

Fil-Am Community Church
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THE HABITS OF A LOVING HEART
Building Great Relationships - Part 10 of 10
I Corinthians 13:7

We're concluding the series we've been in for ten weeks. If you begin to practice everything we've talked about in the last ten weeks you'll find out that love is exhausting. It's hard work to really love. Sometimes you don't feel like loving. Have you ever felt like, "I don't have any more love to give." It's the giving professions: the teachers, the salesmen, the managers, the nurses, the waitresses – if you're in people intensive business you know what it's like to come home one night and say, "I can't look at another person! I can't face another need, problem, demand, heartache. I just can't face it!"

1 Corinthians 13 "*Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres*" Notice how many times "always" is mentioned? Phillips translation says, "*Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading to its hope. It can really outlast anything.*" Where do you get that kind of love? How do you love over the long haul without it running dry? What is the source for that kind of love? Obviously my love dries up. Where do you get the kind of love that always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres?

When you're driving from here to Canada, you will need to stop and refuel. Can you imagine a driver saying, "I don't need to refuel"? That's foolishness! You will not get there. In fact, you might even crash because your engine will suddenly fail and you'll be a traffic hazard. In a long distance trip, you need to refuel to make the journey. In a long distance relationship, to make love last, you have to know how to refuel the love in your life. The landscape is littered with

debris of relationships that have crashed and burned because they didn't know how to refuel their love so that it lasted.

Which brings us to the question: What are the secrets of lasting love? This morning I'd like to share with you these secrets. The Secrets of Lasting Love. You know, it's simple. It's a matter of three basic habits that you need to develop.

1. I need to develop habits that refresh me physically.
2. I need to develop habits that recharge me emotionally.
3. I need to develop habits that renew me spiritually.

Because you're a combination of the physical, emotional, and the spiritual you have to work on all three. All three of these affect your ability to love people.

1. DEVELOP THE HABITS THAT REFRESH ME PHYSICALLY

Most people don't understand that their physical condition has a strong impact on their relationships and their ability to love. You see, it's hard to love when you're tired. It makes a difference. A lot of marriages, all they need is to get some rest. They're worn out.

What are the Warning signs of being worn out: Always feeling fatigued. Too tired to care. Depends on stimulants.

You see, it takes physical energy to listen to people, to put their needs first. Have you ever tried to appear like you're interested in your child when you're dead tired? You're not listening because it takes energy to listen.

What happens to your relationships when you're run down? Little issues become big problems when you're tired. You're more cranky, defensive, critical when you're physically low. On Sunday evenings, I'm usually drained so my family knows Dad's cranky on Sunday evening. Everybody understands and they know after I get my sleep on Sunday night I'm back to my normal, sensitive, compassionate self! It's not a spiritual problem, I'm just tired!

What are some habits that physically refresh you? The Bible is full of them. The Old Testament has many principles for health but the three most basic are proper rest and regular exercise. It's nothing new, we just need to do it.

Rest. Psalm 127:2 (Living Bible) "*It is senseless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night...for God wants his loved ones to get their proper rest.*" Some of you need to put that as a reminder on your cellphone. Rest is so important that God put it in the Ten Commandments. Every seventh day you rest. If you're not taking a day off every week you're breaking the commandments. Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is just get some rest. It's amazing how much better things look after a good night's sleep. Many of you are too tired to love your kids, too tired to love your husband, too tired to love your wife. Your basic problem is physical not spiritual. Nothing mystical about it. You need habits that keep you physically refreshed.

Regular exercise. "*For physical training is of some value...*" (1 Tim. 4:8) Our bodies were made for activity. In Bible times they didn't have to exercise; they walked everywhere, they did physical work. But we have a sedentary life and we drive everywhere. Jackie Gleason said, "Whenever I get the urge to exercise, I lay down until it goes away."

The bottom line is you really only have two choices in life: fatigue or fitness. You're going to have one or the other. If you're going to have fitness it involves regular exercise. Study after study shows that exercise doesn't deplete your energy, it increases your energy. But if you're a sleepwalker, you can get your rest and exercise at the same time.

I believe that if in some marriages, the husband and wife would just get in shape their love would return. You're just too tired to love each other.

2. DEVELOP HABITS THAT RECHARGE ME EMOTIONALLY.

When your emotional tank is empty you're unable to keep on loving. You just give up. And your emotional tank does get empty.

How do you know when you need physically recharging? You stomach growls -- it's time to eat. Your eyelids get heavy -- it's time to sleep.

But we often overlook the signs and symbols that say our emotional tank is on empty. We often tend to ignore it more than eating and sleeping.

Warning signs: Sense of being overwhelmed, you feel inadequate; you've got a short fuse, outburst of impatience. When your emotional tank is low you tend to get angry at the people you love the most. You desire to avoid people, you see them as problems. You have no desire to love people when your emotional tank is low. Dreaming of getting away -- escape fantasies, the island in the Pacific.

