatever it is, give out of love, but for the right reason. And that is not that there's going to be a payoff down the road for you.

N: Well, I think it's important for us, as you've just said, that we are supposed to give out of the abundance of our heart for pure motives. Motives do matter. And as people who have been given love freely by God, we are called to love others freely. And at the end of the day, we don't save anybody. We are called to scatter seed and water, wherever we go. And so we may end up being rejected. We may be loved even more, but that really doesn't, that's not the point. The point is that we are obedient to God and loving people freely. And at the end of the day, we can cast all the seeds and water, but it is the Holy Spirit who will save. Now, Cara, I want to close our time by asking you a question, because I think there are two people that I know personally, that I kind of view as, I guess, the outreach queens, and that's you and my wife. You both have great hearts for the lost, and you know, Jesus was never turned off by the behavior of sinners. I mean, He rejected sinful behavior, and He called them out, we know, but He was there to seek and save the lost. He met them where they were at, and He was gracious to them. I want to know, and I know our listeners would love to know, how can we do the same thing today? I mean, practically, how can we love people and reach people like Christ did as well?

C: People who are hurting, whether they're smoking crack, or they're prostituting, or they're cheating on their spouse or whatever, they know what they're doing is wrong. And they don't

need a sermon. You know what? They need a listener. Okay, so Tiffany probably has it too, but I always said I have a bartender's face. So people will just tell me things. They'll literally be like, "Hey, I smoked crack last week." And you know what? I put on my poker face and I'll ask them questions, like, "How long have you been smoking crack? What's going on in your life that...?" you know, and people just want to be heard. Isn't that what they're saying now in the world? People just want to be heard. When you're hurting, you just want to lay it out there. And if they don't know the Lord, they're going to talk to you about it, but you can make the introduction in that. So just ask questions, be a good listener; they know they're screwing up. And you know, it's like the Woman at the Well. I always go back to that. The first thing Jesus said was, just give me a drink of water, you know? And He already knew everything about her, and that wasn't the forefront of the conversation. What the forefront of the conversation is Him offering her something better than how she was living. And then He said, yeah, I already know all that. The front of the conversation isn't the sin; the front of the conversation is, "You're lost. And I can offer you something better than what you have now."