

## THE WORD OF LOVE

It's the end of the month and what is going to happen? I'm going to talk about love to mark the end of the love month. But we're continuing with our series I'm calling, "The Seven Greatest Words of Love". This is the third part. We talked about the word of forgiveness first, then last week the Word of Assurance.

Folks, the single most important lesson that you have to learn in life is this: How to love like Jesus. Learning to love like God loves you. The whole reason God put you on this planet was not to make money, not to retire, not to just have a lot of fun and die. God put you here on this planet to learn how to love.

So, the title of this message is "The Word of Love". It's a word that Jesus said to his mother, Mary, who's standing at the foot of the cross as he was dying and to his best friend, John the Apostle, who's standing next to his mother.

So, we see Jesus crucified on the cross, exhausted and dying because of all the beatings and whippings and every physical torture you could ever imagine being done upon a man. People are jeering him, shouting at him, laughing and making fun of him. Except for a small group of people, consisting mostly of women. One of this women was Mary, his mother. There were other Marys, we don't know how many but our focus is on his mother.

Jesus looks down at his grieving mother and his best friend and he quietly says the third word. Let me read it to you in John 19:25-27, "*Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother (that's Mary), his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there [standing at the foot of the cross], and the disciple (John) whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, [this is the third word from the cross] 'Woman, here is your son,' and to the disciple, [John who is writing this. John won't even admit his name because he's humble about it. He says to the disciple] 'Here is your mother. 'From that time on, this*

*disciple [John, who wrote this book took care of Mary] took her into his home.”*

Mary we know by this time was a widow. According to tradition, Joseph had died a long time earlier. Tradition also tells us that after Jesus died on the cross that she lived about twelve more years. During that twelve year period John, the Apostle, took care of Jesus’ mother because of this statement. Jesus looks down from the cross and he says, “Mother, this is your new son. And John, this is your new mother. And you’re to take care of each other.”

What he’s doing here is showing his deep concern for his mother and best friend. It’s the same kind of deep concern that God has for you when you’re in pain.

And what do we learn from this phrase? We learn two things. First we learn what it means to love like Jesus. And second we learn what Jesus does when we’re in pain. And when you’re in pain you can know that God does this with you.

Let me tell though that what I’m going to teach you this weekend you can’t possibly do on your own power. You can’t love like Jesus by yourself. You can only do it by God’s power. We’ll come back to that at the end. You can’t love other people in the same way that God loves without God’s power in you. You can’t do it on your own. It’s humanly impossible.

But **in order to learn to love like Jesus I have to do four things.**

## **1. I MUST CARE FOR MY OWN FAMILY**

Number one, the first thing is pretty obvious. If I’m going to learn to love like Jesus I must care for my own family.

First, what is love? Love is not just something you say. It’s something you do. It’s a choice. It’s an action. Jesus loved in the middle of all of his pain and he does three things for his mother. He honors her, he provides for her, and he gives her emotional support. Let’s look at these real quickly. These are the same things that God expects you to do with your family. Let’s look at them. If I’m going to learn

to love like Jesus, there are three ways I do this.

**First, by paying attention.**

The first way you learn how to love like God loves you is by learning to pay attention to the people in your life. Specifically in this case your family. Attention is one of the greatest gifts you can give your family. Attention is far more important than money. You can always get more money but you can't get more attention.

I remember when my kids were little and I'd be reading the paper and Eza would come up and say, "Daddy?" Then, I would look at the direction of Anabel, "Honey? I think she needs something." Then I would go back to my paper.

Attention is the greatest gift you can ever give anybody. Why? Because if I give you my time I've just given you a part of my life. It's the most important thing you can give somebody. Far more important than money.

There's another word for giving attention to your family. It's called respect. If you don't pay attention to somebody it means you don't respect them. You may say you respect your wife but you never pay attention. I remember, too, in the first years of our marriage, Anabel will talk to me while I'm driving, you know, sharing a story or venting and in the midst of that, I would turn on the radio, and right there, there's Word War III. "Why aren't you listening to me? Turn off the radio. Pay attention." You honor people when you pay attention.

