

How to Never Give Up on Loving

1 Corinthians 13:7

Good morning! Good to see you all! Happy Valentine's Day!

So, guys, have you told her? Did you already tell your wife what she wants to hear today? Aside from your gift? I think that's important too. Happy wife, Happy life.

On this Valentine's Day, let me share a few corny jokes.

Who always has a date on Valentine's Day? A calendar.

What did the love-obsessed candle say when it was lit? "I found the perfect match!"

What's the best recipe for a perfect morning on February 14? A hug and a quiche. (kish)

What did one piece of toast say to the other? "You're my butter half!"

What do you call a happy couple who first met via Twitter? "Tweethearts."

What did the stamp say to the envelope on Valentine's Day? "I'm stuck on you."

Why did the chicken cross the road on Valentine's Day? It was too busy on lover's lane.

What did the couple say after they were struck by Cupid's arrow? "Ouch!"

OK. That's the corniest of all.

We're on the second part of our series on love called **"Courageous Loving"**. In this series we're looking at how to love courageously or boldly or bravely despite the difficulties of loving another person. And last week we look at the example of God's love for us. His love is tough. Meaning, it is strong, solid, steadfast, never wavers, consistent.

God's love for us is just one aspect of love. And I would say the best aspect that we could derive inspiration from. It's our model, the pattern on which our loved should be based on. Today, we'll look at another aspect. And it is love toward our special someone. That could be your spouse or your girlfriend, boyfriend or your fiancée. This message is for them. But, the principles apply to everyone anyway and so even if you are not in a relationship, please listen carefully. I'll share some practical principles as you relate to people around you.

The title of this message is "How to Never Give Up on Loving". 1 Corinthians 13:7 says from the New International Version that love "always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." The Contemporary English Version says that love "is always supportive, loyal, hopeful, and trusting." The New Living Translation says "love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance." And finally, the English Standard Version says that love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

No matter which translation you use, the meaning is the same. The word "always" (or the phrase "all things") is repeated four separate times so we won't miss the point. Here are four qualities of love, which when taken together, teach us that no matter how desperate our circumstances may be, love never gives up. In other words, we must never give up on loving.

As I said last week, the foundation for a stable life, no matter what you go through in life, is the unchanging love of God. I know that a lot of things will change in my life. But one thing I know will never change is that 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 says *“I command you to love each other in the same way that I love you.”*

How do you do that? Euripides once said, “It’s not real love unless it’s eternal.” Is that possible? Is it possible to even have a love that lasts a lifetime?

I think it was Mark Twain who once said “You don’t really understand perfect love until you’ve been married at least a quarter of a century.” There’s some wisdom in that. To me, love at first sight is no big deal. It’s just attraction. To me the miracle is when people have looked at each other for an entire life and still love each other. That’s the miracle. Love at first sight is no big deal. Love that lasts a lifetime – that is a big deal!

One thing is sure. There are no marriages made in heaven. And some marriages are like hell. That’s why some marriages end in divorce. We have to admit it is difficult to stay in love, to stick together. There are times in your life when every bone in your body says, “This is too hard. I give up. I quit. I’m moving out.”

If you’re going to build a love that lasts a lifetime you have to figure out how to overcome what I call the Deadly D’s. Every relationship whether it’s a marriage or a friendship or work or business it goes through the Deadly D’s – Difficulties, Disagreements, Differences, Discord, Disappointment, Defeat, Dead-ends, Depression, Delay, Doubt, Distance, Debt, Demands, Death. Those are not easy things to overcome. And if you don’t overcome, then guess what, you get to the deadliest D – Divorce. And that is the path you don’t want to take. But if you’ve been divorced God still loves you and he expects you to stick to your present marriage.

How do you never give up on loving? How do you keep your heart beating? If you’re going to build a love that lasts a lifetime, if you’re never going to give up on loving, there are some things that you must do, consciously and willingly. I’m going to share those things with you this today.

But first, I'll let you listen to a song. And listen carefully to the lyrics.

