

CCC ITS ALL ABOUT LOVE Part 1

Welcome to 40 Days of Love kickoff!

I want to begin by asking you a question. How would you complete this sentence? My number one goal in life is...

Think about that for a minute. What I am asking you is what is most important to me is _____ ... how would you complete that sentence? What word, what phrase would you use?

Would you say my number one goal in life is to be happy? Or maybe, you would say, my number one goal in life is to be loved. Or my number one goal in life is to succeed at my career. How would you answer that question? My number one goal in life is... Why I ask that is because it's very, very important. If you haven't ever thought it through, you need to think it through and

consciously understand it because however you answer that question is what I call your dominant life principle.

Everybody's got a dominant life principle. It's the most important value in your life. You may have never thought it through but you use it all the time. Every time you make a decision, every time you have a choice to make, you access the database in your brain... and you decide what you're going to do based on your dominant life value, your dominant life principle, for instance if my dominant life principle is to have fun then I'm going to tend to choose the thing that's the most fun to do for me. Why, because that's what's most important to me; to have fun.

If my dominant life principle is comfort, then I'm going to tend to choose the easiest thing to do, what's the most convenient thing. "I'd rather just stay home and lie

on the couch and watch TV and sleep.” Are you getting the picture of dominant principles?

If my dominant life value or principle is safety, then I’m going to tend to make every decision in life based on what is the safest choice, security.

If my dominant life style is to be approved, to be affirmed, to be applauded, then I’m going to tend to choose things in life where I get the most affirmation

So in saying this to you, hopefully you will see that it’s extremely important that you think through what is going to be the most important value in your life.

Now I want to share with you what God has to say about this? He has a lot to say about your dominant life value or principle. Now the verse I am going to give you is for Born Again Christians, followers of Christ, those who have asked Jesus to come into their life and be their Lord

and Savoir, their manager of their life and now are trying to live that new life that comes through Jesus Christ. If you’re here and you haven’t made that commitment yet that’s okay just sit back relax and consider the claims of Christ. Here is what God’s word, the Bible in the book of 1 Corinthians 14:1 says, “*Let love be your greatest aim.*” Not status, not success, not possessions, not power or privilege or prestige, not comfort, not money, but, “*Let love be your greatest aim.*” It says you should make as your number one life style, love.

Why do you think God would say that? Why do you think God, would say, “Make love the highest aim of your life.” And the answer is because God is love and he wants you to be like him. The Bible tells us that God created everything in the universe out of love. He made everything in order to love it. He couldn’t make it any other way

Why, because, God is love. It doesn't say he has love. God is love. And God wants you and I to be like him. In fact you were put on this planet to learn how to love. Life is actually an exercise for Christians to learn how to love. In fact, one day Jesus was walking down the street and a guy came up to him and he said, Lord what is the most important command in the Bible. Basically the guys was saying, "Tell me what really matters most?" Jesus said, I can summarize the entire Bible and your purpose here on earth in two sentences. Its called the Great Commandment. Jesus said, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind and all your strength. And love your neighbor as yourself. There are no commands more important than these.*" Mark 12

That's pretty clear. Learn to love God with all your heart (which is your choice to do – You learn); and, learn to love

everybody else, (again is your choice to do – You learn). He said if you get those two things, you've got it. He is saying to us basically if you understand this then you understand what I put you on this planet to do

Life is all about learning to love. Everything else is excess. Everything else is secondary. Jesus said make love your highest aim. Jesus, says I want you first of all to learn to love me – God. Then I want you to learn to love everybody else and once you've done that you're ready to come to heaven.

One day you're going to stand before God and he's going to ask you, "Did you learn to love me? That's why I sent Jesus Christ so you could learn to love me. And did you learn to love other people, because that's what I put you on earth to do. I want you to understand something very clearly here... If you miss that, we'll sorry to say,

wrong answer, you've missed it all!" It's not about having some knowledge of Jesus Christ in your head, so you can get your get out of Hell free card. It's not about keeping some list of does and don'ts. It's not about doing some certain type of ceremonies... It's all about love, God will ask you, "Did you learn to love me." And He will have already know the answer.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 16:14 "*Everything you do must be done with love.*" Okay now let's be realistic here what does that really mean, "*everything.*" What does that include? And the answer is: everything.

Does this include ordering fast food at Wendy's when you can't understand the person at the other end of the speaker? Yeah. "Everything you do must be done with love."

- Does it include finding a parking spot when three other people want it? "Everything you do must be done with love."
- Does it include being nice to people who vote differently than you? "Everything you do must be done with love."
- Does it include responding to people who attack you for your faith? Yes. "Everything you do must be done with love."

