

Issue 25 - Love Is Not Impressive

Messy story of the week

Linda is exhausted, but not in a dramatic way.

She's the one who remembers permission slips, keeps track of who needs what, notices when someone's tone has shifted, and makes sure everyone gets to church mostly on time. She prays. She tries to respond thoughtfully instead of snapping. She swallows irritation more often than she'd like to admit.

From the outside, her marriage looks solid. From the inside, she feels unseen.

What troubles her most isn't the work itself, but the quiet question she doesn't know how to name: *If I'm doing all the right things, why does love still feel so thin?*

Faithful God, then and now

"If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing."

— 1 Corinthians 13:3

When Paul wrote what we now call 1 Corinthians 13, he wasn't offering a poetic ideal. He was confronting a church that was spiritually busy and relationally immature.

They spoke well. They served hard. They believed deeply.
And yet, something essential was missing.

Paul doesn't deny the value of effort, sacrifice, or faithfulness. He simply insists that without love, those things lose their substance. God has always been attentive not only to what His people do, but to who they are becoming as they do it.

The same faithful God who spoke truth to Corinth still speaks gently and firmly to us: *Love is not measured only by output. It is revealed over time through formation.*

What we can learn

- It's possible to be sincere, responsible, and still miss the heart of love
 - Doing "good" things doesn't automatically form a loving posture
 - Exhaustion can be a signal that love has been confused with performance
 - God cares deeply about the condition of our hearts, not just the weight of our effort
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Behind the curtain

In coaching, I often see people who are faithful, conscientious, and well-intentioned quietly burning out. They've learned to equate love with responsibility and worth with usefulness.

When love becomes something we *produce* instead of something we *practice*, resentment and loneliness tend to follow. Not because anyone is malicious, but because love was asked to carry a weight it was never meant to bear.

Faith step for the week

Pay attention to where you feel the need to prove your love through effort. Ask God what love might look like if it were rooted in presence rather than productivity.

Bible verse

"If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing."

— 1 Corinthians 13:3

2-minute practice

Once today, pause before responding to a request or a problem. Ask yourself quietly:
Am I trying to be impressive here, or present?

Prayer

Faithful God,
You see the ways we try, strive, and carry more than we were meant to hold.
Gently loosen our grip on performance and teach us the shape of real love.
Form our hearts, not just our habits.
Amen.

Coming next

Next week, we'll look at why love is hardest in the very moments we feel most justified in our reactions, and what patience really requires when emotions run hot.