You're always thinking about it. The psalmist had this problem. He said, "*Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.*" (Psalm 55:6) That's a tell-tale sign that you're emotionally empty. Someone asked Jim Erwin, astronaut who went to the moon, "What does it take to be an astronaut?" He said, "First you need the incredible urge to get away from it all!"

To keep on loving and do the things we've talked about you not only have to keep your physical tank full, you have to keep your emotional tank full because when it gets low it's going to show. If you're not recharging it, it's going to make a difference in your relationships.

How do you recharge yourself emotionally? Three suggestions from God's word:

1. Solitude. Time alone. You need time alone. One day, Charlie Brown says to Linus, "My uncle is taking a stress test." Linus says, "That's great. What is it?" So, Charlie Brown explains. Linus says, "Have you ever had a stress test?" Charlie Brown says, "No, but I live with one." Lucy says, "What?"

Jesus frequently withdrew from crowds. It says He would get away from them when He needed to recharge Himself emotionally. The person who is available all the time isn't worth anything when they're available.

Mark 6:31 "*So many people were coming and going Jesus said to them 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'*" There was so much hustle and bustle, Jesus says to the disciples, "You need a break today. Let's get off for a while. Let's go off to the desert." The next verse says they went off to the desert. Sometimes they went to the mountains. You need times of solitude.

Your emotions are like a battery. If you plug one light bulb into a battery it will last for a fairly long time. If you plug five it lasts less. If you plug 100 lights in it's going to drain real quick. A lot of you have so many irons in the fire that you're putting out the fire. You're burning the candle at both ends and you're not as bright as you think you are. You get so many things going that it's draining. You can't recharge anybody else, you can't give love, if your battery is drained yourself. You need time to recharge emotionally. Solitude and quietness is one of those times. You can have five emotionally draining conversations a day and come home and have nothing left to give. One conflict can drain you for the day. Some of you husbands who have wives at home with young children, the best gift you can give your wife is just some time alone.

2. Recreation. Recreation is important. Recreation is not rest. There are certain activities that recharge you emotionally -- recreate -- re create. There are certain things that recreate energy in your life and enthusiasm for life and recharge you. After you've done them you feel good, not bad. It's different for different people. We all have different things that recharge us because we're all made differently. It may be hobbies, a sport, a craft, games. You need to experiment and find out what it is that recharges you emotionally.

You need to make time for it. Since I'm working with my mind all the time, one of the things I do to recreate is do things with my hands. When my mind is tired I work with my hands. Some of you who work with your hands, when your hands are tired you need to work with your mind.

I believe Jesus enjoyed life. How do I know that? He enjoyed children. He wanted to be with children. Then, he also ate and drank with people who others despised. "*The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. '*" (Matthew 11:19) People who don't enjoy life don't like children or don't mingle with the dregs of society they consider them to be distractions, a waste of time. But Jesus was the most intensive, ministry oriented person that ever lived but He enjoyed life. The more you're involved in intensive ministry, the more you're involved in helping other people, the more critical your need for play time. The more you minister, the more your need for recreation. When you're helping other people, counseling, encouraging, supervising, serving, whatever your job is when you're giving out to others it costs and it exhausts. You need play time.

3. Laughter. Develop the habit of laughter. Proverbs 17:22 "*Being cheerful keeps you healthy.*" There are studies that prove that when you laugh it increases the number of T-cells which raises your immunity level. It's good for your health. When you laugh it produces endorphins in your brain. There are beneficial effects to humor. Humor is God's gift. Laughter is God's gift. God has a sense of humor ... He made you! The Bible says God laughs. We need to learn how to laugh. Humor is an emotional recharger and a love rebuilder.

When I was young, my most favorite magazine was Reader's Digest. You remember that? And the first section I turn to always was "Laughter is the Best

Medicine." I crack up without fail at every joke that's printed there. One example I never forget is this.

There were two guys talking about freedom of speech in their countries. One was an American and another a Russian. The American said to the Russian, "Here in America, you can always walk up to Reagan and tell him, 'You're a jerk!' and nothing will happen to you." The Russian, smiling, responded: "In my home country, you can always walk up to Gorbachev and tell to his face, 'Reagan is a jerk!' and walk away unhurt."

Now I could have made the names contemporary but I'm not sure about Trump.

I've talked to couples who were in serious conflict in marriage. They say, "Someday we'll look back at this and laugh." I say, "Why wait?" Why not just laugh at it right now? The stupidity of the arguments, the stupidity of the conflict. Go ahead and enjoy it now, because laughter is a load lightener. For loving people over the long haul you need to emotionally recharge yourself with habits like solitude, recreation and laughter.

If you want to be emotionally balanced you need to take God very seriously and you need not take yourself very seriously. Learn to laugh at your limitations. There is plenty of material. If you only laugh and enjoy life when your problems are all solved, you're never going to enjoy life. You have to learn to enjoy life in the middle of your problems, the conflict, and the relationship difficulties.

