**Learning to Love**

**Chapter 1**

We are doing another mini-series on a book by David Alsobrook, which is going to open our hearts to understanding God’s heart of love, and will teach us to love.

There is only one thing God requires of me and you: *To Love God and Love People.* Jesus said as much as we do to the least of his brothers, we do for Him. (Matt 25:40) When he spoke to the rich young ruler, He combines the 2 focuses of loving God and loving people into *“one thing I require of you.”*  And we must know that every human spirit senses the outreach of love, regardless of their outward responses. The author wrote this poem:

Loving You brings Love to Me

 *I reap love when I sow it; I see love when I show it.*

 *I feel love when I give it. It am love when I live it.*

 *Loving others sets me free. Loving you brings love to me.*

The main thought here is that I must love others if I want to be loved. Since man was created with a love need, everyone looks for love. But to get love one must give love. When we sow acts of love, our love deeds become love seeds. In time the seeds grow into a harvest of love which is reaped back to the sower. But we know that many of our churches have huge lack in this area. If our Father values us, and we are His pearl of great price, the object of His unconditional love, shouldn’t we attach a greater value to one another?

Everyone has a life-long need to be loved. And all of us know the pain of unreciprocated love and the hunger of the inner, unmet love need. And most people spend their entire lives trying to get that love need met through a multitude of surface relationships, and futile endeavours. Yet, if we receive Father’s love for us and give this same love to others, our search for love and our loneliness would cease. We cannot satisfy our love hunger with pursuits in business, ministry, or achievement. It can only be met through Him and giving relationships – that is how we were created.

The love emptiness in many lives is a result of approaching love with a motive of using instead of giving. And most people live in a state of continual hunger, because only Perfect Love can fully satisfy our love hunger. John 4:18 says, *“Perfect love casts our fear … God is love*.” Our Father is *“Perfect Love*” and the “*Perfect Lover*”. God created man with a love desire which only He can satisfy.

Most of us, due to our fallen nature, spend our lives trying to suck out all the love we can from every relationship, leaving those we are connected with, drained and empty. But when we properly relate to the Perfect Lover, then love just pours into us as we fellowship with Him; and then the Love, which He is, then pours out of us into others. Love looks through our eyes, shines through our smiles and is transmitted by the very tone of our voice. Once we have made our regular connection with the inexhaustible source, His love flows out almost effortlessly to those we contact and share with.

As we purposely emit this love, even to strangers in the Mall or colleagues at work, we soon begin to reap love, as others reach out to bless us. When we emanate love from our hearts, when we practice the love method, every hungry heart senses it. It opens all kinds of doors to share the goodness of the Lord with others. William Branham said that even animals can sense divine love and respond favourably.

The pastors who are most loved by their people are not the greatest preachers or teachers, but those who love most. The lover gets loved in the process. People will sense love when we purposely transmit it through our attitudes and smiles. You can actually refresh yourself by practicing the love method at work. As you pour out the love God poured into your own heart, it flows out, unforced. It is not something you say to someone, but something you first feel for that person and then release to him. Sometimes it will hurt to express love, because people might reject it. We cannot choose the response to our love. We can only choose to love or not to love. But we can rest in the promise that *“love never fails*” (1 Cor 13:8), although we might never see the fruit in this life. Each heart remembers agape love. Our job is to transmit love in all we do. Whether we actually tell the good news or not to someone, any love-deed can open the person’s heart who receives it, and that may bring him to the God of love. We do not force love, but simply flow love to persons by allowing Jesus within us to emit His love through us. If our spirit is active with Him, His real love flows through us. It is a conscious act of faith.

Love must be brought from inside the heart and deliberately expressed by words or actions. We should not only express love when we feel overwhelmed by love ourselves, but express it continuously, otherwise our focus will shift back onto ourselves. Our inherent tendency is always toward self-centredness. So love is something we must consciously practice, and the Holy Spirit will show us when we fail to show it. We don’t need to live in condemnation, but begin to learn the secret of life: to love others as God loves us. It is not natural to really love other people, because all of us are basically selfish. Only God is love, and only He can teach us to love others. The wise apostle John said, “*You yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.*” Since love is what God is, we should know that He teaches about himself, revealing love more and more to our hearts. Let’s make love our all-consuming goal. And as we as the family of God begin loving one another in reality, the world will become convinced of our genuineness, and of God.

If you have not yet come to the divine source of Love, the way is open for you to come today. God sent His Son to show us his face of love. Come to him simply saying, “*Father I need you. I receive Jesus into my life now. Pour your divine love into my heart by your Holy Spirit. Make me a channel of your love to others*. *Heavenly Father, Awaken me. Change me from using into loving. Teach me to love - my family, my leaders, my pastor, my friends and co-workers, my brothers and sisters in Christ, even my enemies, Lord. Teach me to love complete strangers – the homeless, the disadvantaged, the unborn and the unwanted. You are love. You live in me. Love and live through me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*

God bless you till next week when we will look more closely at the characteristics of love.

**Learning to Love**

**Chapter 2**

Last week we spoke about the one thing God requires of us which is to love God and to love people. To get love we must give love. Our Father is perfect love, and once we have connected with Him, and his love has been poured into our hearts by his Holy Spirit, it can flow out of us to others.

