



I'M SEARCHING FOR A
R E A L
Love

S E R M O N G U I D E

NO LIMITS WITH PASTOR DELMAN

I'm Searching For A Real Love

1 John 3:16

INTRODUCTION

In 1992, Mary J. Blige released a song that became an anthem for a generation: “Real Love.” The song gave voice to a longing that lives in every human heart, the search for a love that sets us free. This desire is not a sign of weakness or desperation; it is a divine signature from the hand of a loving God. When God said, “It is not good for man to be alone,” He affirmed that looking for love doesn’t make us broken, it makes us human. We are made in the image of a God who is love.

The problem is that we live in a world that often serves us substitutes. It seduces us into chasing chemistry over character, attention over alignment, and feelings over faithfulness. But long before pop songs, the Apostle John, who stood at the foot of the cross, wrote to a young church that was confused about love. He gave them a clear, sharp definition that cuts through every cheap imitation the world has ever offered. He pointed them, and us, to the cross to show us what real love truly looks like.

KEY POINTS

1. Real Love Exposes Fake Love

John’s description of *agape* love, a love rooted in God’s own character, serves as a light that exposes the world’s counterfeits. Fake love is conditional, transactional, and often preoccupied with what it can get. It may borrow the language of real love, but it refuses the accountability that comes with it. This is dangerous because exposure to toxic or abusive behavior can rewire our understanding of love, leading us to confuse chaos with passion and drama with devotion. We must learn to test the spirits and hold our relationships up to the light of Christ. Discernment helps us ask the deeper question: “Is it my healed self or my wounded self calling this love? Is it my wisdom or my trauma?” Real love will survive the examination.

2. Real Love Is Demonstrated Through Sacrifice

John doesn’t say, “We know what real love is because Christ talked about it.” He says we know because Christ *died for us*. Real love is not just declared; it is demonstrated. It’s what someone does when love costs them something. While worldly love is conditional, biblical love is covenantal and sacrificial. Jesus didn’t just say He loved us; He proved it with nails and signed it in His blood. This is the model for us. As John writes, “let us not love with words or speech, but with actions and in truth.” Real love shows up, bears weight, makes the apology, and makes the effort. It is patient and kind, and it does not keep a record of wrongs.

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3. Real Love Is Expressed Personally

Love is not one size fits all. Real love is attentive; it learns the unique needs and preferences of the person you are in a relationship with. This is what Dr. Gary Chapman's work on the Five Love Languages highlights: the problem in many relationships isn't the absence of love, but the translation of it. God modeled this for us. He didn't save us in the abstract. He came in the flesh. He speaks promise to one, gives presence to another, and offers proof to another. Same God, same love, different language. Real love is willing to become bilingual, learning to love another person in the way they can best receive it. It doesn't make excuses but says, "Because I love you, I am willing to learn."

Our search for love must begin with a commitment to understanding God's definition of it. When we hold our relationships up to the light of the cross, we protect ourselves from the pain of counterfeit love. This is an act of social justice for ourselves and our communities, as it breaks cycles of trauma where abuse is normalized and gentleness is seen as weakness. We are called to reject a culture that glorifies dysfunction and instead champion a love that is safe, healing, and holy. Ask the Holy Spirit for discernment to see your relationships clearly. Is this relationship drawing you closer to God's character, or is it reinforcing a familiar wound?

Our faith calls us to be demonstrators of this sacrificial and personal love. Jesus showed us that love is not a passive feeling but an active verb. It moves toward need. It shows up for the struggle, not just the celebration. This means we must learn to love our neighbors with our actions, not just our words. Who in your life needs you to speak their love language? Is it an act of service, a word of affirmation, or the gift of quality time? We are called to be agents of Christ's love, tailoring our care to meet the specific needs of the people God has placed in our lives. This is how we live out the Gospel and become a tangible expression of God's love in a broken world.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. In what areas of your life have you accepted a counterfeit version of love because it felt familiar? How can you hold your relationships up to the light of Christ for greater discernment?
2. Real love is demonstrated through sacrifice. What is one practical, sacrificial way you can show love to someone in your family, church, or community this week?
3. Thinking about the people closest to you, what is one step you can take to better learn and speak their personal love language?
