

LOVE LESSONS
The Secret of Love
1 Corinthians 13:8

There is no greater subject of interest to mankind than the subject of LOVE. Everyone WANTS love in their life. Everyone NEEDS love in their life. In fact, life without love is not really life! Maybe this is why there are more than 1,500 MATCHMAKER organizations in the U.S. right now. Everyone seems to be LOOKING FOR LOVE (in all the wrong places?). Maybe YOU are in that category! **In this series, I want us to look AT love as God DISPLAYS and DEFINES it so that we can truly know what love is. This way, we can know what we are really looking for when we start looking for love!** I want this series to simply be LOVE LESSONS that we receive from God himself!

By the way, this is NOT a series about DATING and ROMANCE, although it will certainly apply to that category. This is a series about how we can BECOME people who KNOW HOW TO LOVE OTHERS in all categories of life: Marriage and family, friendships, biblical community, neighbors, and even enemies. We can learn to love people in every one of these categories. In fact, Christ COMMANDED those who follow him to do just that. And THAT is a BIG ORDER! **But there is a BEGINNING point for expressing this kind of love, and it does not involve those people at all. This is the great SECRET of love that each of us must learn NO MATTER WHAT our PRESENT EXPERIENCE of love might happen to be.** Let's begin by reading perhaps the most famous and beautiful description of love that has ever been given; something Paul called the "more excellent way." **1 Corinthians 13:1-13 NASB**

1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. 4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 **Love never fails**; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part; 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. 11 When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. 13 But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

I LOVE this passage of scripture. It is poetic and warm and hopeful. But it also seems to fly in the face of harsh realities of life. Maybe you have experienced BETRAYAL or LOSS in love, and it has BURNED you deep in your soul. Maybe you feel that you have lost the power to love others deeply because of the pain that you have experienced. This kind of pain can easily become the defining focus of our lives. But remember this: While it is TRUE that this broken world is filled with hatred and sin and selfishness and people who have FAILED to love others, **it is even truer that this world is permeated and saturated with the PERFECT LOVE OF GOD.** His love is the greatest REALITY in this world and the ONLY HOPE for this world. **This is the SECRET OF LOVE: GOD'S LOVE NEVER FAILS!** This means that the only possible failure concerning love is not that IT will ever somehow fail, but that YOU AND I would fail to RECEIVE it from God! Have you received God's love? Here is the FIRST LESSON that you must learn about love:

Love is an UNEARNED GIFT. Ephesians 3:14-19 NIV

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 **so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.** And I pray that you, **being rooted and established in love,** 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

You are ALREADY experiencing the love of God in your life, even in ways that you cannot fully realize it. This is why Paul prayed such an amazing prayer!

***God loves you, and there is NOTHING that you can do about that!** Some of you at one time felt like you were somehow too far-gone for his love; that you were somehow disqualified or cut off from ever deserving his love. But you had to LEARN that everything that Christ has done for you is a GIFT that is simply meant to be RECEIVED by FAITH. Salvation opens our eyes so that we can begin to actually SEE the love of God as it is displayed in every arena of life.

LISTEN AGAIN TO PAUL'S PRAYER in Ephesians 3 [KJV order]:

How WIDE: "For God so loved the WORLD!"

How LONG: "He gave his one and only Son."

How DEEP: "Whosoever believes in him."

How HIGH: "Whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life!"

-His love is a bottomless well that will satisfy us FOREVER!

All of this is true because of the love that God has for us. We must simply receive it by faith. But once we receive it, it becomes the SECRET to LOVING OTHERS! You see, this is why Paul said that we must become ROOTED and GROUNDED in this love.

Rooted = Our living, growing connection to Christ (JOHN 15) [[Sayger Trees](#)]

Grounded = Our consistent stability in the Unchanging Christ (Matthew 7)

Are YOU rooted and grounded in Christ? If so, then you are connected to something BIGGER than your own EMOTIONS or ABILITIES!

*We are commanded to FOLLOW AFTER LOVE. **1 Corinthians 14:1 NLT**

-“Follow after”= to run swiftly in order to catch; to seek eagerly.

[CLEAVE – Illustration of the spirit of MARRIAGE!]

-We are to “put on love.” **Colossians 3:14 NLT**

-We are to “increase and abound in love.” **1 Thessalonians 3:12 NLT**

-We are to “have fervent love for one another.” **1 Peter 4:8 NLT**

-We are to “provoke one another to love and good works.” **Hebrews 10:24 NLT**

How can we possibly do all of this? There is only one way!

Love is an EVERLASTING SOURCE!

*God’s love never fails. This is because God himself is ETERNAL. John the Beloved said it this way in **1 John 4:7-11 NLT**

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

God’s love never RUNS OUT!

God’s love never GIVES UP!

You do not have to stop loving someone just because they do not respond to your love the way that you want them to respond. The key to love is to stay connected to your EVERLASTING SOURCE! Your FOCUS is your FUTURE! In light of that, I want to teach you a simple practice that you can do that will help you to stay connected to the love of God every single day. It is not rocket science; it is just a simple CHOICE.

This final practice is meant to teach you how to ACCESS the love of God by choosing to acknowledge his everyday expressions of love for you. This is a great practice for both those who DO NOT know God, and for those who know him and want to LOVE HIM MORE.

Many people DOUBT the love of God, but they FAIL to SEE the multitude of ways that God demonstrates his love for them EVERY SINGLE DAY.

***God's love is the SOURCE of EVERY GOOD THING that you enjoy in your life!**

Jesus – “God sends his rain on the just and the unjust!”

James – “EVERY good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights.”

-You can let salvation bring you to a full awareness of God's ever-present goodness.

OR

-You can let God's ever present goodness lead you to the acceptance of salvation by faith.

HERE IS WHAT YOU CAN DO:

What if you choose to ASSUME every day that ANYTHING GOOD that happens to you comes directly from God?

*These assumptions will give God the GLORY in EVERY category of blessing.

-LOOK for the little INTIMACIES that God is giving you.

-BEAUTY, PLEASURE, JOY (Why is there joy in a broken world?), HOPE

*This MUST be VERBALIZED: SAY IT OUT LOUD!

*These assumptions AVOID an attitude of ENTITLEMENT.

-It is NOT that I DESERVE these good things; these things are from God's love!

-This protects me from taking good things for GRANTED. [Creates blindness]

But there is ANOTHER CHOICE that you must make every day if you want to stay connected to God's love. It has to do with what you do with the BAD things that happen to you in life. If you experience loss or trouble or pain, does that mean that God's love has failed you? Absolutely not! You need to FILTER those experiences another way.

What if you choose to believe that anything BAD that happens to you is an opportunity for God to DEMONSTRATE his love for you by teaching you, using you for HIS good purpose, or simply by comforting you in your pain?

*This requires TRUST and TIME. You will have to WAIT for some things. PROCESS

Jude 20-21 – Keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy . . .

*This takes God's SOVEREIGN WILL over the whole earth AND his SPECIFIC WILL over my life into account.

Illustration: JOSEPH – “And the Lord was WITH him . . . “

*Where was God when he was sold as a slave, falsely accused, locked up?

*His WORD becomes the FILTER that helps you to INTERPRET all that you are going through and what God may be doing in it.

How would these two choices change not only YOUR VIEW of God; how would they change YOU?

Let's pray.