Today we want to look at defining infinite, unlimited Love? Love can be described more easily than defined. It can be described by its characteristics that we can find in the Word of God. We have often heard that love is a choice or a decision – but it is more than that – it is a Person. Love is powerful, but not an impersonal force. It is not an idea, but an actual entity. It is the divine nature; and the most clear picture of this is in the Person of Jesus Christ.

We have often heard of the Greek words for love as *agapao* and *fileo*. *Agapao* is God’s love and is used to express the deep and constant love and interest of a perfect Being toward entirely unworthy objects. It refers to the unselfish, outgoing affection or tenderness for another without necessarily expecting anything in return. It is also to desire another’s highest good, to give freely without thought of oneself. It is the highest form of love and the only kind which is completely unconditional.

*Phileo* love is a brotherly type of love that reacts to outward contact or action, whereas agape love comes from within and is always pouring out to others regardless if it is accepted or not. This divine agape love never expects something in return, is impartial and loves the unlovely. It always edifies or “*builds up*”, as 1 Cor 8:1 says.

Most people associate love with feelings, but real love is more than feelings, more than decision and warm thoughts. Love must be expressed if it is to be fully known in one’s life. You can sense the agape love of God in your heart for someone, but until you are moved to pray for or minister to that one, your love is not complete. 1 John 3:18 says, “*My little children, let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth.”* It must be expressed practically.

Someone said, “*Love is an action word*.” As John 3:16 describes God’s love, *“God so loved the world that He* ***gave*** *his only Son.”*

Some specifics of love:

1. Eph 4:32 “*Be completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love.”* This means accepting each other’s differences with patience, gentleness and humility.
2. 1 Tim 1:5 *“The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart …”* 1 Pet 1:22 also says, *“Love one another deeply from a pure heart.”* None of us is as pure as we desire to be, but as we believe He says that we are holy, our lives change and we begin to live that way. And his love will begin to flow out of our purified hearts.
3. Rom 12:9 *“Love must be sincere*”. Insincere love is counterfeit or pretending love. In other words, unless it is the genuine God-love, it is not sincere.

Then we read about a warning God gave to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:4, “*Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.*” That infusion of overwhelming love floods our hearts at our new birth. But it does not say that they have *lost* their first love, but that they have *forsaken* or *left* it. What changes that? It could be offense at someone who disappointed or hurt you; or when you lose touch with God as the source of love, and serving God becomes a duty rather than a joy. It could be the worries of life, or riches or pleasures that begin to constrict our lives.

So what then is this real love? 1 John 3:16 says, “*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?”*

Everyone is tempted to doubt God’s personal love especially during difficulties and pressures, when the enemy tries to besmirch the character of God. That is when we need to contemplate Jesus’ Calvary love for us. Paul said in Gal 2:20, “*I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.*” Can we say in our dark hour, He loves **me**? God wants to make this clear to us. John 17:23, Jesus prayed, “… *that you sent Me and have loved them even as you have loved Me.”* Imagine this incredible thought: God loves you as much as He loves Jesus! So we know that we only love Him because He first loved us. It is because He gave us love to love him with. It is not within ourselves at the start. And love for one another is the great convincer and proof to the world, that Jesus is the Son of God.

So why are we so slow to love one another? One reason is because we are not completely convinced of our Father’s love for us as individuals. We read often in the Bible as in 1 John 4:7, *“Beloved, let us love one another*.” The Greek for “Beloved” refers to those who have been divinely loved. In other words, “*Love as you are loved*.”

So how do we increase our love? Say to yourself, “*I am an object of God’s special love … not because I deserve it but because God set His love upon me.*” So as we meditate on Jesus’ sacrifice, we can increase our realisation of God’s love for us. “*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”* God loved us before we were born of the Spirit, or even born physically. Love is not something we earn, but something we must accept by faith. To know God’s love for me is to believe it in my heart. We so easily evaluate people’s maturity by their ministry or wisdom, but love is the measuring stick of spiritual growth.

It is a gift we receive by faith as Rom 5:5 says, *“God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us*.” Yet we are told “*it is a more excellent way,*” (1 Cor 21:31) and we are to “*walk in love*” Eph 5:1, so love must be pursued and followed. Gal 5:22 says, “*The fruit of the Spirit is love*”, so it must be cultivated. Then 1 Thess 4:9, “*You yourselves have been taught by God to love one another*,” so it must be studied*.*  And John 15:12, “*My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you,”* so it must be obeyed.

God bless you till next week when we will continue learning how to love.

 **Learning to Love**

**Chapter 3**

*Last week we spoke about Agapao* as God’s love that is used to express the deep and constant love and interest of a perfect Being toward entirely unworthy objects. This divine agape love never expects something in return, is impartial and loves the unlovely. We said, “*Love is an action word*,” and shown to us by Jesus who laid down is life for us. If we are not convinced of our Father’s love for us, we will be slow to love one another. You must believe that God loves you as much as He loves Jesus!

We are studying the book by David Alsobrook, and want to look at God as the Love Being. Most of us view God as having lots of love, rather than seeing that love is something God is, not something He has. It is not a characteristic of God, it is his very nature or essence. God does not have love, He is love. Everything He does flows from this very nature of His being. His power, His mercy, His care, His foreknowledge, even his wrath can be viewed as “*severe love*”, especially when God deals with his people.