3. DEVELOP HABITS THAT RENEW ME SPIRITUALLY.

The Bible says that real love always protects, always trust, always hopes, always perseveres, it never gives up. It can outlast anything.

You can't love people that way without God's help. You just can't. You cannot love people the way God loves you to, the way we've talked about the last ten weeks, without God's power in your life because human love runs out.

Warning signs that you're headed for spiritual burnout: nothing seems to be worth the effort, what's the use; life seems to be futile, purposeless; blaming God for your problems -- "Why did You let this happen to me?" -- you brought it on yourself. When you study the scriptures you find out that many of the great saints of the Bible blamed God when they were in burnout stages. David did, Moses did, Elijah did, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Abraham.

How do you stay spiritually fit so you can love people? By building in habits into your life that keep you physically, emotionally, spiritually renewed.

Three spiritual habits that will help you:

1. A daily quiet time. Time spent alone with God where you let God talk to you through the Bible and you talk to God through prayer. I don't know anything that will help your life more. 2 Cor. 4:16 "*Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.*" Outwardly our body suffers wear and tear. But inwardly we can be renewed, spiritually renewed every day, by spending time alone with God.

I don't know what could help your life more than to begin the habit of a daily time with God. Ten minutes just to start out with. Get in your car and set by yourself, or the chair in the living room, or the back yard and watch the sun come up, drive to work and close the door at your office. Spend some time every day. I'd suggest pick a book and read through it a chapter a time. Read it, think about about what you've read -- maybe write some things down. That's a habit that will make a difference and keep you spiritually renewed and it will show up in your relationships. That's your vitamin every day.

Another thing is that when you do a quiet time everyday, you can unload. The Bible says, "*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*" (1 Pet. 5:7) You can unload your frustrations on God. Don't hesitate to come to God. He understands you.

2. Small Group. You need a small group. In this church, we call it home group. We talk about it all the time. A Christian without a home group is an orphan. You need a home group. The Bible says, "*We should keep on encouraging each other.*" (Hebrews 10:25 CEV) Keep on encouraging – that means frequently. You can't be encouraged frequently in a large group like this once a week. You need to get together in a home group at least weekly where you can share needs and problems and cares and pray for each other and develop friendships. Two are stronger than one.

3. Worship. Specifically **singing**. Singing spiritual songs is spiritually renewing. Praise renews and rejuvenates. It builds up. Psalms 59 "*I will sing of your strength in the morning and I will sing of your love for you are my refuge in times of trouble.*" Singing builds you up. When we come and sing in the first part of the service -- this is not the warm up act. It's just as important as the message. I know a pastor, when a person comes for counseling, asks, "Did you sing the songs last Sunday?" If they say no, he says, "Go sing them next week then come back and see me." You need that emotional release and that recharging that comes from singing. Many times in my life I, when I feel exhausted or beat down and have nothing to left to give, while I in the car I put on a CD or tune in to a Christian program and sing along and during that time He restores my soul. I am a firm believer in listening to Christian music and Christian messages on tape. They restore you. They help you grow.

Ephesians 3:18 "*May you be able to feel and understand, as all God's children should, how long, how wide, how deep, and how high his love really is; and to experience this love for yourselves.*" He wants you to experience it. When you're burned out -- physically, emotionally, spiritually -- and feel like you've got nothing left to give, your greatest need is you need to feel loved by God. That's your

greatest need. It is through these habits that you can begin to feel that love of God flowing through your life again.

As we close ten weeks on relationships, it all boils down to this: the quality of your relationship to God determines the quality of every other relationship you have. When that is out of kilter all the other ones is going to be out of kilter too. They're not going to be up to their maximum potential. The quality of your relationship to God affects the quality of every other relationship you have. Human love wears out and you've got to be plugged in to a stronger source.

My guess is that some of you are running on empty. Especially after that energy-consuming celebration we had. I know it's uplifting too. But, if you look deep inside, you look at your gauges, you're physically depleted, or emotionally depleted or spiritually depleted and you didn't get that way overnight and you're not going to get out of it overnight. You're not going to recover overnight. If you'll take these habits and begin to build them into your life it will be the first step toward recovery. The first thing you need to do is let God love you.

Jesus Christ says "*Come to Me when you're tired and weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.*"

If you need rest and restoration and refreshing, come to Jesus. He will never turn you away. Perhaps, the reason you're feeling the weight of the world is because you've never turned all your burdens to Jesus. Jesus came to earth to unburden you.

Perhaps, you're burdened because of your past, or your present relationships, or you're worried about what the future holds for you. Jesus says, "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." The first step is to trust Jesus. Trust in him as your Lord and Savior. Believe that he died for your sins that there's nothing you can do to make life better for you. Only Jesus can do that. That's the reason he went to the cross. He wants to give you eternal life in the future and abundant life

in the here and now. If you've done that already, well and good. You just need to come to Jesus daily for restoration. But if you haven't, this is the time for you to start a relationship with Jesus. And then your relationship with others will significantly improve.