

Do you remember when Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was?

Matthew 22: 37–39 NKJV

Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Here Jesus emphasized in a big way the importance of relationships

This is what life is about—loving God, loving yourself, and loving others

- It is never wrong to love
- It is never out of order to love
- You do not compromise when you love
- You never lower your standards when you love

The unfortunate truth about love is that the people we love the most are the ones that can hurt us the most

- Someone is going to break your heart
- Someone is going to abandon you or leave you
- Someone is going to say something hurtful to you
- Someone is going to disappoint you
- Someone is going to let you down
- Someone is going to stab you in the back
- Someone is going to reject you

Jesus said in **Matthew 18:7**, “Offenses must come.”

- Getting hurt is part of life

Right now, you may see the face of a person that caused you great pain

- The parent who left home when you were five years old, or abused you physically, maybe sexually
- The spouse who cheated on you
- The sibling who refuses to talk to you
- The child who has chosen to rebel
- The friend who betrayed a secret

Whatever our situation, when we have loved hard and were wounded by someone

- That someone has cut off our love supply
- You are not living fully
- The way God intended

You don't know how and doubt if it is even possible to love the way God says to love

Its easy to love others when we have no conflict with them or share the same viewpoints or theology

- Its easy to love in the “Honeymoon” stage
- Or when children act right all the time
- The truth is, no one lives in that kind of state all the time

God intends for us to love the way He does

Gods Love Never Fails!

1 Corinthians 13:4–8 (NKJV)

⁴ Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never fails.

- When we read this, it may seem impossible to love this way
- We think of all the times we have been hurt or let down
- We replay bad memories over and over again
- We talk about the repeatedly to anyone that will listen
- We poke and prod at our gaping wounds which only fester deeper and deeper

James Garfield had the twentieth president of the United States
Shot in the back on July 2, 1881, by a would-be assassin.

- He lived just under three months more
- You would think it was the shot that killed him
- It wasn't
- You see, the bullet did not penetrate any vital organs
- It got stuck behind his pancreas, but it was not a fatal injury
- But back then, doctors weren't concerned about germs
- They did not even believe they existed because they couldn't see them

So, minutes after President Garfield was shot, doctors pressed in around him to stick their fingers and push unsterilized instruments into his wound

- They poked and prodded as far as they could in his body, hoping to find the bullet and remove it
- They continued to do this for eighty days while President Garfield languished in the hospital
- As we today would expect, this regular unsterilized digging worsened the president's condition
- He developed infections and eventually died

This is what we do when we don't choose to love after we've been hurt and replay bad memories over and over

- Unforgiveness festers
- We eventually become bitter
- Hardened
- Often, we withhold our love from those who desperately need it the most
 - Love eventually dies

In **Matthew 22:37-39**

Jesus emphasized in a big way, how important relationships were

- This is what life's about

God is not put off by struggles

- Whether loss, betrayal, an addiction, an infidelity

Without a doubt these things affect the dynamics of a relationship

Let God heal your wounded heart

Psalm 147:3 (NKJV)

³ He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

- Do you want to be right or reconciled?
- Do you want to be hurt or healed?
- Do you want to remain the victim, or become whole?

The only way to become reconciled, healed and whole is through the love of God

Philippians 3:13–14 (NKJV)

¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Life is all about forgetting the past and pressing ahead into the future

If you never release the past you will never reach for the future effectively

- You will never get ahead trying to get even

The love of God will allow you to override all your natural instincts for bitterness and revenge

Love Wins – All the Time

There are only two subjects in the Bible that have a full chapter ascribed to it

- Faith – **Hebrews 11**
- Love – **1 Corinthians 13**

Love is kind, permanent, thinks no evil, enduring and doesn't give up

- You can not walk in love until you walk in forgiveness

If we focus on the blood and forgiveness of Jesus Christ we can love the same way God does

After Jesus rose from the dead He asked Simon Peter a question

John 21:15–17 (NKJV)

¹⁵ So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” ¹⁶ He said to him again a second time, “Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.” ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.

Jesus asked the questions three times

The original language has more than one word for love

- Eros – Sexual
- Phileo – I feel something for you
- Agape – God’s kind of love (divine) – 1 Corinthians 13

Jesus asked, “Peter do you *agape* me?” Peter answered, “You know I *phileo* You.”

- Jesus asked again
- Peter was grieved and answered with the same word
- Finally, Jesus asked Peter, “Do you *phileo* me?”