Dr F T Pickett explains that since God is love and love must have an object, it must be expressed. Thus God created man so he could love someone in a special way. He created man with a special need to be loved, a need which only He could fill, and with a unique capacity to relate to Him in love and worship. God had someone to love, and man had Someone who loved him.

When man spurned God’s love, it “*hurt*” him in a special sense, yet Love would not let man go. That is why God redeemed His fallen creature, because His love for man could not be extinguished by man’s disobedience. So whenever we as redeemed worship, obey and fellowship with God, we are “*healing*” his hurt love.

When Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well, he said, “*Give me a drink*.” John 4:7. Jesus revealed the “*thirst*” in God for the worship man can give Him. “*The time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.*” John 4:24. Yet we know that nothing man does can affect God’s eternal nature. He is still God no matter what anyone does. But God has real feelings which He showed when He created man in His own likeness. And God knew man would disobey and yet has chosen to relate to us in human terms so we can relate to Him.

John shows love’s progression, in 1 John 4:7,8, “*Beloved, let us love one another, for loves comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love*.” Sometimes we forget that the unsaved or our weaker brothers, look at the essence of our lives more than our outward deeds and sometimes we fail to speak the truth of God in love (Eph 4:15). What we are is more important to our observers that what we do and what we know. Love is the great convincer of the genuineness of our faith.

But when we realise that, we usually make a purely human mistake: we make inner vows. *“I will love others more so I can show the world that Jesus is the Son of God*.” But, it doesn’t work that way. Love is not something we manufacture or force. Love is something God puts in us before we express it.

Before love can be given, it must be received. We experience love as we come to know the “*Lover*”. “*He who does not love does not know God.”* (1 Jn 4:8) This is why Jesus said to some of the religious leaders, in John 5:42, “*But I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in you*.” They were religious, but Jesus went on to explain that their father was the devil. So we come to know real love when we are born again by the Spirit of God. That is when we know that we are unconditionally accepted and loved by God.

Alsobrook says, he discovered that the power in the experience of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is combined with love. The Greek word (*epipipto*) used for the infilling of the Spirit is also used for the love embrace of the father toward his prodigal. In Luke 15:20 it says, *“But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”* The identical verb is used in Acts 10:44, “*When Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word*.” The Holy Spirit is God, who is love. And in the dynamic of the Baptism of the Spirit, the Person of Love embraces Father’s child. We have all known this same love poured in us afresh during times of prayer and worship.

Love is the heart of the Gospel, the basis of our religion. Yet when we ask unbelievers, very few of them associate Christianity with love. We tell the lost how much God loves them, but we fail to love one another within the Church. Sadly, as the world looks on, believers criticise and slander each other, and even take each other to court.

No wonder we are told again and again to love one another. In fact, we are told 7 x more to love one another than we are told to love our enemies. Rom 12:10 says, “*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves.*” This devotion is translated as “*kindness and affection”* in the King James Version, and must be our attitude even when rebuke is given.

Our Father is love. As we become more like Him in our nature, we will evidence His love in more perceptive ways to those who contact us. The Love Being is the Supreme Lover, and the source of all genuine love. 2 Pet 1:4 says, “ … *he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature*…”

Let us keep coming to the Source of love, God Himself, where we can be filled with His Spirit and His love embrace, and then worship and love Him, and as we do that, we evidence more of His love to others. It happens without conscious thought at times. God is love, and we will love if we are His children.

God bless you till next week when we will continue *Learning how to Love.*

**Learning to Love**

**Chapter 4**

Last week we spoke about God who is love. He created us with a love need that only He can fill. We come to know real love when we are born again by the Spirit of God. And the words for *“the infilling*” of the Holy Spirit is the same as the “*love embrace*” the prodigal received from his father. We need to keep coming to the Source of love, God Himself, to be filled with His Spirit and His love embraces, and love Him. Only then we can evidence more of His love to others.

Today we look at the disciples, John and James, who were called the unflattering title, “*sons of thunder*” by Jesus. (Mark 3:17) We read about their short tempers in Luke 9:51-53, when the Samaritans did not receive Jesus’ ministry. They were probably rude to Jesus. When James and John saw this they asked, *“Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?*” It says, Jesus rebuked them. The interesting fact is that in Acts 8 after the evangelisation of Samaria under Philip’s ministry, Peter and a changed John were sent there. Vs 17 says, “*they* *placed their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit*.” (v 17). So he did get to call down fire - the fire of the Holy Spirit!

Then in Mark 9:38 we see more of John’s lovelessness, when he said, “*Teacher, we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”* Jesus told him not to stop him, “*for whoever is not against us is for us.”* And in Matt 20:20 – 28 John’s mother came with her sons and all knelt before Jesus asking him for the two highest thrones in His kingdom. Their concern was to promote themselves. We see in 1 Cor 13:4, that love does not boast or lift itself up.

So how did this *son of thunder* with the fiery temper, become a lover of Jesus who stands out as the greatest example of all? The truth is that John was the disciple whom Jesus loved and this realisation of being loved, transformed him. When John realised he was unconditionally loved, it freed him to love unconditionally. He could show love to Jesus and others. The *son of thunder* grew into the Apostle of Love.

