

Sermon Series – All You Need is Love
Part 1 - “Introduction to Series”
Pastor Dale Campfield - August 21st, 2011

Intro:

Matt 28:19 “Go and make disciples of all nations...”

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow...which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Past Sermon Series: “God Pleasers” – 49 Days of Faith

Theme Verse: Hebrews 11:6 “Without faith, it is impossible to please God.”

We’ve just completed a sermon series in how to be a God Pleaser – by Living a Life of Faith. Now what? Now that we know how to live by faith, what are we to do with it? The Bible tells us that if you are a follower of Christ, all that matters is your faith that makes you love other people! That’s what this next sermon series is all about. “All You Need is Love.”

We can become a little callous to the fact that there are people around us who are hurting, who need love, who need care, who need concern. We live our comfortable lives with our comfortable families, jobs, homes and friends and life is good. Sure, we’ve got our everyday problems that most people have, but for the most part, we’re comfortable. However, there is a world around us that is hurting and need the love of Christ in their lives. We are that love. We are the chosen ones to IMPACT them with the Love of Christ. All you need is LOVE. All you need is God’s love being expressed upon those around you in what you say, what you do and who you are.

Current Sermon Series: “All You Need is Love”

Theme Verse: Galatians 5:6 “If you are a follower of Christ Jesus all that matters is your faith that makes you love others.”

Sermon Topics During this Series

Taken from 1 Corinthians 13: Love is kind, does not envy, is humble, respectful, patient, forgiving and speaks the truth.

Jesus told a story about this. In Luke 12, Jesus says, *“There was a rich man whose lands produced bountiful harvest. He asked himself, ‘What should I do for I don’t have enough space to store my goods?’ [In other words, God is blessing him so much he doesn’t know what to do with all the blessings.] Then he says, ‘Here’s what I’ll do. I’ll tear down my barns and I’ll build larger ones. Then I’ll say to myself, ‘I have so many good things stored up for me. Now rest, eat, drink and be merry.’” But God said to him, ‘You fool. This night your life will be demanded of you and then to whom will all your things belong?’ Thus will it be for anyone who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich in what matters to God.”*

Take note of “what matters to God.” This guy only thought of himself. It didn’t occur to him that maybe God was blessing him so he could be a blessing to other people. That maybe God had given him things that God wanted him to share with the less fortunate. No, all he thought was “I’ll build a bigger barn. I’ll put some of my stuff in mini storage. I don’t have a place for it myself. I’ve got so much. I’ll just have to go out and rent some more storage. I won’t give any of it away. I won’t bless anybody else. I’ll just keep amassing and say, ‘Look how much stuff I’ve got.’” And God says, “You’re missing what matters most in life.”

So what does matter most to God? The Bible tells us in Galatians 5:6, *“If you are a follower of Christ Jesus all that matters is your faith that makes you love others.”* God says what matters in life is not your accomplishments or your achievements or your fame or your wealth. What matters in life is one thing. All that matters is your faith that makes you love other people. He says if you miss that, you have missed the most important thing in life. It’s the kind of faith that makes you love other people. “All You Need is Love”.

HERE WE GO:

Today we’re going to begin this new series I’m calling “All You Need is Love.” We’re going to look at the most famous chapter in the Bible on love, **1 Corinthians 13**. Speakers, when they want to get your attention and they want you to remember something, they use repetition. They say something over and over and over. In the first few verses of this passage, God says the same thing five different ways. He says it over and over and over. He says, I want you to understand the most important thing in life is love. Your relationships – that’s what matters most.

QUESTION: What happens if I don’t live a life of love?

1. If I don’t live a life of love, nothing I say will matter.

Verse 1: *“If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth, but I didn’t love others I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a claiming symbol.”* God says words without love are just noise. Words without love are empty.

We’re really impressed by great speakers, great communicators. We love eloquence. We love charisma. We love to hear somebody really ring our chimes and really stir us. God says, “That doesn’t impress Me at all. I don’t care how good of communicator you are. I want to know if you love. Is your life a life of love?” Living a life without love means nothing I say will matter.