If you don't get what I just said, you're missing the point of life. You know what I would like for us to do let's memorize a verse together as a church body as we start 40 Days of Love. Now when you're memorizing scripture it is good to always say the address first and last. Let me give you an example the address for the scripture I would like for us to memorize is:

1 Corinthians 16:14 *“Everything you do must be done with love.”* 1 Corinthians 16:14. When you see each other during the week say to each other the memory verse.

Today we’re going to begin the journey of how you do everything with love. As we begin the 40 Days of Love journey together, I thought it would be helpful to start with the definition of love. We throw this word around a lot. We’ll say things like, I love hot dogs. I love Krispy Kreme. I love Cheetos, I love my wife. I love America. I love God. Not in that order of course.

So what does it mean to love? The Bible has a lot to say about it. I’ve been studying it for a lot of years and I’m going to be sharing that with you in the material you have been given to take home with you each week. And during this series if you want... you can call me anytime to ask question about the material or just talk about the series.

Now I have a new phone number just for this series. You can me at (1-800 The Love Doctor!) What we’re going to look at in the weeks ahead and also each week will be going to give you a booklet to take with that can be used either by yourself or even maybe meet with a few friends and go over it and discuss the material with each other: What I am asking you to do is to get involved in this 40 Days of Love. Now there are:

Five things the Bible says about love.

1. We love because God loves us.

God is love. And all love comes from God. And we love because God loves us. 1 John 4:7-8 it says, *“Love comes from God... for God is love.”* It doesn’t say that God has love. It says God is love. The reason why God wants you to love is because He is love. It is his character, it is his essence. The Bible says in 1 John 4:19 *“We love*

because God first loved us.” Circle “*God first.*” God is always first in everything. He always takes the initiative. The reason you are here today is because God took the initiative to work things out that this is were you are this morning. God wants you to hear about His love, He wants you to consider having a relationship with Him thru Jesus Christ. The only reason you can love God or love anybody else for that matter, is because God first loved you. And he showed that love by sending Jesus Christ to earth to die for you. We love because God first loved us.

I’ve heard many people say: “My problem is I just don’t love God enough.” And I say to them, “No, that’s not it. Your problem is not that you don’t love God enough. Your problem is you don’t realize how much God loves you. Because if you realized how much God loves you – if you realized how extravagant, how irresistible and how

unconditional His love for you– you couldn’t help but loving him back. You could not, not love God... It would automatic, you would automatically be attracted to him, be drawn to Him. The reason you don’t love God, the reason you don’t really care about God, the reason you don’t serve God, the reason you really don’t draw to God... is you don’t understand... you don’t really feel how much he loves you.”

You have to start, if we’re going to talk about learning to love other people and becoming great lovers of other people, you’ve got to first understand and feel how much God loves you and that’s what I want to happen in your life during these forty days of love. I don’t want you to just come in hear and we talk about love, we read about love, we discuss about love. I want you to experience the love of God. I want us to become His love. And the day you

finally, fully understand how God loves you completely, How He loves you unconditionally, how you can't make Him stop loving you. When you start feeling that unconditional love that God has for you... it is then and only then that you're going to start cutting people a lot of slack. You're **not** going to be as angry as you've been in the past. You're going to be more patient. You're going to be more forgiving. You're going to be more merciful. You're going to let other people have grace. But it will not come until you feel His unconditional love for you.

The reason why you see people who are judgmental, who are sarcastic, who are mean spirited; the reason why you see people who are angry, self righteous, always putting other people down is because they're putting themselves down. They don't feel good about themselves. They don't feel loved. They don't feel forgiven. They don't feel

grace. They feel guilty. They feel bad about themselves. And at Calvary there is one thing we do understand, hurt people , hurt people... if I feel bad about myself I certainly don't want you or anyone else feeling good about themselves.

So during the Forty Days of Love we're going to have to do some healing in your heart because you have been hurt in life. You've been hurt by parents or you've been hurt by peers in school or you've been hurt by professionals or you've been hurt by partners. Maybe some of you have been abused or you've been misused or you've been rejected or you've been abandoned or you've been betrayed. You've got some scabs on your heart. During these 40 Days of love we're going to have to do some gentle surgery on your heart because you can't love others until you feel loved.

Listen carefully, You cannot give to others what you have not received yourself. You cannot give to others what you don't possess. Unlovely people are unloved people. Hurt people hurt people. During this political campaign you could see it on both sides. All I saw on both sides were a lot of hurting and angry people. That's what you saw played out and those people were that way because they themselves are angry inside. Talk radio, Christian radio they were all the same angry and hurting people try to get others to become that way... because they inside are angry and hurting. Listen when you would rather sit down and talk about politics then talk about God's love you got something really mixed up. Because we are all like a tube of toothpaste. When you squeeze a tube of toothpaste what's going to come out? Whatever's inside it.

