

February 11, 2024 Valentine's Day "Beloved"

There is no power on earth compared to God's power because He created it all. And besides that, beyond our capacity to understand or even fathom is that God's power is infinite, limitless, and creation and sustaining the heavens and earth are no decrease or change in that power. Ponder that for a moment, then put it together with the thought that one way God's sovereign power is made real to us is by His **love** directly to and indirectly through those who have Him as priority one in their lives. That love lets God into a life to make order out of chaos! Sharpening the receptors of love is how we earthlings can make sense and order out of the chaos of circumstance and confusion. Reducing or blocking the priority of God in life reduces or eliminates entirely the possibility of order defeating chaos in life.

The reality of plugging into that "love" power source means nothing works as extraordinary on earth as when God's love is flowing through we of HIS church under HIS charge and command. God's church is at it's greatest potential when men and women stand up with courage and conviction for God's righteousness and justice to prevail as revealed and empowered by Gods love..

I stand alongside you who are assembled - realizing - that from God as our "love" power generator - we become the moral compass for our families, and the community in which we live... And because God has selected you - you are now that moral compass upon which the future of this congregation, and community depend// every family and every individual owes their spiritual safety, security and hope to God's presence and their intimate connection to His ultimate power made manifest as love. There is no power on earth compared to God's power and therefore nothing works as great as when God's church is working energized by the power of God's inexhaustible love.

1 Peter 2:9 *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;* The word darkness refers to chaos, the word light refers to order.

I bring this morning to you who are therein described as God's *own special people* -a responsibility for their spiritually gifted service. The focus of this message is the message of

Valentines Day – love. The message of God’s pure agape’ unconditional sovereign love.

1 Corinthians 13:2 *And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. --- but have not love, I am nothing - In other words, all our achievements and talents ring hollow if they are not accompanied by the overflow of the power source of genuine Godly love.*

Love is so important in the biblical context that it goes beyond just an emotion or feeling. It becomes an action and a lifestyle choice. The Bible beautifully illustrates this with Jesus’ commandment in **John 13:34** *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ///* Please note this not a scriptural take it or leave it suggestion – this is sacred commandment: *as I have loved you, that you also love one another!* God commands it because He is sovereign, He constructed us and knows that is what is best for us and makes us function in life for our purpose and His eternal glory.

This is about actively showing kindness and forgiveness to others. **Colossians 3:12-13** *Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; **13** bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.* Among the most difficult things God has directed us to do is forgive, much less to forgive “*as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*” There is no provision for debate or argument on our part regarding forgiveness ,- just do it! Even from Jesus’ model prayer in **Matthew 6:12** we say “*forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*” satan has convinced some people that all this is a burdensome load of commands to keep them from fun, freedom and happiness when in actuality to reject, compromise or criticize those commandments is when fun, freedom and happiness are illusive and unsuccessful.

In essence, **the Bible emphasizes that without love & forgiveness, life loses its true meaning and purpose.** Love isn’t just the icing on the cake; it’s a fundamental ingredient for a fulfilling life. So next time you’re pondering over what really matters in life, remember what

the Bible teaches – without love we’re merely going through the motions of struggling in chaos without truly living for a purpose, the purpose for which God designed and create us..

1 Corinthians 13:1 *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.*

Peeling back the pages of the Bible, one finds love woven into its very fabric. It’s a theme that runs deep and wide throughout this Holy book, touching on every aspect of human experience. From God’s unconditional love for humanity to instructions on how we should express love towards each other, it paints a profound picture of what true love is.

When most folks think about love in the Bible, they’re likely to recall **1 Corinthians 13:4-7** *Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.* Here, Paul describes love as patient, kind, not envious or boastful. He goes on to say that it isn’t rude or self-seeking either.

Then there’s John 3:16 – perhaps one of the most quoted verses from scripture – which speaks volumes about God’s immeasurable love for us all. **John 3:16** *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*” That spells out divine tenderness in big bold letters. That spells out the ultimate example, the perfect model of agape – unconditional love.

Husbands are commanded to mirror Christ’s sacrificial love for His church when loving their wives in **Ephesians 5:25-33**, *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 31 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the*

church. **33** Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

That means laying down their own desires and needs for the sake of their partners', just as Jesus did for humanity. That means going back to the garden and following through on God's plan and design: **Genesis 2:18** *And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."* Amplified version: *Now the Lord God said, "It is not good (beneficial) for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper [one who balances him—a counterpart who is] suitable and complementary for him."*

The agape love relationship in marriage is the idea of completion. Husband and wife are created to be a fulfilled and completed singular unit: **Ephesians 5:31** *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."*

Husband and wife are two unique created and designed persons to function as one in love and purpose.