2. If I don’t live a life with love, nothing I know will matter.

Verse 2a: *“I may have the gift of prophecy. I may understand all the secret things of God. I may have all knowledge. But if I do not have love, then I am nothing.”*

You may be Phi Beta Kappa, a Mensa member, you may be a genius, brilliant, a walking Bible encyclopedia, have incredible knowledge of science or math or literature or history. You may be

a genius. But He says if you don't have love in your life, all that you know is worthless. It doesn't really matter. **Brilliance without love equals zero.**

We live in a world where knowledge is exploding. It doubles about every six years in our society. We are smarter than we've ever been before than any other generation. But we still have the same old problems – war, terrorism, crime, abuse, prejudice, hatred, violence. Why? Because what the world needs is not more knowledge; it needs more love. Without love, nothing I say will matter, and without love, nothing I know will matter. All the knowledge in the world can't compensate for it.

3. If I don't live a life with love, nothing I believe will matter.

There's a myth that being a Christian, being a follower of Christ, is just a matter of believing certain truths. That is not true. Nothing can be further from the truth. Following Christ is much more than believing intellectual facts or doctrinal truths. It's a life of love.

1 Cor. 13:2b *“Even if I have the gift of faith so I could speak to a mountain and make it move [In other words, a miracle worker], I will still be worth nothing at all without love.”* It takes more than belief to please God.

You say, “But wait a minute! I believe in Jesus!” So what? So does the devil. The devil believes that there's a God. The devil believes that Jesus is the Son of God. But you won't find him in heaven. Why? Because it takes more than believing in Christ to make it to heaven. The issue is not do you believe in Him. The issue is do you love Him. The Bible says, *“If I say I love God and hate other people, I'm a liar.”* The Bible says *“I can't say that I'm right with God and be out of sorts with other people. Relationships with others affect my relationship with God. If I don't live a life of love, nothing I believe will matter.”* That's pretty profound.

4. If I don't live a life of love, nothing I give will matter.

1 Cor. 13:3a *“If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body [In other words, I became a martyr – sacrificial giving], but I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever.”*

Can you be in a relationship and give for selfish motives? Absolutely, you can. Giving is not necessarily always loving.

- Some people give just in order to get back. That's not love. I'm going to give to you because I know you're going to give back to me. That's not love. That's selfishness. I know what will get you to do something for me, so I'll do this for you. That's selfishness.
- Some people give out of guilt, to try to assuage a guilty conscious so they give and give and give trying to make up for something they did in the past.

- Some people give to control other people. Parents do this all the time – the way they give to their kids in order to try to control them.
- Some people give for prestige, for glory, for honor. They want a little plaque that says, “Look! I’m a great giver!” That’s not love.

You can give for a lot of wrong motives, and the Bible says if I’m not doing this in love, none of my giving counts. And nothing I give will matter.

A guy once said, “I don’t understand. I’ve bought my wife everything she could ever want, and she’s leaving me.” I said, “But did you love her?” You can’t buy a wife, just like you can’t buy your kids. A lot of parents try to compensate for the lack of time they spend with their kids by buying them lots of things. They don’t need things. They need your time. They need your love. “I’ve bought my kids all these things, but they still reject me.” Maybe you didn’t love them. Maybe they didn’t sense that in the way that they needed.

5. If I don't live a life of love, nothing I accomplish will matter.

1 Corinthians 13:3 in The Message paraphrase says, “*No matter what I say or what I believe or what I do, I’m bankrupt without love.*”

You can rack up an incredible list of personal achievements. You can get your picture on the cover of *Fortune* magazine or *Inc.* or *Time*. You can win the Nobel Peace Prize. You can have enormous accomplishments, be entrepreneur of the year, build a billion-dollar company, have incredibly great successes in your field of endeavor. But the Bible says it isn’t worth squat if you don’t love. The Bible says -- *God says* --relationships are more important than accomplishments. Life is about relationships not accomplishments.

SO.....Let me summarize it like this.

God says I can have the eloquence of an orator, the knowledge of a genius, the faith of a miracle worker, the generosity of a philanthropist, the achievements of a superstar, but if I don’t have love in my heart, it is worth zero. It doesn’t count. The only thing that matters to God is do I love Him and do I love other people?

