

LOVE LESSONS
Practice, Practice, Practice
1 Corinthians 13:5

Do you want to learn to love others better? Good for you! Today, we are going to continue in our series of LOVE LESSONS from God. Now, lessons are never EASY. They are MEANT to make you do things that are NEW and UNCOMFORTABLE and CHALLENGING. It will be FRUSTRATING. It may even cause you PAIN. [My GUITAR LESSONS] Yet, those lessons allowed me to serenade my bride, sing my kids to sleep at night when they were growing up, and lead this church in some sweet songs of praise. **It was worth every bit of the pain and sacrifice.** SADLY, I have let those lessons slip. My fingers have grown tender and sensitive, and I am in need of once again APPLYING EFFORT to the KNOWLEDGE that I already possess. We do the same thing with the art of loving well. Knowledge by itself is NEVER enough! It has to be applied. It has to be acted on and acted out. Some of you KNOW what love is, but you have grown weak in applying what you know to your love life. It is time to RELEARN what love really is, and then PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE.

As we walk through more of these lessons, I want to remind you that we PRACTICE because we are NOT PERFECT! **We want to get better, but WE WILL FAIL along the way.** So, do not let your failure keep you from more practice. Only practice makes perfect! Now, our next love lessons are found in **1 Corinthians 13:5 NIV**
5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

Wow, that is quite a list of love lessons, and these lessons seem really TOUGH! It almost feels like love is a GREAT DEAL for everyone else, but a PAINFUL ORDEAL for the one doing all of the loving! Right? Well, maybe not. Maybe loving others turns out to be the only way to experience GOD'S BEST in our lives, but it requires FAITH that waits to see what God will DO with our SACRIFICIAL LOVE. You see, the REWARDS of love are not just about what love does FOR ME, but what it does IN ME and what it does for OTHERS! Love CHANGES me for the better, and my expressions of love can actually help others find their ULTIMATE SECURITY in GOD'S LOVE. My love is an IMPERFECT (but constantly IMPROVING?) picture of the PERFECT love of God for the people in my life. **Your love can help people learn to REST in the perfect, unconditional love of God!** So, let me encourage you to practice love no matter who you are or who happens to be in your life. These love lessons apply to SPOUSES and PARENTS and TEACHERS and COACHES and BOSSES and FRIENDS and BROTHERS and SISTERS and EVERYONE else. This is WORLD-CHANGING stuff! But these life-changing lessons only take place in the LITTLE MOMENTS of LIFE. Let's begin.

Love does not DISHONOR others.

Once again, these love lessons are all about what love DOES NOT DO. [That is a NECESSARY part of taking lessons. My guitar teacher was CONSTANTLY telling me

what I was doing wrong. He even had to RETRAIN me about some wrong finger placements that I had taught myself! I am glad that I did not GIVE UP!]

HONOR is a key aspect of all healthy relationships. But what honor CREATES, dishonor DESTROYS. Is there dishonor in your key relationships? Let's see.

VARIOUS TRANSLATIONS OF OUR FIRST LESSON TODAY:

- *Does not behave rudely- NKJV *Does not act unbecomingly – NASB
- *Does not act improperly – HCSB *Does not force itself on others – The Message

***This is MANNERS 101 . . . and MORE.**

- Are you DIFFICULT to live with? [Do people always have to ADJUST to you?]
- Are you RUDE? [Interrupting others, Crude speech, Being Inconsiderate]
- Do you DISHONOR people? [Ignoring others, Criticizing others, Mocking others]
- Are you IMMODEST? [Sadly, this is NORMAL in our society. Be SEXY!]
- *Unbecomingly comes from a word that means INDECENT.
- *It is the opposite of the word MODEST, ELEGANT, or GRACEFUL.
- *It is used of the parts of our body that must be COVERED UP for decency!

1 Corinthians 12:23 HCSB

23 And those parts of the body that we think to be less honorable, we clothe these with **greater honor**, and our **unpresentable** parts have a better presentation.

[VINES: To run the risk of bringing others to disgrace!]

- Immodesty ignores the impact of my self-exposure on your spirit!
- Indecency is another expression of BOASTING: SELF-DISPLAY.

GOOD PRACTICES:

- *Watch the FACIAL expressions and body language of people when you talk.
 - Do they move back? Does their face show fear or shock or disgust? Do you know?
- *ASK those closest to you where they see RUDENESS in you. [Manner, Dress, etc.]
 - Expect an answer that will STING a little . . . or a LOT!
 - Make appropriate adjustments and then ASK AGAIN for FOLLOW-UP!