John 13:23 tells us “*there was leaning upon Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved*.” 4 times John refers to himself as that disciple, “*whom Jesus loved*.” It denotes the person “*whom Jesus hugged*.” Jesus did not love John any more than He loved Matthew or Peter, but He expressed that same love to John more actively than He did to the other eleven. Why? Because John was one willing to lay his head on Jesus’ chest. All of them needed a hug, but only John was willing to draw close enough to Jesus to receive his embrace.

We can read the verse like this: “*There was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus was embracing in love.”* We too, want to be near the Lord, but not too near because we realise our gross imperfections in the light of his holiness, and we still fear God’s rejection. John knew Jesus was God with skin on and that he was love in human form. John behaved like a child does when he wants to be held - this was hug therapy. Jesus hasn’t changed. Jesus still hugs.

1. So we see the first change effected by this realisation of love was to transform John into a lover of God. He says in I John 4:19, *“We love Him, because He first loved us.”* He did not boast that he loved Jesus, but that Jesus loved him.
2. The 2nd change love accomplished was to replace John’s fear with boldness. 1 John 4:17,18, *“In this way love is made complete in us, so that we will have confidence on the day of judgement …. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment.”* After the crucifixion of Christ, John was the only disciple who, after forsaking the Lord with the others, returned to His Master within a short time, risking his own arrest and execution. The memory of his head on Jesus’ bosom, only a few hours earlier, brought him back to his senses. He found him at Caiaphas’ hall and stayed with Him all the way to the end.

There were also women who followed him and were at the foot of the cross. Women are more honest about their feelings than most men. With John, they were consumed by thoughts of their stricken Master, not by thoughts of self-preservation. Love takes us out of ourselves and into others. Fear can exist only in an atmosphere of self-focus. What a comfort to a dying Man, to see his only bosom-buddy, near his mother, who depended entirely on her Son for her support. Jesus transferred the earthly care of his mother to John as He hung on the cross. Interesting also that John was the only one, who, according to Church tradition, did not die through some agonising martyrdom, just as he was the only one who witnessed the crucifixion.

John and James were sons of their father, Zebedee, “*sons of thunder”*. So mostly likely their father had an unpredictable temper. Those are the people who abuse others emotionally, verbally and sometimes, physically. And usually they were similarly abused in childhood. The sins of the fathers are passed on to their sons, both by example as well as by genetic iniquity.

So consider the transforming power of God’s grace and love. Here is a man named after his angry temperament at the beginning of his walk with Jesus. Years later, *Saint John, the Beloved*, is known once more by his nature and named both “*Beloved*” and “*Apostle of Love*.” If God could do it for John, He can make us “*lovers*” as well, and correct our character flaws.

How did the Lord transform John? By meeting his unmet love need. John had never known agape love before he knew Jesus, who healed a deep ache inside John every time he laid his head on Jesus’ bosom.

We have all inherited our parents’ weaknesses, of anger or fear, which are all signs of not having all our love needs met. So as we come close to Jesus, and recognise how much He loves us, those love encounters with him will change us and fill us with confidence and drive out fear. And our focus will not always be on ourselves, but begin to change us to loving others. Once our sins are forgiven, by his undeserving grace and love, we can have confidence before God and not have any more fear of punishment for our sins. That is grace. That is love.

God bless you till next week when we will continue *Learning How to Love.*

**Learning to Love**

**Chapter 5**

Last week we looked at the change in John, the “*son of thunder*”, and who became the Apostle of Love. The truth is that John was the disciple whom Jesus loved and this realisation of being loved, transformed him. It freed him to love unconditionally. He could show love to Jesus and others. And as we come close to Jesus, and recognise how much He loves us, those love encounters with him will change us and also fill us with confidence and drive out fear.

Today we look at the characteristics of love, as we see it in 1 Corinthians 13, the famous love chapter and also Romans 13:10 and 1 Pet 4:8. We are urged to “*walk in love”* as true followers of Christ. If we study what real love is, we can evaluate our “*walk in love*”.

There are 3 basic points of love: Love suffers, love rejoices, and love covers. All the characteristics of love flow out of these 3 basic points.

1. Love suffers: We usually find that giving love is inconvenient to our flesh. In fact, love hurts, especially when it is not returned. No one wants to get hurt. However, if we are ever to become like Jesus, we will have to grow used to the suffering of love. Alsobrook says, “*Love is not expressed until a sacrifice is made.”* A good example of this is a mother’s love, that is willing to give and sacrifice even when her child is sixty years old. Although love has a way of transforming sacrifice into joy, a person suffers as he or she loves. Much of the suffering in our world is not redemptive suffering but because of sin. This suffering is only beneficial when it brings people to God. But all suffering in the demonstration of divine love, however, is beneficial regardless of outward results. It hurts to lay down your life for others. To have the heart of Jesus is have a heart that bleeds.

