

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday February 3, 2019. "More Love: It Starts With Me".

A. Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message this past Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper in your own spiritual walk.

Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

B. Series Intro.

We started a brand new series this past Sunday. It's Valentines month, so what would be more cliché than to talk about love. Except, we're coming at it from an angle and perspective you've probably never heard before. Jesus said; out of all the things that define heresy, (being bad at practicing your faith), not loving well was at the top of the list. That means this; how to love others well is difficult... I mean REALLY difficult. So for the month of February, we're going to dig deep into what makes love so difficult, and what are some very practical and specific things we can incorporate into our everyday lives, that will help us to love more...so... "More Love".

C. Sunday's Message.

Sunday we started our series with; *'to be able to love more it has to begin with me'*. If our ability to love others, unconditionally, selflessly, without exceptions, actually begins with us, we have to make sure that our inner life, (the drives and desires that affect all of our decisions), are moving towards a more healthy and scriptural practice of what it looks like to genuinely love others.

Just to begin to wrap our mind around the concept of love, let's ask some general questions.

Push yourself to avoid cliché responses.

What does love mean to you?

How do you know someone loves you?

What muddies up the water, can make showing love more difficult?

D. Scripture.

The scripture Sunday was an unusual one for the topic of love. We told you this would be a different perspective. It was on the temptations of Jesus very early in his ministry. Jesus had just been baptized by his cousin John, and then he went off by himself to be 'tested' before he began his ministry. Some translations use the word 'tempted' some use 'tested'. Semantically the difference isn't huge, but we just want to make sure the underlying understanding is consistent. Jesus did face temptations that we are going to unpack that could limit our ability to love well. However, we just want to make clear, Jesus wasn't tempted by God. God doesn't send temptations our way.

He was being tested, by facing certain temptations we all face.

Read Matthew **4:1-11**, in a couple of different versions, then we'll talk about the specific temptations.

The importance of self-reflection. (4:1).

There is a practice of honest self-evaluation that reveals things that we rarely see in our daytoday life. We have to regularly get alone time with God, and have him reveal those things within us that inhibit our ability to live fully for God.

Why is doing this so difficult?

Do you have a practice of getting alone? How has it helped you?

Manipulating for personal needs. (4:2-4).

Sometimes the first step of self-examination is a period of denial. Giving something up. It's why we do this for Lent. {Commercial break...mark your calendar for March 6, our Ash Wednesday service which begins Lent}. An important aspect of honest self-evaluation, and necessary in order to love more, is to see if any of our basic, personal needs are dictating how we love.

There are drives, and desires, deep within each one of us that are normal, natural, but often cause us to manipulate relationships. They may not be bad, or sinister, just not healthy.

So...a super tough question; **Are you aware of ANY needs or desires, (attention, being right, being taken care of, being made to feel safe, etc.) that could be driving your relationships?**

Manipulating thru game playing. Not being honest. (4:5-7).

Most of us, because we're not fully self-aware, and we don't regularly allow ourselves to be 'tested', don't realize not everything we do is done with honest and honorable intentions. We'll try to hide and package our brokenness in something that seems good, presentable. But deep down there is something else going on. And we're not always upfront with those hurts and wounds from our past.

This is how it often manifests itself: *"I will know the person loves me because they will..."*

The therapy world calls them; '**unspoken expectations**'.

So, how you know someone loves you?

What expectations do you have about loving someone, could be coming from your past?

Temptation to compromise for shortcut gain. (4:8-11).

We know this last passage is the truth that eventually everyone will recognize who God is. But the temptation here was to sacrifice the real effort it takes to get something important done. Real love and real growth is hard work. It requires committed effort and lots of time to grow. Shortcuts don't work.

In your life, what have you learned or experienced, shows that love must be grown over time, and doesn't just happen?

E. Challenge.

In wrapping up all of these specific issues that can get in the way of us being able to love more, we learn we have to **create a lifestyle in which we will get alone with God and have him reveal what those are to us.** We must work to cultivate a life of doing this.