And love does not stop there! In **Matthew 22:36-39** *"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"* **37** *Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'* **38** *This is the first and great commandment.* **39** *And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'*

We are shown that to *"Love your neighbor as yourself"* is an essential part of Christ's teaching – a commandment second only to loving God with our whole heart. Both contain love as the key ingredient --So when you delve into understanding what biblical texts say about being without love... well let's just say - it's like trying to imagine a rainbow without colors! The message seems clear enough; without genuine selfless love, life can feel pretty bland, commonly tumultuous and inherently incomplete.

When it comes to the Bible, one might say it's a veritable love letter from God to humanity. The concept of love is woven into its many pages, intertwining with teachings and stories that have stood the test of time. **1 Corinthians 13:2** *And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.* That verse reinforces again

how essential love is in our lives. It suggests that no matter how gifted or accomplished we are, without love, it amounts to zilch. It is like when your electricity goes off and everything is without power – that describes our lives without God’s love power source.

Romans 12:9-10 *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;* Here we see the Bible encouraging us to hold onto genuine feelings of affection towards each other while rejecting malice of every kind. This is a great time to reinforce the purpose of Bible reading for practical helps in dealing with real world situations with God’s direction and love. A reinforcement of the Ephesians 5 passage a few minute ago and the next one:

John 15:13 where Jesus Himself says: *Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.* Through these words, Jesus shows us the ultimate expression of selfless affection – sacrificing oneself for others. The world is replete with those stories, I mention just one – a couple of years ahead of us in school was Gerald Adams from Craig who was killed in Viet Nam – a medal of honor recipient for flying his helicopter again and again into enemy fire to rescue trapped soldiers. *Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.*

Now **1 John 4:8** *He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.* With this verse as a foundation stone in Christian theology, we understand that knowing God requires embracing His essence and the essence of God is Love itself becoming the power and energy source of our bodies functions in life.!

To round off our exploration into biblical verses about love starts with **Proverbs 10:12** *Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins.* This nugget of wisdom underscores how potent the power of forgiveness can be when fueled by unconditional agape love.

John 15:12 *This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.* As followers of Christ we are instructed to imitate His form of love for everyone we meet. Without such love, there’s an inevitable disconnect from the very essence of Christianity and relationship with our fellow humanity.

As I have already pointed out the book of Proverbs adds further weight to this topic – specifically with **Proverbs 10:12** *Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins.* I like the clarity of the **NIV Proverbs 10:12** “*Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs.*” It is clear that living without love not only isolates us from others but also perpetuates conflict and disharmony.

Let’s not forget about brotherly love that is an active expression of Christian love. Consider **Proverbs 19:17** *He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given.* Helping the poor is like lending to God! This isn’t merely altruism for its own sake but helping the poor, flows directly from a heart filled with divine love.

So it is; **without** LOVE permeating every facet of life – be it faith or charity or interpersonal relations – Christianity loses its heart and soul.

There’s no denying that love is an essential theme in the Bible. It pops up again and again like a refrain in your favorite song. The New Testament alone mentions ‘love’ over two hundred times! That’s quite a reckoning and underlines just how important this theology of love is within Christian teachings and it’s life application on this Valentin’s celebration and every day of our lives.

Magic of Love by Helen Steiner Rice

Love is like Magic and it always will be,
 For Love still remains Life's Sweet Mystery!
 Love works in ways that are wondrous and strange
 And there's Nothing in Life that Love cannot change!
 Love can transform the most common place
 Into beauty and splendor and sweetness and grace!
 Love is unselfish, understanding and kind,
 For it sees with its Heart and not with its Mind
 Love gives and forgives, there is nothing too much
 For Love to heal with its Magic Touch!
 Love is the language that every heart speaks,
 For Love is the one thing that every heart seeks!

1 Corinthians 13:2

John 13:34

Colossians 3:12-13

Matthew 6:12

1 Corinthians 13:1

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

John 3:16

Ephesians 5:25-33

Genesis 2:18

Ephesians 5:31

Matthew 22:36-39

1 Corinthians 13:2

Romans 12:9-10

John 15:13

1 John 4:8

Proverbs 10:12

John 15:12

Proverbs 10:12

NIV Proverbs 10:12

Proverbs 19:17