Characteristics of love falling under the suffering of love:

1. Love is patient: Love stays the same under pressure, is constant. Love does not escape from the suffering of inconvenience.
2. Love is kind: Love goes out of its way to be gracious and gentle, and does not escape from the suffering of constraint.
3. Love does not brag: it does not blow its own trumpet. We sometimes have to bite our tongue and suffer in order to show love.
4. Love is not arrogant: It is approachable and willing to consider the opinions of others even if it hurts. It is not proud or puffed up.
5. Love is not rude or inconsiderate: It does not slam doors or phones and doesn’t raise its voice.
6. Love does not seek its own: it is not selfish, self-seeking, or self-absorbed. Love changes a person from getting into giving. It is concerned for others, and does not insist on its own way.
7. Love is not provoked: it does not give way to outbursts. It is not touchy.
8. Love keeps not record of the wrongs it receives: Love forgets the wrongs that it forgives. It doesn’t rehash old mistakes. It may hurt to keep quiet.
9. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness: it finds no delight in wrongdoing. It gladly sacrifices carnal pleasures for spiritual delights.
10. Love bears all things: It is slow to lose heart and become upset.
11. Love endures all things: It doesn’t give up. It endures without limit. Love sacrifices the luxury of giving up.
12. Love Rejoices: Rejoicing love brings release and fulfilment to a person’s life. It brings release from the burden of suffering love and directs us to God and frees us from concern over a situation. Love rejoices after loved suffers. The rejoicing of love takes all pain away and causes the lover to experience great joy and peace. Suffering love can drain the emotions, but rejoicing love replenishes the soul. Characteristics falling under this one:
13. Love rejoices with the truth: it is always glad when truth wins. Love is glad when others succeed or prosper.
14. Love believes all things: It is eager to believe the best about every person. Love has unquenchable faith. It is ready to believe the second time.
15. Love hopes all things: It forbids discouragement and hopes under all circumstances. Love is optimistic in the face of negative circumstances, believing that all things work together for good. Love even finds hope in loss.
16. Love covers. It reveals the aspect of God which takes no delight in the faults of others and seeks to blanket the blemished one. Covering love causes us to put a hand over our mouths and not to convey factual information unless it can be used in a restorative way. Covering love restores those who failed.
17. Love never fails: Love doesn’t quit; its light does not go out.
18. Love does no harm: It never wrongs a neighbour. It doesn’t get even, but allows God to deal with offenders. It does not take revenge.
19. Love covers a multitude of sins: It does not count how many times it forgives. It does not expose the sins of others. It covers the situations where it was hurt and doesn’t bring them to mind.

We know that this is exactly the nature of Jesus. We can actually put the name “Jesus” in front of every characteristic of love. And we will all realise that all too often we do not match up to that standard. But let us understand that the life of Jesus in us is able to live this way. So we can replace the words, “*Jesus in me is kind. Jesus in me is not selfish. Jesus in me is not jealous. Jesus in me covers a multitude of sins.”* As we understand and believe that his life in us is this beautiful love, we will be able to draw on it and release this love more and more in our daily lives.

Let us learn this way of love; learn to receive and release Jesus’ love in us, in our attitudes and actions. Remind yourself that his life, his love, is real and within you. Let love out, as it suffers, as it rejoices and as it covers.

God bless you till next week as we continue *Learning How to Love.*

 **Learning to Love**

**Chapter 6**

Last time we spoke about the characteristics of love based on 1 Corinthians 13 and 1 Pet 4:8. We said there are 3 basic points of love: Love suffers, love rejoices, and love covers. All the characteristics of love flow out of these 3 basic points. We can learn this way of love, and learn to receive and release Jesus’ love in us, through our attitudes and actions. Remind yourself that his life, his love, is real and within you.

Today we want to look how to make payment on our debt of love. Romans 13:8 says, “*Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law*.” You and I *“owe love”*. The reason we are love debtors is because it is impossible for us to ever love others as much as God loves us. We are obligated to love every person. Paul teaches in this passage that we are not to live beyond our means in finances, and to be extravagant in the love we show others, because we will never be able to love people more than God loves us. Paul teaches that we are to be simple in our lifestyle, but lavish in our *lovestyle*. Loving others is true prosperity.

*“Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore Love is the fulfilment of the law.”* Rom 8:10. Jesus taught that loving our neighbour is the second greatest commandment preceded only but the command to love God. Everything in the Law hung on these 2 commandments. And everything in the law was summed up in love. Paul said in Gal 5:14, *“The entire law is summed up in a single command: Love your neighbour as yourself.”* David Alsobrook says, “*Love is the great simplifier of the complexities of Christianity.*” Paul shows in Romans 13 that after love frees us, it puts us in debt. It frees us as it enters us, but obligates us to free others. And love frees others as it flows from us and then obligates them to love again.

When Jesus ministered to the needy, his ministry was driven by compassion. As he was moved with compassion, he gave sight to the blind, food to the hungry and deliverance to the oppressed. Compassion is focussed love. It is love in the specific area of his hurt. It is the outreach of God to the person who needs his touch.

And when love touches a person, it frees him from unforgiveness, bitterness, past hurts, emotional bruises, physical illnesses, mental bondages, and relational difficulties. Remember how God’s love changed you when you were downcast or troubled? It came either as you prayed or read your Bible, or at other times through a person. Sometimes the clouds are so dark we cannot receive the sunshine of his love and he uses people to send “bottled sunshine” in the form of a phone call or a friend.

We can transmit love through a smile, a kind gesture or just the tone of our voice, which can often lead to opportunities to share the perfect love of Jesus with even strangers.

So how do we make payments on our love debt?

