

SERIES: DARE TO LOVE
"HAVE COURAGE TO LOVE"

SERIES FOCUS: Love is the foundation of our relationship with God and others. We must learn to love as Christ loves.

LESSON FOCUS: Loving is not always simple or easy – it requires courage. When we have the courage to love we can experience wonderful and fruitful relationships.

Scripture: 1 John 4:7-8 (ESV) – “7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

- A. God does not merely love; He is love itself. Everything God does flows from love.
 - a. Jesus taught that only two commandments are needed to govern our lives – to love God and love our neighbor. If we demonstrate this kind of love, then the rest of the law and prophets are fulfilled!
 - i. **Matthew 22:36-39 (ESV)** – “36 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” 37 And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”
 - b. Jesus also taught that the identifying marker of a true disciple of Christ is one who demonstrates love.
 - i. **John 13:35 (ESV)** – “35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
 - c. The attribute of love is essential to the life of the believer. It is the first fruit of God’s Spirit in us.

- b. Sinfulness brings us to a place of brokenness. Sinful nature has caused once-meaningful relationships we've had with others to end in hurt, distrust, pain, anger, fear, misunderstanding, isolation and even abuse.
- c. Many people have had at least one bad relationship with someone that we loved dearly, which has caused us to put a wall up around our hearts from loving, or being loved again with such intimacy.
- d. Because of such bad experiences, we are afraid of allowing anyone – especially God – see us with our guard down. Our relationships – our love level – becomes superficial...surface level.
- e. If we get down to the root of the matter, it is *fear* that has kept us from true intimacy and having deep, satisfying and meaningful relationships.
 - i. **1 John 4:18 (ESV)** – “18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.”

D. How do we overcome our *fear* of being loved, or loving again? How can we gain the courage to love?

- a. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:31 that he would show the church the “more excellent way” to live. What is the more excellent way?
- b. When we develop an intimate relationship with God – one that knows and understands His love for us – we will begin to know God’s perfect love.
- c. God’s perfect love is constant; it is unwavering; it is full and never ending; it is immeasurable; His love reaches to every depth and every height; His love satisfies all needs and desires; His love is faithful; His love is pure; His love is perfect.
- d. **Developing an intimate relationship with Christ is crucial to developing intimate relationships with others.**
 - i. **1 John 4:8 (ESV)** – “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

- e. Through Christ's love we learn and experience forgiveness, and in turn we are empowered to forgive those who have hurt us.
 - i. **Proverbs 10:12 (ESV)** – "Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses."
 - ii. **Colossians 3:12-14 (ESV)** – "12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."
- f. Knowing Christ's love fosters the ability to have intimacy, openness, security, comfort, growth and support in our relationships with others.
- g. Having this kind of love though, requires us to have courage – to be willing to love. To love as Christ loves is to love others even when they are inconsistent – even when they fail us – even if they do not love us back. We must have the courage to love.
 - i. This applies to all relationships in our lives:
 1. Our spouses and children
 2. Our parents
 3. Our friends – people inside and outside of the church
 4. Strangers – people we meet unexpectedly or temporarily
- h. When we are filled with Christ's love – it is His love that satisfies our need to be loved, and it enables us to replicate that love to others, despite what we may or may not receive back from them.