

40 Days of Love – Part 6

Good morning! Good to see you! You know that our family had gone through a crisis when Daddy Lino suddenly was taken away by the Lord. Whenever you're going through massive change there is one thing you can always count on that never changes. It is the unchanging love of God. It is constant. It is steadfast. It is enduring. The Bible says this "*I will show you my love forever.*" In other words it's eternal. God's love does not change. "*I will show you my love forever, ' so says the Lord who saves you.*"

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 said "*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 an entire life?

The divorce rate in America is now 50 percent and slowly growing. One out of two marriages end in divorce even among Christians. And, how many more are living separately? So, in light of this, how can you have a love that lasts a lifetime? Loving other people in the same way that God loves you – consistently, unconditionally, eternally?

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!

That's what we're going to look at today. In fact, let me just ask you how many of you have been married or if your spouse is already in heaven, you were together at least twenty-five years. Congratulations! Let me ask, those of you who have been married for thirty years or longer, would you stand up and stay standing a minute? Great! I should ask all of *you* to come to the front right now and help me teach this message. Anybody here been married fifty years or longer? Would you stand up? Fantastic! If my parents were here, they would be standing too.

Here's my question to you – those of you who have been married fifty years or longer – it was easy, right? Smooth-sailing? I can guarantee you this; if you were to take any of these people and ask them to share their testimonies of their marriage they would tell you that it was not easy. That it is difficult to stay in love, to stick together. There are a million times in life when every bone in your body says, "This is too hard. I give up. I quit. I'm moving out." But they didn't.

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, Death, Debt, Demands, Difficulties. Those are not easy things to overcome. But those who just stood overcame the big D – Divorce.

How do you have a love that lasts a lifetime then? If you're going to build a love that lasts a lifetime, there are some things that you must *never do*.

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

VIDEO OF “NEVER MY LOVE”

Are you feeling in love again right now? I am. The interesting thing about that song is that it also went back in the last forty years to number one, four other times recorded by three other groups. It just kept coming back. People are so desperately wanting a love that never ends.

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.

We’re in 1 Corinthians 13, the passage we’ve looked at for all of these weeks during 40 Days of Love. It says this in verse 7 **“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, learn to do these four things:

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. The Bible tells us that this is part of love. You’re not going to have a relationship unless you have forgiveness. You’ve got to let things pass. You have to put up with a lot. Everybody agree with that? You have to put up with a lot! You have to extend grace.

The Bible says this **“Love never stops being patient.”** The Message paraphrase of that verse says **“It puts up with anything.”** The New Century Translation says **“It patiently accepts all things.”** And the New Jerusalem Bible translation says **“It is always ready to make allowances.”** You have to allow for mistakes.

This word in Greek that says “It’s always patient,” is the 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. 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. 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 who always does what is right, not even one."* None of us get it right a hundred percent of the time. The next verse 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 tango and it takes two to tangle. It takes two to disagree. It's never just one person's fault. There's always a part on both sides.

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 each other just as Christ has 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.

I read this week that a bullfrog when it’s croaking that God created a muscle inside that bullfrog that goes to its brain that when a bullfrog is croaking it cannot hear that tone. It cannot hear the obnoxious noise that it’s making.

I know a lot of humans like that. You’re not intentionally obnoxious. You don’t get up in the morning and go, “I think I’m going to be irritating today. I think I’m going to tick everybody off. I think today I’m just going to be obnoxious.”

No. You don’t hear yourself. That’s why the rest of us have to show you grace. That’s why you need to show grace to other people and other people need to show it to you. Sometimes you don’t even know what you’re saying. You can’t even hear it. We all need grace.

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.”**

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.

Anabel knows that there is one time every week she needs to make allowance for me. It’s 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 our other pastors get it too once in a while.

Who do you need to show grace to this week? Maybe your spouse who's just going to the bathroom on Sunday morning when you're ready to leave. 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. Faith and love are intertwined because love is built on trust. I'm talking about trusting and believing in people.

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."** The NIV translation says **"Love always trusts."** Always trusts. The New Living Translation says, **"Love never loses faith."**

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 – “They’re off my group! 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, you’ve got to watch out for that staff member, you’ve got to keep away from that neighbor.” – 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.

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 that said, “Trust God, not the driver.”

The Bible says this in Isaiah 55. *“I don’t think the way you think and the way you work isn’t the way I work. For as the sky soars high above the earth so the way I work surpasses the way you work and the way I think is beyond the way you think.”* God says I know what I’m doing. Please trust me.

Love, whether you’re loving God or somebody else, involves trust. The Bible says *“Love never stops believing.”*

You know how Rick Warren started his church? It was 31 years ago and he was 25 years old. He and his wife Kaye were living in Fort Worth, Texas and God put this crazy idea in his mind. He told it to Kay, “Honey, I think God wants us to move from Texas to Southern California and we’re to start a church. Here’s the problem: we don’t have any money, we don’t have any members, we don’t have any buildings, we don’t have any sponsorship, I don’t know anybody in this city and I’ve never been a senior pastor before. What do you think?”

And he said he’ll never forget what his twenty-five year old wife said to him: “It scares me to death. But I believe in God and I believe in you, so let’s go for it.” And the rest is history. Because his wife believed in him, there is Saddleback, there is Purpose-Driven Life, there are thousands and thousands of people whose lives have been changed.

Women, those of you who are married, your husband is dying for you to say, I trust you. 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 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.

Lasting love is hopeful. It is forward looking. It is positive. It is expecting the best. The Bible says this *“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 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. It extends grace. It expresses faith. It expects the best.

4. **It endures the worst.**

Love endures the worst. Lasting love is persistent. 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. 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. *Shoot!* 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. It's easy to love cool people like you.

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 to 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.

We've been studying now for six weeks 1 Corinthians 13, the chapter on love in the Bible. I want to end by reading a paraphrase of this chapter on love.

“Because God loves me he is slow to lose patience with me.

Because God loves me he takes the circumstances of my life and he uses them in a constructive way for my growth. Because God loves me he does not treat me as an object to be possessed or manipulated. Because God loves me he has no need to impress me with how great and powerful he is because he's God. Nor does he belittle me as his child in order to show me how important he is. Because God loves me he is for me and he wants to see me mature and develop in his love. Because God loves me he does not keep score of all my sins and then beat me over the head with them whenever he gets the chance."

This is the real secret to learning a lasting love. Letting God's love flow through you. The Bible says *"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."* This is the secret of lasting love. It takes Christ's love in you. Human love wears out. That's why we've got those divorce statistics. 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.