1. Serve others. Gal 5:13 says, “*You, my brothers, we called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather serve one another in love.”* You may have a busy schedule, but look for a little way you can bless someone by helping them. Give someone a cup of coffee with a smile – look for ways to step through open doors to serve and bless others. You will be blessed instead, because *“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”* Giving to someone who cannot return that favour to you, is a supreme blessing, because in this way only God can reward you. Make payments through service.
2. Pray for others. Matt 5:44, 46 *“Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you …. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?”* Praying for others is a wonderful way to express love, because no one is around to watch you do it. Prayer is selfless and pure. God is the only Person who sees the act love love, which is why he rewards such a prayer so greatly. A life of intercession is a life of love in its purest sense. Jesus taught that we can make love payments through prayer.
3. Return good for evil. God requires us to love those who hurt, malign or abuse us. This cuts across the grain of fallen human nature. We want to retaliate in order to get even, and we do it as we “bite” back with sharp, cutting words that sting. But God offers us extra grace so a root of bitterness cannot grow in our hearts. Bitterness, unforgiveness and resentment are love extinguishers.

Love has a supernatural quality that enables us to rise above our humanness into the divine nature of our heavenly Father. Drawing from His divine love will conquer your natural inclinations and enable you to love somebody who was rude or ugly to you. We can love without offering even one cutting word back. This is the way believers can bless those that curse them. Make love payments by returning good for evil.

1. Cover over a multitude of others’ sins. 1 Pet 4:8 tells us to love each other deeply in this way. The Greek word for *deeply* here is “*stretchingly*” – in other words, a stretched out love will cover many sins. Our stretched out hearts will cover the faults of others without condemning them. This is the unconditional love of God that stretched all the way from heaven to earth to save us. He stretched his arms of love around us. As we yield to him, we can release and project His love to others. And as you give love to others, God will give more love to you. The cycle never ends. We will be tested again and again and may want to give up, but love bears all things; when overwhelmed, love never fails. We become the love of God to the rest of the world, and no act of love is ever wasted.

Let us continue to pay our debts of love to others by serving them, by praying for them, by returning good for evil, and by stretching out to cover their faults. The unending debt of love should not discourage us, but we should be eager to make love payments. Letting God love on us is wonderful, but letting Him love through us is even more wonderful. We will find that we reap what we sow, and much love will come flooding into our own lives.

God bless you till next week as we continue *Learning How to Love.*

 **Learning to Love**

**Chapter 7**

Last week we spoke about paying our debt of love to others. Romans 8:10 also says, *“Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore Love is the fulfilment of the law.”* Ways of making love debt payments, is by serving others, by praying for them, by returning good for evil, and by stretching out to cover their faults. In this way we become the love of God to the rest of the world.

Today we want to look at the aspect of projecting love, as David Alsobrook defines it. Projected love denotes a love which flows out of the heart toward a hurting person. It is different from a feeling of love inside you for a needy individual. But it is when you deliberately transmit God’s love to someone as a vehicle of His love. It is focussed love directed to meet the needs in the hurting person. This is compassion, which moved Jesus towards the suffering and “moved” Him to release the power that ministered to that person’s pain.

The truth is that every human spirit senses the projection of love even if there is no outward sign which might indicate this to the sender. Alsobrook tells how he sensed a cashier at a petrol station was hurting. So her prayed briefly in his heart and sensed the compassion of Christ rising in his heart for her. When he turned to her and told her the pump number and the amount of purchase, in purely natural conversation, God’s love through him overwhelmed her, and she burst into tears. Agape love is powerful. So he took the opportunity of her opened heart to tell her how much Jesus cared for her and the reality of God hit her full force. She had to call the manager to take over the register while she excused herself. Projected love of God will touch peoples’ hearts and can break down barriers.

We can practise to speak love-charged words and will then have stories to share as well. Jesus had this wonderful ability to show love to complete strangers, who opened up to Him, like the woman at the well. Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 13:5, “*Do you not realise that Christ Jesus is in you …?”*

Love is not the power that completes the healing or deliverance, but it is the power which lets the miracle begin. The power that accomplished the completed work is the anointing, which is the application of the Holy Spirit within the believer’s spirit. The anointing contains the power of God, or the *dunamis* of the Holy Spirit, to accomplish His powerful works. Jesus promised the inherent ability and power of the Holy Spirit to His disciples shortly before he ascended, “*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.”* Acts 1:8.

Alsobrook says, “*Love is the power behind the dunamis power, the catalyst which releases faith, which in turn releases the power and grace of God that works the miracle.”* Galatians 5: 6 says, “*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”*  Apparently the word here for “*expressing itself*” in Greek, is the word for “*energised by*”. Faith is energised, activated, and made operational by love. That is also why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:1, *“Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts.”* This will explain why few Spirit-filled believers observe miracles that happen through them. We see too few miracles happen in God’s Kingdom today. It isn’t that the promised power of the Holy Spirit was not received through the Baptism of the Spirit, but the power was not activated though the energising power of God’s love. Phil 1:8 speaks of this “*affection of Christ Jesus”*. The older version uses the words, *“bowels of compassion.”*

The Holy Spirit is the source of *energising love*, which becomes this projected love we have been speaking about. This love contains the power or anointing, which affects the miracle. One of the Spirit’s primary activities is to continually pour out love within our spirits, just as another of his functions is to equip us with *dunamis*-power.