If you're filled with anger and you're filled with impatience and you don't feel loved, guess what? You're not going to be able to love anybody else. You have to learn how much God loves you and experience that and let it heal your heart so his love can flow through you. It is impossible to love others until you really feel loved yourself.

So during Forty Days of Love, we're going to work on this. We're going to experience it. I want you to feel the love, the transforming love that comes from God. God's word, the bible says, "*We know and we rely on the love that God has for us.*" 1 John 4:16. Let me ask you... Do you know the love of God? Do you rely on the love of God for your life? If you don't, you'll have a hard time loving other people. It's easy to love people who love you. That's not a problem. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about

loving the unlovely. Loving the difficult. Loving the irritable. Loving the people who are different, who are demanding. Loving people all around you who you don't feel like loving. You can't do that until you have God's love coming through you. Love happens because we are loved by God.

2. The second thing that the Bible teaches us is that love is a choice and a commitment.

Love is a choice and it is a commitment. You choose to love or you choose not to love. It is a choice. Today we've bought into this myth that love is some uncontrollable thing, something that you really can't control it. That it's just kind of happens to you. No that's a fairytale, a myth. That's not true. Love is a choice and love is a commitment. In fact, even the language that we use today makes sounds like love is uncontrollable. We say, "I fell in love." Like it

was a ditch. You will here people say, I was just walking along one day and bamm! I fell in love. I couldn't help myself. I'm sorry. I fell in love. But, that's not love. Attraction, Arousal, maybe they are uncontrollable... But attraction and arousal are not love. They can lead to love but they are not love. Why? Because Love is a choice.

A few weeks ago I did a wedding, the bride and the groom stood right here on this stage and they made choices and they made commitments to love each other. In their vows they said to each other, "I choose you above everybody else in the world. I choose you for the rest of my life." That's a choice and that's a commitment. Love is a choice.

Think about this for a minute. Can you force somebody to fall in love with you, No! Can you force them

to stay in love with you, No! Why? Because you chose to love and you chose to have commitment... It is a choice. Deuteronomy 30, "*Choose to love the Lord your God and commit yourself to him.*" That same principle is true about your relationship with God. You must choose to love God. And commit yourself to Him. God isn't going to force you to love him. You can live your life and whenever this Christian things doesn't fit your life thumb your nose up at God and go a totally different way. You can destroy your life, if you want to. God won't force you to love Him. God won't force you to commit your life to Him Why? Because love can't be forced. Love is a choice.

But as it says, "*choose.*" I can only give you my personal testimony here. I have chosen to love God and I have chosen to commit myself to him. It's the same thing with everything else. I choose to love you and I choose to

appreciate you and I choose to pray for you and I choose to commit myself to you. Love is my choice and is my commitment.

That's why, when people say, "I just don't love her any more," they say it to me like as if you don't have any choice. You just need to man-up. You just be a man and own up to it because really you're choosing not to love her any more. Given the right circumstance any two people could "fall in love". But it was their choice because love is a choice. And you can choose to love anybody you desire to. You can also choose not to love anybody. So when you say, "I don't love him/her anymore," that's your choice but don't blame it on circumstances. You are choosing not to love. It's a choice.

3. Love is an action not just emotion.

As I said love is more than attraction, it's more than arousal. It's more than sentimentality. Today love songs that say, "I've got a quiver in my liver for you darling. It's like an ocean of emotion." If that is your definition of love... because then I guess when the emotion is gone does that mean the love is dead? No, not at all. Because love is an action. It's something you do. Love is a behavior.

Love can cause emotion. Yes it can. In fact it causes the strongest emotions in human beings. It can create emotion. It can cause emotion. It can produce emotion. But love is not an emotion... Why? Why do I say that?

In the Bible, over and over, we are commanded by God, "*to love each other.*" And you cannot command an emotion. If I told you right now "Be sad!" You can't just be sad on my cue. You can maybe fake it. You just can't command an emotion. Emotions are often uncontrollable.

If love were just an emotion then God couldn't command it for us. But love is something you do. Yes, it produces emotion but love is an action.

In fact, the Bible says this in 1 John 3:18 "*Let us love not with words or tongue* [in other words, just talk about it] *but with action and in truth.*" See we can all talk a good act. "I love all people." But do you really love them? Let's see how you act toward them.

During the 40 Days of Love, that means we're going to have some practical assignments for you to do. You don't learn to love by listening to a sermon. You don't learn to love simply by reading a book. And you don't learn to love by going to a small group and discussing and watching some videos. Those are all helpful things. But you actually learn to love by practicing it. By doing it, so we're going to have some assignments for you to do each

week to help you practice learning how to love. That brings me to the fourth thing the Bible teaches about love.

4. The Bible says that love is a skill.

It being a skill means you can get good at, you can become better and better at doing. You can become a great lover.

