

## CCC THE SECRETS OF LASTING LOVE Part 7

### 40 Days of Love –

Good morning! Good to see you!

Whenever you're going through massive change there is one thing you can always count on that never changes.

Whenever you're going through things of life that you don't know really what the outcome is going to be... there is one thing that never changes. And that is the unchanging love of God. It never changes. It is constant. It is steadfast. It is unchanging. It is unwavering. It is enduring. God's word, the Bible says this *"I will show you my love forever."* In other words it's eternal, it does not change. *"I will show you my love forever," so says the Lord who saves you.* " Isaiah 54:8

The foundation for a stable life, no matter what you go through in life today, is the unchanging love of God. That is what will bring stability in your life, in your children lives, in everyone life. I know that a lot of things will change in my life. But one thing I know will never change and that is God will never stop loving me.

Here's the catch. God commands you to give that same kind of unchanging love to everybody else. Jesus said *"I command you to love each other in the same way that I love you"* John 15:12. That means my love needs to be reliable, unchanging, consistent, steadfast, unwavering, eternal, enduring love.

How do you do that? One of the famous Philosophers said, "It's not real love unless it's eternal." But, is that possible? Is it possible to even have a love that lasts an entire life, let alone eternity?

I believe the world needs to hear today's message. Here are some statistics for you about divorce. The divorce rate in America is now forty-one percent of all first marriages.

The divorce rate for second time marriages is sixty percent.

And the divorce rate for third marriages is seventy-three percent. The odds get less likely, the more you try.

So in stating those divorce statistics, how is it that you can have a love that lasts a lifetime? Loving other people in the same way that God loves you – consistently, unconditionally, eternally? How is that...

And that's what we're going to look at today. Today we're going to look at the things you must *never* do if you're going to build a love that lasts a lifetime.

God's word, the bible says, "*Love never stops being patient, never stops believing, never stops hoping, never gives up.*" These are the habits of a lifetime of loving.

If you're going to learn to love other people the way that God loves you, if you're going to learn how to have a lasting love that makes it all the way through life, you have to develop the four habits that are talked about in this verse we just read. "*Love never stops being patient, never stops believing, never stops hoping, never gives up.*"

1. The first thing that you have to learn to do is you have to learn that **lasting love extends grace**.

No relationship will make it without grace. Basically what I am saying is you've got to cut people some slack, you got to have grace. You've got to let things pass. You have to put up with a lot! You have to extend grace.

The Bible says this "*Love never stops being patient.*" 1 Corinthians 13:7 The Message paraphrase of that verse says "*Love puts up with anything.*" The New Century Translation says "*Love patiently accepts all things.*" And

the New Jerusalem Bible translation says *Love is always ready to make allowances.*” You have to allow for mistakes. You have to be willing to make allowances. You have to extend grace. Why is grace essential to relationships, because you married an imperfect person, you married a sinner,. And my wife, Edna-Wynne married a bigger one. You’re imperfect, your spouse is imperfect. If you’re in a relationship, you’re imperfect and your friend is imperfect. Two imperfect people will never create a perfect relationship. It isn’t going to happen. There’s no such thing as a perfect marriage, so stop trying to find one. Two imperfect people cannot create a perfect relationship. It isn’t going to happen on this planet. The Bible says this in Romans 3:10 *“There is no one who always does what is right, not even one.”* None of us get it right a hundred percent of the time. The next verse in

Romans says *“If we say we have no sin, we’re only fooling ourselves and refusing to accept the truth.”* In other words if you think the relational problems in your life are all the other person’s fault, you’re out of touch with reality. The truth is we all make mistakes. It takes two to disagree. It’s never just one person’s fault. There’s always a part on both sides.

Why, do you think the Bible says we have to extend grace to each other, because forgiveness is a two way street. You don’t want to burn the bridge that you need yourself to walk over to get into heaven. God word says, forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us Jesus said, we cannot receive what we’re unwilling to give to other people.

The Bible says this *“Be humble and gentle with each other. Be patient with each other, making allowances for*

*each other's faults because of your love.*" Eph 4:2. Circle "*making allowance.*" It says if you're going to have a love that lasts you've got to learn to make allowances for the mistakes and the faults and everything else, the flubs, in other people's lives.

Edna-Wynne knows that there are two times every week she needs to make allowance for me. Edna-Wynne is a strong and wise woman. She understands when I'm the grumpiest. I am not saying this is right and some would try and pigeon hole this and say she is enabling me maybe but the truth really is she is just a godly woman and she makes allowance. She graciously loves me and shows grace and gives me a wide berth two times a week.

One of them is Sunday evening/ Monday. Sunday after doing two services and talking to people all day, I'm always emotionally drained. She is very gentle and very

kind to me. She makes allowances. If I say something cranky she just writes it off – "It's Sunday evening/ Monday morning. Bill is tired."