Jesus... the first thing he does, the first way he shows love is by caring for his own family and he does this by paying attention. In all of this pain and all of this hubbub he looks down at his mom and he notices her.

Exodus 20:12 says, "**Honor your father and mother.**" That's not an option, friends. It's a command. So you pay attention. That's one of the ways we show love – by paying attention.

The second way we show love like Jesus to our family is **by meeting practical**

needs.

And Jesus does that here. Here we have Jesus' last will and testament. He's meeting the practical needs of his mom. The last earthly task that Jesus Christ does when he's dying on the cross is provide for his mother. That says something pretty significant.

As I said, Joseph had died. Mary's old, Mary's poor, Mary's a widow. And what does Jesus have to give to his mom? Nothing. Jesus has nothing to give. He's not rich. He has no wealth. He has no home. So what can he give his poor aged mother?

All he has is a friend. And he entrusts his mother to the care of his closest disciple. He knew that after he died she would need others' protection, others' care, and that's why he said, "John, I want you to take care of my mom." I want you to take care of my mom.

Here's what the Bible says about meeting practical needs in your family. **1 Timothy 5:3-4, "Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God."** You want to please God? Take care of your elderly father. You want to please God? Take care of your elderly mother.

We all know we're supposed to take care of our kids. Did you know the Bible says you're supposed to take care of your parents? Many of you now are in that situation because people are living longer and longer. Love begins at home.

Look at this next verse. **1 Timothy 5:8, "Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."**

That's a powerful verse. Loving your family is one sign of a true believer. If

you can't do that, maybe you're not a believer.

I honor my wife. I watched her take care of her father in his last days. Then, when her brother died, she flew to the Philippines and took care of everything and offered support to her siblings.

Some of you are going to have parents who get dementia or Alzheimer's. And you're going to have to tell them the same thing 15 times over and over and over. That may get frustrating. But when you show patience and when you're loving, even when you've told them 15 times, you're being like Jesus.

We show love like Jesus in honoring our families. How? By paying attention, by meeting practical needs. Then there's a third way. Take note of this.

**By giving emotional support.** God wants us to learn to do this just like he does with us. This is a very tender scene when you actually think about Jesus and his mother in his final moments of life. He's hanging on the cross. Mary is broken-hearted. She's watching her Son suffer incredible agony. Can you imagine being a mother and watching your child hang on the cross?

Standing with her is John, Jesus' best friend. He is in agony. Not understanding why. He knows Jesus is the Son of God. Why does he have to go through all this pain? Why does he have to put up with all this ridicule, all this torture, all this suffering?

And not only that, when you think about it, Mary's entire life was a life of emotional pain. We don't think about that but her entire life was a life of emotional pain. An unexplained pregnancy, being almost divorced, escaping with her young family to Egypt to get away from Herod who was trying to kill her child, being the subject of gossip in her village because of what they thought was an illegitimate child, and being aware of the pain and suffering her son Jesus endured throughout his adult life.

And now, he's tortured as a criminal. About to suffer a gory, gruesome, bloody

death. Jesus has nail-pierced hands but Mary has a nail-pierced heart. And she is in emotional agony. And she felt those nails that only a mother could feel as she watched her Son slowly die.

She needed emotional support. The Bible says this in Proverbs 17:17, **“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.”** The word brother can also be translated relatives or kinsfolk. Someone close to you. And who could be closer to you than your family? The point is, as family the Bible encourages us to provide emotional support when troubles come. Because they do come. And a family should stick together in times of difficulty.

That’s the third way you show Christlike love in your family. You stick together. You show up, you stand up and you hold up. Like a great mom, Mary was there when everybody else turned away. She was there when everybody else deserted her Son. She was there. That’s real love.

Think about this: Do you do that with your kids? Do you show up? Do you stand up? Do you hold up? Do you speak up? Where are you when your kids are being crucified at school? Do you say, brush it off. Or do you get in there and stand up and speak up? Are you there when your kids are being crucified? Are you there when they’re in trouble?

If we are to practice loving like Jesus, I must care for my own family. Here’s the second thing

## **2. I MUST TREAT OTHER BELIEVERS AS MY FAMILY**

Now we’re going even deeper. There are a lot of people who love their family. But that could be total self-centeredness. I’m just going to protect what’s mine. The rest of the world could go to hell for all I care. But the Bible says that real love is learning to treat other believers in your church family as actual family. You treat them as good as your family.