When we are baptised into the Holy Spirit we are usually overwhelmed by His love and we show that love for a while in our speech and actions. However, as we encounter various trials in life, often our love grows cold. And cold love is powerless. It cannot energise faith or release anointing. Lukewarm or cold love only affects believers, as unbelievers do not know the agape love of God until they are born again as John tells us in 1 John 4:8, “*Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.”*

We must emphasize that divine love, cannot be manufactured by human effort. Projected love is not the product of soulish power or self will. The secret is maintaining a fresh relationship with the Holy Spirit so that His love may be poured out within our own hearts. His love flow can be blocked by unforgiveness or guilt, but that can be removed by simple prayer. Jude admonishes us in verse 20,21, “*But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in the God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life*.”

If you have not yet opened your heart to the love of God through Jesus, why not do so this morning? God, who is love, will pour his love into your heart by his Holy Spirit, who will come to live inside you. Pray this simple prayer after me, *“God, I invite you into my life to free me from hatred and bitterness. Forgive me of my sin and independence of you. Pour out your love and come and live in me by your Spirit. Thank you that you save me today and give me eternal life. Thank you for your love that you will pour out through me into the lives of others. Amen*.”

So let us project His love, his compassion, that will activate God’s anointing and touch many hurting hearts around us. We will see miracles happen as we become a channel of His powerful love to the world. Let His love and compassion active your faith and anointing, and see lives touched by the power of God.

God bless you till next week as we continue this study of “Learning to Love.”

**Learning to Love**

**Chapter 8**

Last week we spoke about projected love, which denotes a love which flows out of the heart toward a hurting person. It is when you deliberately transmit God’s love to someone as a vehicle of His love. It is focussed love or compassion. We also said, faith is energised, activated, and made operational by love. Let His love and compassion active your faith and your anointing, and see lives touched by the power of God.

Today we want to look at how to release miracle-activing love. The author tells about a hardened criminal, Starr Daily, in the early 20th Century, who was miraculously touched by the love of God in his solitary cell. As he sent love thoughts and prayers to his enemies from prison, profound changes happened in their attitudes toward him and others. He let God’s love flow through him to people, and their lives were changed. He even focussed God’s love on his damaged body organs, caused by extreme punishment in prison, and miracle healing began to happen to him. Guilt and fear are the two greatest obstacles to releasing love. Matt 5:44 says, *“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.”* And 1 Pet 3:9, “*Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called, so that you may inherit a blessing.”*

Practicing love by projecting it in prayer to those who need the Lord’s healing touch can only bring blessing to them and fulfilment to us.

In Mark 10:21, we read that *“Jesus looked at him and loved him.”* And Matt 9:36 says, “*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them…*” We, too, can look and love like He did, because the unchanged Christ lives inside us.

This is not a soulish activity, but a heart of love and faith, joined with prayer for someone, who might not even be in your presence. There are a few points to prepare your heart to love in this way:

1. To project God’s love to another you will need first of all to rid your heart of all bitterness. Bitterness grieves the Holy Spirit. We must forgive those who wronged us, because nothing quenches love faster than unforgiveness and bitterness. Col 3, 15, *“Forgive as the Lord forgave you*.” To become a channel of his love to others, there cannot be any blockage of resentment or anger towards those who hurt you.
2. Then, fill your heart with love for God. Prayer and worship enable us to express love to God directly. And when we commune with the Love Being, His love rubs off on us. Spend time adoring the Lord. David’s only desire was “*to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord*.” (Psa 27:4). As you soak up the oil of his love, and even when someone with a hard attitude brushes against you, God’s love will brush off on them.
3. Then, ask the Lord to fill your heart with His love for people. God is into people. He loves the human race and wants us as his sons, to being them to His love. David Alsobrook says he often does not witness to strangers, but as he just loves them with God’s love, they soon ask him what he does, and a door opens naturally into sharing the Gospel with some of them.
4. Pray in the Holy Spirit. This aids the infusion of God’s love into your spirit. Rom 5:5, “*God has poured his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”* Jude also says in v 20,21, “*Pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God’s love…”*
5. Surrender yourself fully to the Lord. In order to enter into God’s presence and love, we must fully yield ourselves to Him. 2 Chronicles 30:8 says*, “Submit to the Lord. Come into His sanctuary…”* Surrendering and yielding to the Lord unclogs the hose, which allows the Living water to flow through us more freely. It is just letting go of your own struggles and letting God take over. There is great release when we consciously give over everything to the Lord, and let Him work on our behalf.
6. Focus on the individual while in prayer. This is the heart of projecting or transmitting the love of God you feel inside for the person as you pray for him. Your prayer target becomes the recipient of increased grace whether or not he realises it. Paul says in Phil 1: 3,4, *“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy…. Since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God’s grace with me.”* Paul spent a lot of time in jail and thinking about the believers to whom he had ministered and praying for them so they could share in the grace of God in his life. He could communicate grace through prayer as well as through preaching. Ask God to let His love wash over the person you are praying for. God says in Jeremiah 31:3, “*I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness*.”

