

What Is Love?

Presented on 02-11-18 at

Crossroads United Methodist Church, Waunakee, WI.

John 13:34-35

34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

1 Corinthians 13:4-8, 13

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Matthew 22: 36-40

36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” 37 Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

How many of you read or watch the news on a regular basis? If you have, you probably hear a lot of stories about fear, hate, division, retaliation, angst and lots and lots of hurting, troubled people in need. With everything going on in the world, it's easy to lose hope that our world will be OK. It can cause anxiety in the best of us and frankly it can seem that the real war going on right now is a war on love.

Love. You don't hear a lot about love in the news, but turn on the radio and you can't seem to help but hear a song about love – finding it, losing it, wanting it, and protecting it. We also use the word “love” a lot more than we may realize. We say things like “I love pickles!” or “I love my family” or even “God loves you”. But what is love really? Is it a feeling or emotion? A want or desire? Is our love of “stuff” like pickles the same as our love for God? Should it be? And what is “true love”? Today we're going to explore the Bible to see what the scriptures say love is, what it is not, and then together look at ways we can overcome the negativity in the world with the love of Jesus. Let's start with looking at what love is.



“an intense feeling of deep affection or admiration”

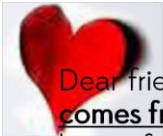
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If you look up the word “love” in a dictionary, you will find a definition similar (SLIDE 1) to “an intense feeling of deep affection or admiration”. But love means different things to different people. I want us all, children, you too, to take a moment and think about what comes to mind when you hear the word love. Think to yourself for a moment and then we will take time to share out loud.



What comes to mind when
you hear the word love?

What came to mind for you? Isn't the diversity of our thoughts and images for a single word amazing! All of our hearts long to love, whether we're totally conscious of it or not. The Bible tells us God is love, as noted in 1 John 4: 7-9, 16.



1 John 4: 7-9, 16

Dear friends, let us love one another, **for love comes from God**. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, **because God is love**. 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. **And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love**. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

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Since God is love, and God made us in His image, we then are made to love and be loved as well. God has given us the capacity to know, enjoy and share love. And because God himself is love, then He is not only our example for love, He is also our source of it.

God's love – true, unconditional love – is more than a dictionary definition, a sensation or feeling, a mission or even a doctrine.



True love is a genuine
desire for the well-
being of another.

True love is a genuine desire for the well-being of another. Knowing, receiving and sharing love that brings glory to God is one of the greatest purposes, for our own lives and the church. It's this love that propels us to reach out to connect and serve others, and to worship and serve God. From our scripture reading today, we heard Jesus tell us about the "Greatest Commandments". These Great Commandments are two statements which Jesus says sum up the rest of God's laws. These two things are simply:

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Greatest Commandment

To love the Lord, Our God,
with ALL of our heart, ALL of
our mind, ALL of our soul and
ALL of our strength.

- 1) To love the Lord, Our God, with ALL of our heart, all of our mind, all of our soul and all of our strength. And this ALL means that we are to Love God in all circumstances, with all we are and all that we have. And then secondly



Greatest Commandment

Love your neighbor,
as yourself.

- 2) To love our neighbor (which is all of humankind) as we love ourselves. Loving all, including our “enemies” is hard stuff. For some, loving ourselves is even harder. But we are commanded to love ourselves and others as God loves and forgives us.



Greatest Commandment

- 1) Love God
- 2) Love Neighbor

Although these two things – Love God, Love Neighbor - are simple to remember, they are so hard to do ALL the time to ALL people. However, it is clear from the scriptures we’ve read today, that love is not just important, it is THE MOST IMPORTANT thing in our lives and faith.

So, if love is so critical to how we live, what makes it so hard? What gets in our way? Why is our world so broken, and full of anger, hatred and oppression? What keeps us from loving ourselves, others and God fully? As we did earlier, I want everyone to take time to think about what keeps us from being able to fully love God and neighbors all the time. Think for a moment to yourself and then we’ll take time to share our thoughts.

What Is Love?



What keeps us from being able to fully love God and neighbors all the time?

Was this one a bit harder to think of? What did you discover?



The "love is ..." verses from 1 Corinthians read earlier in the service gave us examples of what love is. The Bible also provides examples of what God says love is not, and what gets in the way of true love. Some we listed together here, but listen as these scriptures are read and see if you discover something new.



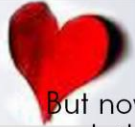
Colossians 3:5-10

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.

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Colossians 3:5-10

But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

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Titus 3:1-5

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone. At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures.