The other time that she writes off is Saturday evening right before I start the services because every Saturday evening I get PMS – Pre Message Syndrome.

Actually, you know what PMS stands for? Punish My Spouse! Do you know why it takes three women with PMS to change a light bulb? *It just does!!* Do you the difference between a terrorist and a woman with PMS? You can negotiate with a terrorist.

Who do you need to show grace to this week? Me, your pastor for the bad jokes I just told you! But the truth is we just have to cut each other a little slack. That's the starting point. Show grace because love never stops being patient.

2. Here's the second key. **Lasting love** doesn't just extend grace, it **expresses faith**.

This is the kind of love if you want a marriage that lasts a lifetime or a friendship that lasts a lifetime, lasting love expresses faith. Faith and love are intertwined because love is built on trust. I'm talking about confidence in others. I'm talking about trusting people. Believing in people. That's what love is. I believe in you. I trust you. I have confidence in you.

Faith is not fearful and love is not fearful. It's not anxious. The Bible says "*There is no fear in love.*" If you are afraid of someone, you don't love them. If they are afraid of you, they don't love you. The Bible says there is no fear in love. Love and fear are opposites. The Bible says that faith and love go together because love is built on trust.

When you trust somebody then you love them. You cannot love someone you don't trust. You can't. So if you're going to love somebody you have to not only extend them grace; you have to express faith. I believe in you. I trust you. I think you can do it. Because the Bible says this, "*Love never stops believing.*" 1 Cor. 13: 7 The NIV translation says "*Love always trusts.*" Always trusts. The New Living Translation says, "*Love never loses faith.*" There are three kinds of people in the world.

- There are the gullible people who believe anything.
- There are the cynics who believe nothing. ..
- Then there are the healthy people. The healthy people are those who love. The Bible says "*Love always trusts...Love never stops believing... Love never loses faith.*" They give people the benefit of the doubt.

This question was studied in numerous studies. *Psychology Today* magazine reported about an article in “Trust and its Consequences.” Dr. Julian Rotter of the University of Connecticut spent years studying the consequences of trust in human behavior, personality development and relationships. He developed a scale to determine the level of trust in a person’s life. Then he compared how trusting a person was with ten different common behaviors for healthy living. Let me give you a little True or False trust test.

Trusting persons tend to be more gullible.

Trusting people tend to have a lower IQ.

Trusting people live happier lives.

Number one and two are false. Number three is true.

Study after study after study has shown that trusting people are consistently less gullible. People don’t pull the wool

over their eyes. They have a higher IQ. The more trusting you are, the higher IQ. Study after study has shown this and they live much happier lives than cynical, questioning, suspicious people. The fact is it is always better to trust too much than too little. The Bible says and studies have shown that you are better adjusted psychologically by learning to trust.

One of the key evidences of trust – and trust and love go together, as I said, you can’t love somebody you don’t trust. One of the key evidences of trust is your willingness to give other people a second chance when they blow it.

When somebody turns you the wrong way or says something about you and you write them down in your little book of their no longer in my group! When you say, I’m never going to that Bible study again, I’m never going back to that small group, I’m never going to serve in

ministry with that person, I have got to watch out for that pastor. God can help you here.

God specializes in miracles and he can transform anything. What do you need a relationship miracle for? Do you need a miracle in your marriage right now? Do you need a miracle in a friendship? Do you need a miracle in a relationship with a child? Let me just suggest this: God's going to start on you first. Look for the changes in you before you expect the changes in somebody else. The miracle is going to happen first in you.

To be trusted is the greatest gift you can give somebody. It is the gift of trust. It is the gift of love. Women, those of you who are married, your husband is dying for you to say to them, I trust you. They are craving it. Your husband is craving it. It is more important than saying, I love you to a man. Because when you say "I trust

you," you are saying "I love you." Because love always trusts.

Who do you need to express trust in this week? To a child? "I know you can do it! To your wife. "I know you can do it!" Believing in somebody is what real love is all about. Lasting love extends grace when we blow it. Lasting love expresses faith and says, I trust you.

The Bible says this in Galatians 5:6 "*The only thing that counts* [you want to know what counts in life? Here it is:] *is faith expressing itself through love.*" Why? Because life is a school of learning how to trust and how to love. It extends grace, it expresses faith.

There's a third key in this verse.

### 3. **Lasting love expects the best.**

It's forward looking. It's optimistic. It's not stuck in the past. It's not always looking backward. Lasting love is

hopeful. It is forward looking. It is positive. It is expecting the best. The Bible says this “*Love* [true love] *never stops hoping.*” The Living Bible translation “*Love always expects the best.*” Message paraphrase “*Love always looks for the best.*” It was Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the poet, who said, “Whoever loves believes in miracles.” Believes in the impossible.