You must care about your family. But you must care for more than your family.

If all you do is care about your family that's not enough. An unbeliever can do that. If you're going to be Christlike, then you must not only care about your family. You must care about more than your family. You must care about God's family – your brothers and sisters in the family of God.

You've heard the old phrase "blood is thicker than water." That's true. But grace is thicker than genetics. Physical families don't last. But the spiritual family does last. People grow up, people die, people move away, people get divorced. There are all kinds of reasons why physical families don't last. They don't. But your spiritual family is going to last forever. And if you follow Jesus, we're a family. And the Bible is clear we're to treat each other as family.

Look at these verses. Matthew 12:50. *"For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."* So that makes us related. You're to treat me as well as you treat your family. I'm to treat you as well as I treat my family. We're to treat each other as relatives in the family of God.

Look at the next verse. First Timothy 5:1-2, *"Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity."* So we have lots of spiritual brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers in this family. That being said, you have a responsibility to serve. If you are a genuine follower of Christ it is your responsibility to serve the older believers in the church and to mentor the younger believers in the church.

I didn't make that up. That's what God says. It is your responsibility if you call yourself a Christian to serve the older people in the church and to mentor the younger people in the church.

There's a real symmetry about this third word. Jesus leaned on Mary as a child. And the Bible tells us that John, the beloved disciple, leaned on Jesus as a disciple. And now Jesus tells them to lean on each other. We're to be devoted to each other.

Romans 12:10, *“Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”* I think that includes sticking up for each other.

Let me just point something here that’s quite interesting. The Bible tells us, maybe you don’t realize this but the Bible tells us that Jesus had four half brothers and two half sisters. Because Joseph and Mary were the parents of all the others. Mary was just the parent of Jesus. Joseph was not the father of Jesus. He was the stepfather of Jesus. Mary was a virgin when he was born. But the Bible even tells us the names of Jesus’ four half brothers. One of them was a guy named James who actually wrote the book of James in the Bible. So Jesus had four half brothers and we know at least two half sisters. They show up many times in Scripture where they are they are watching him do miracles and a couple of times they try to talk him out of some stuff and things like that.

It’s interesting that as Jesus is dying he does not entrust the care of his mother to his half- brothers or his half-sisters. Why in the world didn’t he do that? Why didn’t he just say to his half-brothers and half-sisters, Take care of mom. Because John 7:5 says, “For even his own brothers did not believe in him.” I suppose that includes his sisters. It wasn’t until after the resurrection that people go, he really is the Son of God. Then his half brothers and sisters all became believers. In fact, James became one of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem. So, we see, at the cross, he entrusts his mom to the care of John because John is a mature believer.

Folks, we’re to give special attention to other people in our church family. Galatians 6:10 *“So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all and especially for those of the family of faith.”*

One of the things we’re to do is give them emotional support. Galatians 6:2, *“Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”* We are to carry each other’s burdens in the church.

Number three – this one even gets harder. We’re going up in intensity. To learn



to love like Jesus I must ...

### **3. LEARN TO SEE OTHER'S PAIN EVEN WHEN I'M IN PAIN**

Whoa! That's a hard one. I must learn to see other's pain even when I'm in pain.

Remember I told you at the start, you can't do this on human power. You can only do it with God's power in you. Friend, when I'm in pain I'm not thinking about you. If I'm home and I'm throwing up and I've got diarrhea I'm not going, I wonder what the church is doing right now. If I just had surgery and I'm in deep, deep pain, it's not my nature.

When I'm in pain I'm totally self-centered. I don't know about you. I want to be babied. I want to be pampered. I want Bel to come in and fan me with a feather duster. Whatever. Peel the oranges for me. When you're in pain you're so unselfish. No, you're very self-centered. Pain makes us self-centered.

But God says if you're going to learn real love, love like God does, love like Jesus does, you've got to learn to see other's pain even when you're in pain.