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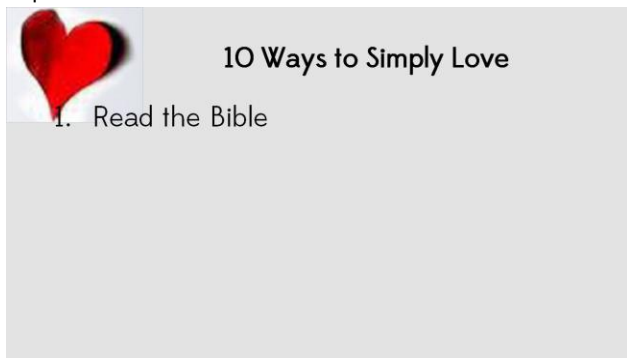
Titus 3:1-5

We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

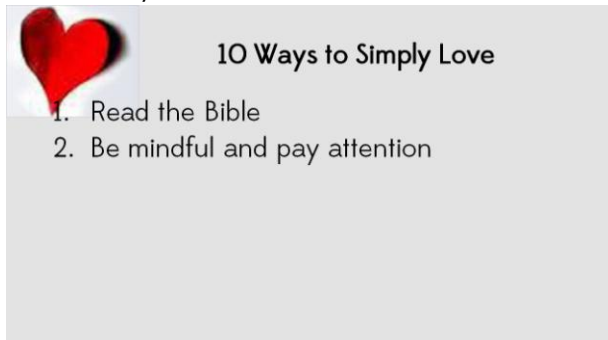
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Wow, those lists are hard to hear. I don't know about you, but I cringe every time I read these scriptures, because I fail every day at so much of it. The great news is, that although our sinful nature can get in the way of our ability to love fully, there are some simple things we can do today, this week and this year to know, experience, enjoy God's love more fully, and share His love with others in our lives and in our community. This list is found in in the message notes you received in your bulletin. It is just a list I thought of and wanted to share today. Instead of reading your notes while I go through this list, I would ask that you just listen and think of other ways you can experience and share love this week. Here is what I'm calling my list of "10 Ways to Simply Love".



- 1) Read the Bible. Find and reflect on verses about God's promises and love. You can use the concordance or dictionary in the back of most bibles to help you quickly find verses on "love". You can also use apps or online bibles such as biblestudytools.com and search on the word love. The notes in your bulletin have the verses we used today as well as others for you to use as well.



- 2) Be mindful and pay attention as you go through your day and look for signs – whether it be people, places or things – that remind you of God's love and the blessings he has given you.

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10 Ways to Simply Love

1. Read the Bible
2. Be mindful and pay attention
3. Take time to stop and pray

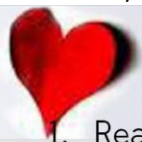
- 3) Take time to stop and pray. Thank and praise God for the sacrifice of his son, for his promise of eternal life, and all He has given you.
- 4) As I mentioned in my ministry moment, sometimes I use money to cover my guilt in not being able to physically do the things that people who don't have my limitations are able to do. I somehow think a "gift" will make others feel more loved. However, I'm finding that instead of spending money, what people want more than anything is my time.



10 Ways to Simply Love

1. Read the Bible.
2. Be mindful and pay attention.
3. Take time to stop and pray.
4. Invest in love by investing time in people and relationships.

Invest in love by investing time in people and relationships. Your present is your presence. Your time is a special gift. It doesn't have to be hard. For example, schedule an extra meal to sit down with your children, family or loved ones and connect. Discuss how their day or week is going, what has brought them joy and what has brought pain. Ask them where they have seen God at work in their lives?



10 Ways to Simply Love

1. Read the Bible.
2. Be mindful and pay attention.
3. Take time to stop and pray.
4. Invest in love by investing time in people and relationships.
5. Communicate with people face-to-face

- 5) Turn off the TV, put your phones and electronics away, and take the extra effort to communicate with people face to face. Yes, it may "be quicker" to text your spouse, boss or friend with what you want, need or why you are upset, but conversations, disagreements,

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and really getting to know people happens best in person. Show people you love and honor them by putting your electronics aside.



10 Ways to Simply Love

6. Show your neighbor God's love.

- 6) Show your neighbor or a community member God's love. Take time to talk, shovel their sidewalk, bring them a meal or cookies, or invite them over for a meal. Be creative and find ways to reach out.



10 Ways to Simply Love

6. Show your neighbor God's love.
7. Get to know someone you don't know well, especially someone you don't like.

- 7) Take time to get to know someone you don't know well at work, church or in the community. This is especially helpful with people you may not get along with or not like much. Getting to know who someone really is, what makes them tick, what keeps them up at night and what really brings them joy, will help you start to see them as God sees them. One of God's children, dealing with life's struggles just like you. It can open up a new perspective and maybe even help understand them and your conflict better.



10 Ways to Simply Love

6. Show your neighbor God's love.
7. Get to know someone you don't know well, especially someone you don't like.
8. Do Acts of Random Kindness (ARK)

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- 8) Do “Acts of Random Kindness” (ARK). Hold a door open, clear someone else’s dishes, compliment someone, buy coffee for a stranger or whatever you think of. The key is to do it, not for recognition, but to do it out of love for God and his children.