One day you’re going to stand before God when you die. And God’s going to evaluate your life. When He evaluates your life, He’s not going to look at your bank account. He’s not going to look at your list of accomplishments. He’s not going to look at your grades. He’s not going to look at all your sports trophies. He’s not going to look at your endorsements or your PR list or your resume. God is going to evaluate your life on one basis – your relationships. God is going to ask, “How much did you love Me and other people?” That’s called the Great Commandment. Did you love God with all your heart, and did you love your neighbor as yourself? That is all that matters in God’s eyes. All the other stuff is superfluous. How well did you love?

The Bible is very clear that love is the primary objective of life and love is the supreme value in life and love is the greatest power in life. That’s why we’re going to spend this series focusing on it. If love is that powerful, if it’s the primary objective of life, if it’s the supreme value of life, if it’s what matters most in life, what in the world is it? What is love? Without a doubt, love is the most overused word in the English language. We use it to refer to so many different things, different emotions and feelings of affection. I’ll say, “I love my wife and kids. I love God. I love my country. I love really spicy food. I love tacos. I love lying on the beach.” I love a whole lot of different things in varying degree of value. We have love letters, we have love songs, we have love stories. But nobody stops to define what love is.

QUESTION: What is Love?

So what is love? It's going to take me this entire series to unpack that question. There's so much about it. We're going to go deep, and I guarantee you it's going to surprise you. You're going to learn things about love you've never thought about.

Let me just start by giving you a couple of definitions right now. This will just scratch the surface. We're barely getting into this great subject of what does it mean to be a great lover.

1. The Bible says that love is a command.

God commands that we love each other. It's not optional. If we don't do it, the Bible says that we are sinning. The Bible says this in...

2 John 1:6

"Love means doing what God has commanded, and He has commanded us to love one another."

He has commanded us to love one another.

Some of you say, "I can live without love." No, you can't. You can exist without love, but you can't live without it. And you can't please God without it because the Bible says God has commanded us to love each other.

MYTH: LOVE IS A FEELING

Because it is commanded, that brings up a corollary, and it is this: Love is not a feeling. We know that because you can't command a feeling. You can no more command a feeling that you can command the wind. Have you ever said to a little kid that is upset and crying and really frustrated: "I command you to be happy! I command you to stop crying!" You can no more command a feeling than you can command the mountains to move. Feelings cannot be commanded.

Love is not a feeling. It creates feeling. It produces feelings. Love causes feelings, but love is not an emotion. If you think it is, you have a very shallow understanding of love. It creates emotion, but love is not an emotion. So you need to understand that. When people say, "I feel love," you're feeling an emotion, but love is more than that. God would never command you to do something that He doesn't give you the power and the ability to do. And you can't always control an emotion.

2. The Bible says that love is a choice.

We choose to love, and we choose to not love. It's a choice.

1 Corinthians 14:1 in The Message paraphrase,

"Go after a life of love as if your life depended on it because it does."

Circle “go after.” That means make a choice. Decide. Choose. A volitional act of the will. Love is a choice. We choose to love or to not love.

MYTH: LOVE IS UNCONTROLLABLE

That destroys another myth that we have about love. We think love is uncontrollable. As if one day I'm just walking along and I'm instantly in love – no control over it. Even the terminology we use is kind of accidental – I *fell* into love. Like it's a big ditch or something. I *fell* in love. “Help! I've fallen in love, and I can't get up!” As if I have no control over my choice to love or not love.

I can't tell you how many times I've had men or women say to me, trying to justify a separation or divorce: I just don't love him/her anymore. As if that's totally out of your control and now because you don't love her that gives you the right to divorce her or leave her. Let's be honest about this. Love is a choice. You need to rephrase that: “I'm choosing not to love him any more.” Because it is a choice, and you could choose to keep on loving even if they didn't love you. That's your choice. In fact, the truth is, acting in love when you don't feel like it is actually a higher level of love than when you do feel like it. It's one thing to love when the flowers are in bloom and you're on a honeymoon and things are going your way and you've got a lot of money to spend and things are going great. But the real test of love is when things are not going great in your life, when you're out of money and when you're sick and don't feel good, the pressure is on and you've lost your job. You choose to love in spite of how you feel. That's a higher level of love. Loving in spite of your feelings. Loving in spite of your emotions.