Think about this. Jesus is hanging on the cross. He's in enormous physical, emotional, and spiritual pain. Carrying all the sin of the world. He's in his dying moments. What does Jesus do? He notices the pain of other people. *"Father forgive them, they don't know what they're doing."* He says to the guy next to him, *"Today you'll be with me in paradise."* He notices that guy. Then he notices his mom. He's not thinking about himself even in agony.

We typically pull into a shell and we become very self-centered. But the Bible says in Philippians 2:5, **"You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had."** What does that mean? What does it mean for me to have the attitude of Christ Jesus? It means when I'm in pain I still look around and see who's in worse pain than I'm in.

That's a hard one. How do you look at the pain of others when you're in pain?

1 Peter 4:1 says, *“Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin.”* Sin loses its power. Basically, God says I want you to take whatever pain you’re in and I want you to use it to help other people.

I read how Rick Warren said that he and his wife couldn’t tell the number of people that they have been able to help since their son Matthew died. People who lost a child or a loved one to suicide or struggle with mental illness have come out of the woodwork. He mentioned that as a result of helping others, they themselves got healed of the pain they experienced.

The lesson is this: The way you get healed is by helping others. By helping others. Don’t wallow in your pain but use your pain to help other people. I must learn to see others’ pain when I’m in pain.

Finally number 4:

#### **4. TO LOVE LIKE JESUS I MUST MEET OTHERS’ NEEDS EVEN IF MINE AREN’T MET**

That’s the most difficult lesson of all. I must meet other peoples’ needs even though my personal needs are not met. At work, at home, at church, in society. If I’m going to love like Jesus I must learn to meet others’ needs even if my own personal needs are not being met.

It is interesting to me – Jesus is hanging on the cross and to the very end he’s thinking about other people. He doesn’t say, “My pain is too great. I can’t help you with yours right now.” “Excuse me! I’m being crucified.” He doesn’t say that.

Follow me on this. Jesus is doing the most important work ever done – the salvation of the entire human race. Nobody will ever do anything more important than Jesus is doing at this moment. Nobody. Not you, not me, not anybody else. Nobody will ever do anything that’s more important than what Jesus is doing at

this moment. He's dying for the sins of all mankind. Even in the middle of this he stops and cares for a criminal next to him, cares for his mother, and cares for his best friend. He doesn't say, my purpose is too important; I don't have time to think about you.

Folks, there is no excuse for you to say I don't have time. No. You say I know my family is important but right now I've got to close this deal. Then that deal is too important to you. Nothing you will ever do is as important as what Jesus did and yet even in that, doing the salvation of the world, he makes time for the people around him.

What I'm teaching you this weekend is the exact opposite of what our culture says. Kingdom values are the opposite of American values. American values says the more important you are the less you're expected to care for individuals. Jesus said if you want to be great be the servant of all. And the greater you are in God's kingdom the more serving you are. You take time.

What does it mean to love like Jesus? The Bible says this in Romans 12:13.

*"Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality."*

Let me close by speaking to some of you who are actually in pain. We'll take a minute on this. When you're in pain it's hard to think about anybody else. You may be grieving the loss of someone you've loved. Like Mary was grieving the loss of her Son. I want you to write down **three things that you need to remember when you're in pain.** Write these down.

Number one,

- **Remember that Jesus cares about your pain.**

Jesus cares about your pain. Even on the cross when he was in pain he cared about the pain of others. He certainly cares about the pain that you're going through right now. So remember Jesus cares about your pain.

Number two,

- **Accept love from others.**

When you're in pain you need to accept love from others. Don't shut yourself off. Don't build a wall. Don't suffer in silence. Let people know.

So remember Jesus cares about your pain and be willing to accept help from others, accept love from others.

And number three,

- **Look for somebody else to help.**

Yes, you are in pain. But I guarantee you there's probably somebody else in the world in greater pain than you are. And Jesus gives us the power to love like he does.

I'm just going to give you this last thought. Whatever pain you're in, you can't receive the comfort of Jesus unless you get close to him. Both John and Mary in this story would have missed the blessing of Jesus if they hadn't been close to him. If they'd been far away from Jesus they would have missed the blessing, they would have missed the comfort, if they had just stayed away. God's answer to your pain is always at the foot of the cross. Let's bow our heads.