10 Ways to Simply Love

6. Show your neighbor God’s love.
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8. Do Acts of Random Kindness (ARK)
9. Shower love on underprivileged and marginalized people by volunteering.

- 9) Shower love on underprivileged or marginalized people by volunteering at places like foster care homes, food pantries, assisted/skilled care facilities, prisons or any place where you can directly connect and share your love and talents with people in need.



10 Ways to Simply Love

6. Show your neighbor God’s love.
7. Get to know someone you don’t know well, especially someone you don’t like.
8. Do Acts of Random Kindness (ARK)
9. Shower love on underprivileged and marginalized people by volunteering.
10. Get involved in works of justice.

- 10) Get involved in works of justice. What is “works of justice”? Here’s a way to remember. There is a saying that goes ... “Give a man a fish and you’ve feed him for a day!” This is an act of service or mercy; which is serving others to provide things they need. The rest of the saying goes ... “Teach a man to fish, and he can eat for a lifetime.” This is an example of justice, which is helping to solve the root cause of problems and social issues. You can get involved in organizations that help with advocacy, education, fundraising and more to further social justice causes, such as care of the earth, equality, and human rights.

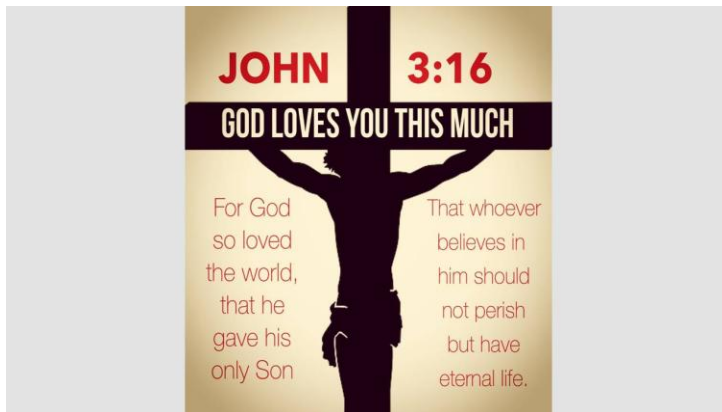
I know you’re busy, and carving out time for all that is “essential” is hard. However, we discovered today LOVE is THE most important thing, so doesn’t it deserve some of your time and attention?

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Wouldn't we personally have more energy and capacity to do more if we allowed ourselves to be filled to overflowing with God's never ending supply of love? In fact, if everyone in the world spent a bit more time loving others, wouldn't a lot of the world's "problems" solve themselves?

As we start the season of lent this week, it's important to remind ourselves that the gospel is the ultimate act of love. It is God's love story to us. The Gospel is the "good news" that Jesus, the only person who could pay for the penalty of our offenses against God, stepped up, stood in our place and died a brutal death on the cross for our sins.

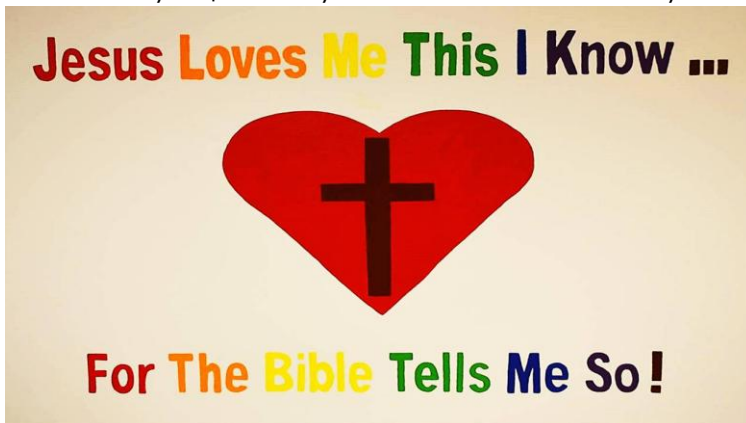


He took our blame, our wrongdoings and our evil thoughts upon Himself and in exchange He gave us His holiness, His character, His righteousness and His salvation so that we may have an eternity with Him in heaven, where we will forever bask in His love.

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Comprehending, accepting and believing in this true and unconditional love is essential and fundamental to our relationship with Christ and to our lives. So let me ask you ... do you know this love? Have you personally received God's love? Are you unsure if you have?



Do you know you have received the gift of God's forgiveness and you trust in Christ and his love, but want to know that love more fully? Then I ask, that now, for the close of our message today, that you all bow your heads and silently pray this prayer with me. This prayer is also in your message notes which you can take home. Let us pray.



Lord, I ask you to open my ears to hear your Word. Open my eyes to see you and your truth. Open my heart to respond to what you want to show me. I give my life to you and ask you to come into my heart. Help me to fully understand and receive your love. This Lenten season, help me grasp what you have done for me and the price you paid for me on the cross, so that I may more fully live in, enjoy and give others your love. Amen!
And Amen!