Have any of you gotten up in the middle of the night with a kid that was sick? That's love. Have any of you ever been kind and patient with your mate when they were grumpy and grouchy? One guy was asked, “Do you wake up grumpy in the morning?” He said, “No, I usually let her sleep.”

Love is giving a person what they need, not what they deserve. That's what God does. That's how God loves you. God doesn't give you what you deserve. If I got what I deserved from God, I wouldn't even be standing here, and you wouldn't even be alive either.

But God doesn't give us what we deserve; He gives us what we need. That's called grace. That's called love. Love is giving to another person without any guarantee of getting anything back. If you're doing it to get something back, that's not love. Love is committing to the well being of another person without any guarantees that they're going to give back to you. That's love. It's a command, and it's a choice. It is not a feeling.

3. The Bible says that love is a conduct.

It's a behavior. It's an action. It's a way of acting. Love is something you do.

1 John 3:18

“Let us stop just saying we love people. Let us really love them and show it by our actions.”

Love is not something you feel. Love is not something you say. Love is something you do. It's behavior. It's actions. It's an activity. It's more than just talk. It's more than just sentimental feeling. It's more than a nice pretty Hallmark card. It's not sentimentality. Love is something you do. A guy was telling his girlfriend all the time, “I would die for you.” She said, “You're always saying that, but you never do it.” Love is something you do.

MYTH: LOVE IS SOMETHING I SAY, NOT SOMETHING I DO

Did you know that every minute of the day God is putting around you – right in front of your nose – opportunities to grow in love? To demonstrate love. The problem is most of the time we're too busy. We're too distracted. We're thinking about achievements, not relationships. So we're looking around and focusing on everything else around us and then the opportunity to demonstrate love passes by and bam! It's over, gone. And it doesn't come back. How many times have you thought: I need to write a letter to that person. I need to make a call. I need to give a word of encouragement to that person at work. I need to go next door to my neighbor's and do such and such. And you have all these great intentions of loving and showing kindness and showing unselfishness, but you didn't do it. And the opportunity bypassed you. Now it's gone. Over. You're not going to get it back. And you have missed an opportunity to grow in love, missed an opportunity to do that which matters most. Love is a conduct.

4. The Bible says that love is a commitment.

1 John 4:16

“God is love. If we keep on loving others, we will stay one in our hearts with God and He will stay one with us.”

Our relationship with God is largely affected by our relationship with other people. If we stay in love, then we will keep in one with our hearts with God, and He'll stay in one with us. Because God is love. Circle the phrase “keep on loving.” Love keeps on. Love is durable. Love keeps on giving whether you like it or not. Love keeps on keeping on. Kind of like the energizer bunny. It keeps on giving, it keeps on loving, it keeps on going.

I want to warn you. If you decide to get onboard with this whole love thing, knowing “All You Need is Love”, and you think, “I really do want to go deeper in love. I don't want to be a shallow lover. I want to be a mature lover. And I want God to love people through me. I realize it's the most important thing in life. It's what I'm going to be evaluated on. It's what matters most. So I'm going to make a commitment to grow in love.” I need to warn you: that

commitment will be tested. God will test, “Are you serious about being loving?” Because mature love is always tested love. There is no mature love without it being tested first.

God will always love you, though all other human love fails at one time or another. It’s not strong enough. God’s love in your heart can help you through the inevitable test of your love.

MYTH: LOVE IS FLEETING AND TEMPORARY

Some would say, “I just can’t love him anymore, I don’t have any more love to give.” Yes you do; for it’s a commitment.

Conclusion:

1 Cor. 13:13

“In this life we have three lasting qualities: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

Why is love the greatest? Because it’s going to last forever. When you get to heaven, you’re not going to need faith, because you’re going to be in the presence of God. You won’t need faith in heaven. When you get to heaven, you’re not going to need hope. You’re not going to need hope because all your needs will be met. You won’t need hope or faith. But when you get to heaven, heaven is filled with love because God is love. The Bible doesn’t say God is faith. The Bible doesn’t say God is hope. The Bible says God is love. And love is going to go on for the rest of eternity. Nothing matters more than what we’re going to talk about the next few weeks.

Remember: All You Need is Love – God’s Love.

And when you do: You watch...you wait... you’ll see!