I don’t know if you know this or not but people tend to live up to your expectations of them. We tend to shape the people around us by what we expect of them. Whatever you tend to expect a lot or a little, people tend to live up to the expectations of other people. You set people up all the time. You set your husband up by what you expect of him and what you don’t expect of him. You set your wife up by what you expect and what you don’t expect. You set your children up by what you expect of them and what you

don’t expect of them. Let me ask you a question... who are you setting up? You can set people up with your nagging, which takes them down. “You say things like, “You always do *this.*” When you say that all you’re doing is guaranteeing the perpetuation of the past. You need to remove that from your vocabulary: “You *always* do this!” What are you doing when you do this... ? You’re labeling, you’re setting them up for failure. Don’t tell it like it is. Tell it like it could be. That’s love. Love always expects the best. Love does not nag. Love says “I see what you could become. I see what you’re becoming. I believe in you can do it. I expect the best.”

So who are you programming with your expectations? You don’t change bad people into good people by telling them they’re bad. Which is, by the way, why I never preach that kind of message here. It doesn’t work. What I

talk about is how God sees us and what we could become if we would choose to live our life for Him

Whatever you want the people in your life to become, treat them the way you want them to become, not the way they are.

Do you know what kills love? You want to know what kills marriage is not hate. What kills marriage is not discord, its not difficulties or conflict. What kills marriages is neglect. You stop doing the loving things that you did to woo the person and now that you've won them you stop doing it. You don't treat them that nicely any more. What kills marriages is neglect.

I thought a lot about this message for the last twenty-nine days... I have talked and cried with people about things that have happened in their life

If I knew it was the last time I'd see you fall asleep  
I'd tuck you in more tightly and pray your soul to keep.

If I knew it was the last time I'd see you out the door,  
I'd hug and kiss you one more time and call you back for more.

If I knew it was the last time I'd get to share your day.  
I know that I'd make certain it didn't slip away.

We assume we'll have tomorrow to correct an oversight.  
That we'll always have another chance to make everything all right. That there will always be another day to say that I love you. There will always be another chance to ask, "What can I do?"

But just in case I might be wrong and today is all I get  
I want to say that I love you so that you will not forget.  
Tomorrow is not promised that we'll see another night.  
Today could be my last chance to love and hold you tight.

Instead of waiting for tomorrow, show your love somehow. For if tomorrow never comes you'll wish you'd done it now. That you didn't take the extra time for a smile, a hug, or a kiss. Instead you were busy, too busy for the one that you now miss. Hold your loved one close today and whisper in their ear. Tell them that you love them and why you hold them dear. Say "I'm sorry, please forgive me, you're the best, it's ok." So if tomorrow never comes you'll not regret today.

You know the old song, "What the World Needs Now is Love, Sweet Love," God's love is the only force that can ever get us out of the mess we're in today. I'll tell you, friends, I'm not putting my trust in any politician as the savior of the world.

Who do you need to expect the best from? Who in your life have you been not expecting the best from? Love expects the best. Love never stops hoping. It extends grace. It expresses faith. It expects the best.

#### 4. **Last Love endures the worst.**

Love endures the worst. Lasting love is persistent. It is determined. It is diligent. It is resolute. It is almost stubborn in its insistence that it will not give up. It will not give up on the relationship. The Bible says this "*Love never gives up. Love endures through every circumstance.*" NIV "*Love always perseveres.*" The Message translation, "*Love never looks back but keeps going to the end.*"

One of the great secrets of a lasting love, a love that lasts a lifetime, is simply this: Stay put. Don't give up. Hang on. Don't let go. Refuse to give in.

I think God brought some of you here today just to hear that.

When God wants to make a mushroom, he takes six hours.

When God wants to make an oak tree, he takes sixty years.

Do you want your marriage to be a mushroom or an oak tree? Do you want your life to be a mushroom or an oak tree? There are things you will learn hanging on that you will never learn any other way.

God brought you here today to say, today's your day. This is the day you're stepping across the line. This is the day you're going to say I'm going to become a great lover and I'm going to start by getting God's love in my life. I'm going to open my life to Jesus Christ and let him fill me with his love in ways that I can't love.

**Prayer:**

Would you pray this prayer in your heart? Dear God I need to feel your love. Today I'm opening myself up in a way like never before. Put your love in every room in my heart. Fill my mind, my life, my body, my hands, my feet with your love. Jesus Christ, thank you for loving me. Thank you for creating me. Thank you for dying for me. Thank you for forgiving me. Thank you for giving the promise of your Spirit to be put inside me. I don't understand it all but I want to be filled with your love and I

want to learn to love you and I want to learn to love the people in my life. Forgive me for my immature love. I want to become a mature lover. I ask you to do in me and in my relationships what I could never do on my own. I want to learn to offer grace. I want to learn to express faith and trust. I want to learn to expect the best. I want to learn to endure the worst even in sickness and in health. I pray this prayer, humbly, in Jesus' name. Amen.