You may think you're a good lover but I'm talking about becoming a great lover, a skilled lover, a master lover. I'm talking about learning to love like most people have never learned how to love. Love is a skill that can be learned.

Did you know that? Did you know that love could be learned? You can get good at it and you can get better at it.

You can become an expert at relationships. God wants you to become a skilled lover. We want Calvary church to be known as the most loving church around. We don't want Calvary Church to be known as "That's the big church," or "That's the church that has the good music," or that's that

church that has that great looking pastor. We want people to say, "That's the church where they love. They don't care who you are or what you look like or where you've been or what you've done or where you're from, they love you there. And not only do they love you there, they teach you how to love."

So what we're going to do for the next forty days is have some lessons on loving.

The Bible says this in 1 John 4:7 "*Dear friends, let us practice loving each other...*" Circle the word "practice."

The only way you get skilled at something is you practice it. You do it over and over. The first time you do it, it may feel awkward. But, the more you do it you get better and better at it. The same is true with love. Let us practice loving each other. We're going to practice during these forty days. "... for love comes from God. Those who are

loving and kind show that they are the children of God and they're getting to know him better." He said it's proof that you're really a believer, that you're in the family of God, that you're saved. How... The proof is that you love other people. He says, let us practice this skill.

We're going to practice that. In fact in 1 Timothy 4:15

"Practice these things and devote yourself to them in order that your progress may be seen by all." In your booklet

there's a place for you to measure your progress between

today and the end of the Forty Days of Love journey. I

want you to be able to see your progress in love. If you

will do the things that we ask you to do during these forty

days and not just attend and listen... but you'll do all the

different assignments, I guarantee you will become a better

lover. You will become a more loving man. You will

become a more loving woman. Your character will be

transformed and you will see your progress. But it says in order to see that progress you've got to practice and you've got to be devoted. You've got to make the commitment to do it and then you have to practice it.

The fifth thing that the Bible teaches about love is...

5. Love is a habit.

You can't claim to be a loving person but unless you are habitually loving, your not. What I am saying is basically your character is the sum of your habits. If you only love off and on like a light switch, you are not a loving person.

You may think you are a loving person but love happens when you love the unlovely. Luke 6:32 *"If you only love those who love you what credit is that to you?"* In other

words, big deal! Big whooppee! Anybody can love the lovable. The point is you think, "I'm a loving person

because I love those who love me. You say, I love my

family.” That’s not being a loving person. Being a loving person is when you love the unlovely, when you love people who don’t love you, when you love people who irritate you, when you love people who back bite you and gossip about you. Anybody can love people who love them. That’s takes no character at all. God says love must become a habit. I can’t claim to be loving unless I’m habitually loving. Let me give you an example of what I mean, If I say to Edna-Wynne. “Honey I will be faithful to you six days a week.” Am I faithful or am I actually unfaithful. That partial faithfulness is actually what... unfaithfulness.

I don’t want this next six weeks to just be six lessons on love. I don’t know about you but I want to be more loving. I want to be more like Christ and there are a lot of areas that I need to work on in my life. One day I’m going to

stand before God and he’s going to say, “Did you do the two things that were most important of all in your life. Did you learn to love me with all your heart? And did you learn to love other people, not just your family?” I want to be ready for that day.

Let me ask you a question: How badly do you want to have better relationships? How badly do you want to become a great lover? How badly, how serious are you about learning how to become a loving man, or a loving woman? If you’re thinking, “Yeah I can do this in my spare time!” Wrong answer! You will never obtain it... If you’re thinking, “I’d like to do it if it doesn’t crimp my style, again...Wrong Answer” This has to become your dominant life value. Philippians 1:9 *“This is my prayer for you, that your love will grow more and more and that you will have*

knowledge and understanding with your love,” not an immature love, an insightful love.

That is my prayer for you and for every church that’s going to be doing Forty Days of Love. It is my prayer, that together we will be known as people that love. I want to grow in love and I want you to grow in love. I want our churches to grow in love. What America and the world needs is not more theology, not more democrat or republicans or more programs. What the world needs are people who genuinely love. It’s all about love.

Prayer:

As I close I want to invite you to follow me in this prayer in your heart. You don’t have to say it aloud: Dear Jesus, I want to be more loving. I want to work on my relationships. I want to learn to love you with all of my

heart. And I want to learn to love everybody else. I want to be known as the most loving person people know. So I’m going to make it my primary value in life, my number one goal to learn to love you and to learn to love other people because it’s all about love. Lord, I’ve got a lot of hurts in my heart that need to be healed. I need to be filled with your love. I can’t give to others what I don’t feel. I need to feel forgiven. I need to experience your grace. I need to know your love so it can overflow out of my life into others. Replace my fears with your love. Replace my hurts with your peace. I want to learn to know you and love you, Jesus Christ, and I want to be a loving person. In your name I pray. Amen