Our next LOVE LESSON is actually the ROOT of the other expressions of loving behavior that we see in this passage. If we work on getting this one right, then we will be far down the road in learning to love well. But be warned: It is anything but easy!

Love is not SELF-SEEKING.

Now, this is NOT a command to IGNORE your own needs or desires. Our lives are filled with wants and needs. We have schedules to keep, bills to pay, and problems to solve. We also have goals we want to reach, pleasures we want to experience, and victories we want to win. In the midst of all this, God calls us to LOVE ONE ANOTHER. However, the love God calls us to give is not to be shared out of the

leftovers of our lives AFTER we have accomplished or received everything that we want, but it is to be shared from the BEST and FIRST parts of our lives. This means that love cannot be selfish; it cannot be focused solely on itself. Love, God says, does not seek its own. That is, love is not relentlessly focused on what it wants, but on what others may need or desire as well.

***A self-seeking spirit is a DEMANDING spirit.**

[Zeteo=To CRAVE, REQUIRE, or DEMAND something.]

- It puts SELF ABOVE ALL OTHERS! [Puts others out so I can get put in!]
- Joe Kelley's statement: They don't want answers; they just want their way!
- This pattern uses control, manipulation, pouting, charming, bullying, etc.
- It HATES the word "NO!"

*It demands its own rights, regardless of the effect on others.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24, 33 NASB

23 All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. 24 Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor. ... 33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved.

GOOD PRACTICES:

*Let others in your family set the AGENDA for family experiences.

*Learn to THANK GOD for the places where you are hearing the word NO right now.
-These are a REMINDER that YOU are NOT in CONTROL!

*Practice the DISCIPLINES of FASTING and SILENCE.

*Seek to EDIFY others. [Edify = to build up] **1 Corinthians 14:12 NASB**

So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.

-How are you seeking to EDIFY the people in your home and your church?

So, how do I know if I am not "seeking my own" stuff? [Next LOVE LESSON]

Love is not easily ANGERED.

Love does not leave itself in a position of continual frustration; always annoyed by the needs and desires of others. [TASK ORIENTED vs. PEOPLE ORIENTED] Because so many of us approach life this way, we find ourselves constantly having to battle irritation and anger. Our frame of mind causes us to create environments in our relationships that are stunningly volatile, and therefore extremely fragile. We are so easily provoked to frustration and anger; but we do not have to be. We must PRACTICE the practical truth from Christ's life that love does not seek its own, **nor does it leave itself in a position to be provoked.** [Some of you are an ARGUMENT just waiting to happen!]

[Provoke = To spur on, to irritate, to arouse to anger, to make SHARP]

*Comes from the Greek word, PAROXYSM! Uncontrollable outburst, a FIT!

[Note: The word "EASILY" is not in the original language.]

-People are GOOD at PUSHING our BUTTONS! Are you practicing the art of RESTRAINING your REACTIONS?

*Is it easy to "set you off?" Are you KNOWN for being short-tempered? Hot-headed?

*Dallas Willard: How easily discouraged and how easily irritated am I these days?

*This does NOT mean that love does not RESPOND to the annoyances and hurtful behavior of others; it simply does not OVERREACT to them!

-My challenge to parents with difficult children: **CALM AUTHORITY!**

***An angry spirit creates a CONSTANT ENVIRONMENT of tension and irritation.**

*It STIRS UP controversy.

Proverbs 29:22 NKJV

22 An angry man stirs up strife, and a furious man abounds in transgression.

*It CREATES a spirit of anger and stress. **Proverbs 22:24-25 NLT**

24 Don't befriend angry people or associate with hot-tempered people, 25 or you will learn to be like them and endanger your soul.

***Ultimately, anger makes INTIMACY IMPOSSIBLE!**

[Quote from Heart Connections by Gordon Macdonald: P. 150]

GOOD PRACTICES:

-Breathe and view INTERRUPTIONS as DIVINE APPOINTMENTS. [Ron Upton]

*God WILL set you up with these appointments.

-Set aside AGENDALESS TIMES for others during your day.

[Eliminate BUSYNESS: Soul Keeper - John Ortberg, P. 40]

-ASK yourself: WHY am I IRRITATED or ANGRY? [The answer may surprise you.]

This leads to our FINAL LOVE LESSON today: (Is only a PARTIAL look.)

Love keeps no record of wrongs.

*Some people irritate us TODAY simply because they irritated us YESTERDAY!

-Are you keeping a RECORD of wrongs that others have done to you?

GOOD PRACTICES:

*STOP REHEARSING your hurts!

*FORGIVE those who have hurt you and RELEASE them from your power!

How do these love lessons affect you? Are you discouraged about your love life?

Just remember: PRACTICE makes PERFECT. Let's pray!