VIDEO

Are you feeling in love again right now? I am. With the same woman. That song hit number one in 1967 and was recorded by dozens of notable artists in the following decades and became number one again four times. BTW, did you notice that Filipino-looking guy? He is a Filipino. His name is Hilario Ramos. He was born and raised in Hawaii by his Filipino parents. So there, you must be proud of that. The first Filipino-American Idol. The second is Jon Badua.

The most interesting thing about that song is that in 1999, the BMI announced it was the second most-played song on radio and television of the 20th century. What was #1? “You’ve Lost that Loving Feeling”. But I thought that wouldn’t be good to play on Valentine’s Day. So, I chose #2. Anyway, “Never My Love” was so loved it just kept coming back. People are so desperately wanting a love that never ends, right?

Today we’re going to look at the **things you must do if you’re going to never give up on loving** your loved one. If you’re going to learn to love the way that God loves you, learn to do these four things:

1. I must **extend grace.**

No relationship will ever make it without grace. The Bible tells us that this is part of love. You’re not going to have a relationship unless you have forgiveness in your heart. You have to put up with a lot!

Our text says about love **“It always protects.”** This comes from the Greek word that means literally “covered with a roof.” Would you buy a house without a roof? Of course not. You’d have no protection from the winds and the rain. A roof covers and protects your home.

In the same way this kind of love, patient love, gracious love, it covers a relationship and it lets some things slide. It doesn't hold people into account for every mistake that they make. People damage pretty easily and you need a roof on your relationship. That roof is the kind of love that extends grace.

Why is grace essential to relationships?

Because you married a sinner. And she married a bigger one. If you're in a relationship, you're imperfect and your partner 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. There's no such thing as a perfect friendship; stop trying to find one. Two imperfect people cannot create a perfect relationship. It isn't gonna happen on this planet.

The Bible says this in **Romans 3:10** "*There is no one righteous, not even one*". None of us get it right a hundred percent of the time. And then **1 John** says, "*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*" 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 tango and it takes two to tangle. It takes two to disagree. It's never just one person's fault. There's always two sides on a coin.

The Bible says we have to extend grace to each other. Why? 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. Jesus said, we cannot receive what we're unwilling to give to other people.//

The Bible tells us that the way you build strong relationships is to treat other people the way God treats you. **Romans 15:7** says this "*Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you.*" You accept them. That's extending grace.

One of the ways you accept people is simply by listening to them. When you listen to people you're giving them a great gift. Because the reason you get so judgmental is you're not really listening to the other person. You're not listening to where they're coming from, what they're saying. God gave you two ears and one mouth – that's why you should listen twice as much as you talk.

The Bible says this *“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”* (Eph. 4:2) It says if you have to never give up on loving, you've got to learn to make allowances for the mistakes and the faults in other people's lives.

Anabel knows there is one time every week she needs to make allowance for me. It's the time when I'm the grumpiest. When I'm the most stressed out. And she makes allowance. She graciously loves me and shows grace during this one pressure-laden time in my week.

This time is Saturday late afternoon when I start to prepare for the service the next day because every late Saturday afternoon I get PMS – Pre-Message Syndrome. I get moody, temperamental, and all that. If a woman gets PMS once a month I get it four times a month. Correction, only three times a month because Brandon gets it too once a month, I think.

Who do you need to show grace to this week? Maybe your spouse, your children, your co-worker, your boss? That's the starting point. Show grace because love always protects. Here's the second key. To never give up on loving, **2. I must express faith.**

Faith and love are intertwined 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 our text says that love, *"always trusts."*

One of the key evidences of trust is your willingness to give other people a second chance when they blow it. How quickly are you willing to give other people a second chance? When somebody turns you the wrong way or says something about you and you write them down in your little black book – "That person just ticked me off! I'm never going to that Bible study again, I'm never going to serve in ministry with that person, I'll never give her a valentine's gift again" – Then you're not very trusting, and you're not very loving. Because love gives people a second chance.

Anybody who's a coach knows the quickest way to restore confidence after a fumble is to give the kid the ball again on the very next play. Otherwise they start developing a phobia – "I'm going to drop it again! I'm going to drop it again!" The way you help a child get over a failure is to put trust in them immediately again and get them started again. "Take the ball the next play. Sure you dropped it. Everybody drops the ball."