Peter had no concept of God’s kind of love because he had not been empowered by the Holy Spirit yet

- God is calling us to a new level of love
- Love is the answer to the broken home
- Love is the answer to the addict
- Love is the answer to the fractured relationship
- Love is the answer to being offended
- Love is the answer to heartbreak

Love is the weapon that can shatter division and rebuild what is broken

- Chose love over hurt
- Choose to love others – always
- Choose to press forward
- Choose to heal your wounds

Genesis 37:4 (NLT)

⁴ But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn't say a kind word to him.

- The second youngest of twelve brothers, born to Jacob
- He was his father's favorite
- Jealousy got the best of his brothers
- Joseph shared a dream that his family bowed down to him
- This made things worse
- The brothers decided to kill him
- Changed their minds and just sold him
- Lied to their father and said a wild beast got him

Think about it:

Joseph was sold by his very own family like a good-for-nothing piece of trash

Carried far from home Joseph was sold to an Egyptian in Pharaoh's palace

- Falsely accused of rape and thrown into prison
- He correctly interpreted some dreams and was eventually called on to interpret one for Pharaoh
- It wasn't a good one
- Seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine

Genesis 41:33–36 (NKJV)

³³ “Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. ³⁴ Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth *of the produce* of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years. ³⁵ And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. ³⁶ Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine.”

- Joseph was appointed to second in command of all of Egypt
- During the famine his brothers came for food
- They didn't recognize Joseph
- Joseph was a powerful man
- He could have made them pay for what they had done
- Thirteen years a slave
- Punished for a crime he didn't commit
- Joseph had a choice

You can either do unto others as they have done unto you, or do unto others as you would have them do unto you

– **Matthew 7:12**

Through a series of twists Joseph eventually reveals his identity to his brothers

- He chooses to forgive them

Genesis 50:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive.

- Not only did Joseph heal himself internally
- He also brought healing and salvation to his whole family

David Had a Father Who Didn't Believe in Him

Samuel goes to Jesse's house and tells him to bring out his sons, because the Lord has called one of them to be the next king of Israel

- He brings out all seven sons, yet Samuel says none of them have been chosen by the Lord
- He didn't even consider David in the lineup
- It was as if Jesse was saying, *"He's a loser, he will never be chosen."* *"You're not even one of my sons."*

When David rose to power he never tried to get even with his father or brothers

- One of his wives was ashamed of him
- His own son tried to steal his kingdom
- He never repaid evil for evil

David was known as a man after God's own heart

— 1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22

Jesus was betrayed by one of His closest friends

- Abandoned by the others
- Beaten by roman soldiers
- Crowned with a crown of thorns
- Nailed to a cross
- Endured excruciating pain
- Stabbed in His side

Luke 23:34 (NKJV)

³⁴ Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”

- Jesus loved like he’d never been hurt
- He loves like we’ve never hurt Him
- He loves like we’ve never failed
- He loves like we’ve never lied to Him
- He loves us like we’ve never done what we said we would never do again

Christs love was not cautious, it was and is extravagant

- In imitating Him we can love the same way

John 13:34 (NKJV)

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

Somewhere in our city there is a young man or woman that just told their Christian family that they were gay

Somewhere a person who's been hurt by religion and now says they are an atheist

A teenager who just got into trouble with the law or admitted to their loved ones they are addicted to drugs

Are we to ignore them and walk away? – No!

- We are supposed to love them
- Eat with them
- Call them
- Email them
- Reach out to them
- Be there for them

Tell them, *“I want to have a relationship with you because I love you.”*

Maybe you've been hurt by someone

- Betrayed, abused, abandoned, gossiped about

There comes a time when you need to pull yourself away from the pain and say, *“Enough is enough.”*

- Choose to stop the cycle and let go
- Let God heal you
- Let God restore you

Isaiah 53:5 (NKJV)

⁵ But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

The dictionary defines a wound as “*an injury to the body (as from violence, accident, or surgery) that typically involves laceration or breaking a membrane (as the skin) and usually damage to underlying tissues.*”

- A wound is more than a surface cut
- It goes so deep that it breaks through and penetrates the soul and heart of a person
- Jesus was pierced for our rebellion
- Crushed for our sins
- Beaten so we could be whole
- Whipped so we could be healed

It's not going to be easy

- It's a process, sometimes a long one
- Keep praying and believing
- Forgive and keep forgiving
- Get wisdom from godly counsel

The thing about wounds, they heal

They also leave scars

Jesus made it a point to show His disciples His scars

Scars say, “I made it. I came out the other side.”