So to re-cap these points to help us to become a channel of His love to others, 1) we must rid our hearts of all bitterness, 2) gaze on his beauty and fill your heart with his love, 3) ask God to fill your heart with love for people, 4) pray in the Holy Spirit, and 5) surrender yourselves fully to the Lord and 6) focus on the individual while praying that His love will wash over them.

This love projection in prayer will release miracles in the lives of those we pray for. Become that channel of love that changes lives. Practice projecting God’s love through prayer. Maybe you are praying for a loved one or child, then become the channel for His love into that child’s life, because His love will melt even the hardest of hearts.

God bless you till next week as we continue this study of “Learning to Love.”

 **Learning to Love**

**Chapter 9**

Last week we spoke about miracle-activating love. Project His love in prayer to those who need the Lord’s healing touch. First rid your heart of all bitterness, gaze on Jesus’ beauty and ask God to fill your heart with love for people, as you pray in the Holy Spirit, fully surrendered to Him. Then pray that God’s love will wash over them. This brings breakthrough in those hurting or hardened by sin.

Today we want to look briefly at dealing with pain in our own lives. The reality is that life hurts. We may have experienced pain from making ourselves vulnerable to others. Friends may have turned against you. Abuses are heaped on us from unhealed people. We know that hurt people hurt people. There may be the pain of disappointment, divorce, or betrayal.

The question is, *“How should deal with our pain?”* Often times we deal with pain through negative emotions and negative behaviour. Sinful attitudes and sinful behaviour usually go hand in hand. Often unbelievers have hardened their hearts to pain by emotional shut-down.

But we as children of God have the desire and hope to be healed from pain. So how do we get release? We need to open ourselves up to the Holy Spirit within us, and release our emotional pain, frustrations, and hurts. He is the “*Balm of Gilead*”. Jesus is our shame and sorrow bearer. He does heal emotional pain and he does neutralise negative emotions. We need to “*pour out our souls to the Lord*”, like David did. Don’t bottle up your suppressed hurts inside, because it results in sinful attitudes, such as unforgiveness and bitterness. And you will then try to compensate through sinful behaviours, like alcohol or illicit sexual addictions. Suppressed pain causes damaged relationships.

Unhealed pain also opens people to the realm of demonic oppression, inviting bad spirits to cause havoc in our lives. It will make you emotionally ill. Unhealed pain can even cause physical sickness. Often people seek escape through religious activities rather than find healing in God. But if we desire true joy and fruitfulness, we must seek true wholeness.

The truth is that pain is unavoidable. We can either attempt to escape from pain or release it to Jesus. That is the only means of finding freedom and relief. Worship Him in your pain even though it’s the last things you feel like doing. David released his pain through prayer and praise. Ps 116: 3-6 says, “*I was overcome by trouble and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the Lord: ‘O Lord save me!” The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. The Lord protects the simple-hearted; when I was in great need he saved me.”* Then you can come to the place to forgive the one who caused your pain, and find forgiveness for your sinful reaction to that person. We have to get to the place where we have no sense of vengeance, and can even ask God to bless them. Then we will be able to say as Paul did in 2 Cor 1:3,4, “*Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”* Somehow the pain you have experienced in your life increases your ability to feel the pain of others. Some call this *“redemptive suffering*” - Jesus endured redemptive suffering. But much of our pain is needless and self-inflicted pain, because unhealed hurts leads to further pain.

So the answer is to go to the Lord right away with your hurt, instead of “stewing” over it, thinking what you should have said or done to get even. It may also be helpful also to discuss your situation with an understanding friend.

The most liberating way to deal with hurts is to apply the ***Royal Law of Love*** to the situations which caused pain. Ask yourself, “*Will I walk in love or wallow in self-pity?”* My choice is the determining factor as to how quickly the pain dissipates and the joy returns. David Alsobrook says, “*We cannot be loosed from the bondage of pain until we forgive from our hearts, and we cannot forgive from our hearts unless we are willing to love.”* Your offender may not be free toward you, but you can be free toward them.

Apply God’s love to the situation. Draw on His love to heal your heart. Then show and project His love to that person in prayer and even action – you could give them a gift - no matter how much it makes you wince. But it will free you into the grace of God.

Let me ask you, “*What is the opposite of love?”* Hate? Lust? Fear? Because God is love, anything that is ungodly is an opposite of love - even worry and anxiety, doubt, unbelief, guilt and shame. Every negative emotion is the opposite of love. Therefore the answer to healing is always **love**.

You see, victory is not the absence of fear, but the presence of love and peace; it is not the absence of bitterness, but the fullness of love for the transgressor. Victory is not biting your tongue when we would love to tell somebody off, but it is receiving His love and taking a step toward loving that person. Jesus is our victory, as we read in 1 Pet 2:21-23. *“To this you have been called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled insults at him, he did not retaliate, when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly*.”

Life may hurt, but love can heal. Neutralise your negative emotions caused by hurts, before they neutralise you. Stay effective in the kingdom of God by applying love to your painful experiences. Jesus prayed this for us, “*Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world … I have made your known to them, and will continue to make you known* ***in order that the love you have for me may be in them*** *and that I myself may be in them.”* Receiving His love is the answer to being healed from hurt and pain. Then loving the offender with this same love is possible, because of the grace and love of God we have received.

Well, this brings us to the end of the teaching on *Learning to Love*. God bless you till next week when we begin another mini-series.