God says, "If you want to build a lasting relationship you're going to have to learn to trust. You say "Pastor Rolly, right now, I can't trust my spouse." Then friend, I recommend you trust God. If you cannot trust your husband or your wife, you need to trust God because God knows what he's doing. If you put your trust in God, he can do things that you can't do in your husband or your wife's life. You trust God when you can't trust that person. Because God knows what he's doing. You can't change a person but God can.

When I was still single and I was driving much faster than I do now, my passengers would always hold tight like this on the seatbelt.

I knew their concern and so before I drove I would say to them, “Trust God, not the driver.” I even had a button made and stuck it on the dashboard and it said, “Trust God, not the driver.”

God says in **Isaiah 55:8-9**, “*‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.’*” God says I know what I’m doing. Just trust me.

Women, those of you who are married, your husband is dying for you to say, I trust you. You know, they are craving it. Your husband is craving it. It is more important than saying, I love you. 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 spouse. “I know you can do it!” Believing in somebody is what real love is all about. So that you’ll never give up on loving, extend grace when they blow it. Also, express faith in the other person and say, “I trust you”.

The Bible says this in **Galatians 5:6** “*The only thing that counts 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. I must expect the best.

Lasting love is hopeful. It is forward looking. It is positive. It is expecting the best. Our text says that love “*always hopes.*” When you hope, you expect, right? Do you ever expect the worst? I hope not. You expect the best. It was Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the poet, who said, “Whoever loves believes in miracles.”

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 much or 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.

Whatever you want the people in your life to become, treat them the way you want them to become, not the way they are. Guys, you want your wife to treat you like a king? Treat her like a queen. It's real simple. Real simple. Treat her like a queen. Emphasize the positive. Forget the nagging. Tell it like it is? No. Tell it like it can be. Visualize potential. Start expecting the best from them.

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. So, to never give up on loving, I must extend grace. I must express faith. I must expect the best. And lastly,

4. **I must endure the worst.**

Love endures the worst. Lasting love is persistent. It will not give up on the relationship. Our text says that love "*always perseveres.*" I love The Message translation where it says, "*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? There are things you will learn hanging on that you will never learn any other way. The purpose of marriage is not just to make you happy but to make you holy and teach you how to grow up. And to be unselfish. To be less thoughtful of yourself and more thoughtful of others. Great people are just ordinary people with an extraordinary amount of determination. They just don't know how to quit.

Some of you are ready to give up. God brought some of you here today to listen to this: Keep on. Don't let go. Don't give up. Persevere. Be stubborn about it. I'm not going to let go! Hang in there. Hang on!

Many of you are familiar with this poem, "Don't Quit." Some of you need to hear again these words today.

Learning to love is the single greatest lesson in life. Learning to love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength. And learning to love everybody else. It's why God put you on this planet. The only way you will ever learn how to love is by loving, when you don't feel like loving. When people are unlovable and unlovely and unloving and unloved. That's where you learn real love.

As I pointed out when we started, these four choices are the exact way God loves you. God just expects you to do with others what he has done with you. God has extended you grace. And he has forgiven you and he's said I sent Jesus Christ to die for all your sins. He extends you grace. If you got what you deserved you wouldn't be sitting there right now. You wouldn't be alive. He has extended you grace. He wants you to do that with others.

He expresses faith in you. Did you know that God believes in you?

He believed in you enough to create you, to love you, to die for you, to send his Holy Spirit to live in you. He believed in you enough to give you a freedom of choice knowing that you full well could thumb your nose at God and live a self-centered life. You need to believe in the God who believes in you. He expresses faith.

He expects the best. He knows what you're capable of. He knows you're not living up to your potential and he doesn't nag you about it. He says this is what I see in you. He always has hope that you're going to turn your life completely over to him and he expects the best. God has endured the worst from you and put up with it all and he's never given up on you.

Folks, all these principles are well and good. But do you know the real key to not give up on loving? It is by letting God's love flow through you. The Bible says *"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."* That is the key. It takes Christ's love in you. Human love wears out. But Christ's love is eternal. Before you can offer it to others you've got to get it in you.

God brought you here for this service. 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.