

When Love Is Hard

Love IRL

March 1st, 2026

Preached by Matt Babcock

Prepared by Isaac Long

OPENING QUESTION

What did you hear as the main idea of this sermon about loving people when it's hard?

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Main Reading:

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

KEY TAKE AWAYS

- Conflict is inevitable, but contempt is not.
- Forgiveness is not denial, it's obedience.
- Love grows through humility and grace.
- Healing takes time, but it is possible.
- Jesus restores what feels beyond repair.

QUESTIONS

1. "Conflict is inevitable, but contempt is not."
 - a. What's a practical difference between normal conflict and contempt in a relationship?
 - b. How can you tell when conflict is starting to turn into contempt?
2. Forgiveness was defined as "releasing the right to repay hurt with hurt," not denying what happened or removing boundaries.
 - a. How does that definition challenge or clarify what you've believed about forgiveness, and what might it look like in a real relationship?
3. The sermon emphasized that love grows through humility and grace, healing takes time, and Jesus restores what feels beyond repair.
 - a. What is one small, practical step of humility, grace, or reconciliation you could take this week, and what would it look like to trust Jesus with the outcome?

PRACTICE

“One Step of Reconciliation” Practice

Step 1: Reflect (Sometime this week)

Ask God to bring one relationship to mind where:

there is tension, distance, or hurt
it is *wise and safe* to move even a little closer

Journal or think through:

What is the main barrier right now: resentment, pride, fear, avoidance, etc.?
What would it look like to “release the right to repay hurt with hurt” in this situation?

Step 2: Choose One Small Act

Decide on one realistic, low-risk act of love you can take this week. For example:

Send a short, kind text (no heavy conversation, just kindness).

Pray daily for that person’s good for 5–7 days.

Speak one sincere word of encouragement or gratitude to them.

Admit one small thing you’ve contributed to the tension (“I’m sorry for...”).

Stop replaying the offense in your mind and, when it comes up, pray, “Lord, I release this to you.”

Make it:

Specific – exactly what you’ll do.

Small – not dramatic, just a first step.

Safe – no contact if it’s abusive or unsafe; in that case, your “act” might only be prayer and internal forgiveness work.

Write it down before you leave group or right after.

Step 3: Pray as You Go

Each day, pray briefly: “Jesus, help me choose love here. Give me humility, grace, and wisdom.
I entrust the outcome to you.”

Step 4: Share Next Week

At the next meeting, have each person briefly share:

What step they chose

What happened (including if it was hard or if nothing seemed to change)

What, if anything, God showed them about love, forgiveness, or humility

The emphasis is not on “fixing” the relationship in a week, but on:

Choosing love again

Breaking the cycle of hurt-for-hurt

Letting Jesus work in the slow process of healing and restoration

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, thank you for your patience, your grace, and the way you love us even when love is hard.

Help us this week to choose one small step of forgiveness, humility, or grace in our relationships, and give us wisdom to do it safely and wisely. Jesus, soften our hearts, protect our minds, and teach us to love others the way you have loved us. Amen.