

## Love Life Actions

Series: Love Life: Discovering a Deeper Connection

John 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

February 12, 2012

Welcome again to worship. I'm so glad you are here.

TV WORSHIP DOESN'T FEEL LIKE WORSHIP

There is something special when the people of God gather to worship their Father.

Valentine's Day is all about telling that one special person how much you love them. Companies buy advertising time to tell you what to get that special one in your life. You can order flowers through ProFlowers.com, mail order chocolate covered fruit, some Hoodie-Footie pajama thing. Of course, you can also buy the bling.

But I have a problem with all that. How does buying something from ProFlowers.com, who takes thousands and thousands of Valentine's Day orders, tell that one special person how special they are to you.

How do I tell Myra how special she is? I'm a little too old to do cut red construction paper into a heart and draw X's and O's on it. I have to think harder on this, and this year, I've got it. This year, to tell Myra how special she is and how much I love her, I bought her pink golf balls! Isn't that great?

We are talking about our Love Life these first two weeks of February. We want to deepen our love connections. Last week, we talked about Love Life Priorities. We have to find balance in our lives, because left to our own devices, we will rattle and bang and cause all kinds of problems, like my front loading washer. To find balance, to set our priorities in the right order, we need to use this simple acronym: JOY. Jesus, others, you.

*"The most important commandment is this... you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. The second is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself. No other commandment is greater than these."*<sup>1</sup>

In the Great Commandment, we find our love life priority: love Jesus, love others, and then love ourselves.

Today, I want us to look at Love Life Actions. You see, we can say we love someone, but eventually, talk is just that... talk. You've got to show love.

Jesus made this abundantly clear to His disciples in the Upper Room just before His arrest, trial, and crucifixion. These "last word" of Jesus to the people who would lead His movement after His death included this from John 13:34-35 (The Message): "Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other."

Now, to love others was not a new commandment<sup>2</sup>, but to love others as much as Christ loved others – that was revolutionary. Now we are to love others based on Jesus' sacrificial love for us. Jesus says that such love will not only bring unbelievers to

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 12:28-31 (New Living Translation, Second Edition)

<sup>2</sup> See Leviticus 19:18

Christ; it will also keep believers strong and united in a world hostile to God. Jesus was a living example of God's love, as we are to be living examples of Jesus' love.

He says that our love that is like His will show we are his disciples. The Message Version puts it clearly: "This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other."<sup>3</sup> What do people see when they look at you, at your family, at our church? Do people see petty bickering, jealousy, and division? Or do they know us as Jesus' followers by our love for one another?

Now, this kind of love is more than simply warm feelings; it is an attitude that reveals itself in action. How can we love others as Jesus loves us? By helping when it's not convenient? By giving when it hurts? By devoting energy to others' welfare rather than our own? By absorbing hurts from others without complaining or fighting back? Yes. This kind of loving is hard to do, isn't it? That is why people notice when you do it and know you are empowered by a supernatural source.

The Bible has another beautiful description of love in 1 Corinthians 13. You usually hear this read at weddings. I want to help us see it beyond the wedding setting and see it as a guide for our Love Life Actions.

This is what 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 says, if you paraphrase every line into a positive Love Life Action:

*Love is patient, love is kind. It lives in charity, it is humble, it is modest. It is polite, it is self-giving, it is pleasing, it forgets our faults and mistakes. Love delight in good and rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always preserves. Love is everlasting.*

In the time we have left, I want to look briefly at each of these Love Life Actions. And on the back of your bulletin, I want you to jot notes down and pray about which action or actions you want to focus on with each of your Love Life Connections.

First, Love is patient. The Greek word<sup>4</sup> used in the New Testament always describes patience with people and not patience with circumstances. It is patience of a person who is wronged and who has it easily in their power to avenge, and yet will not do it. It describes a person who is slow to anger and it is used of God himself in His relationship with us. Patience as a Love Life Action is the same as the patience God has for us.

History tells us that no one treated President Abraham Lincoln with more contempt than did Edwin Stanton, his Secretary of War during the Civil War. He called Lincoln "a low cunning clown", he nicknamed him "the original gorilla" and said that it was foolish to wander about Africa trying to capture a gorilla when one could be found so easily at Springfield, Illinois. Lincoln said nothing. He made Stanton his war minister because he was the best man for the job and he treated him with every courtesy. The years wore on. The night came when the assassin's bullet murdered Lincoln in the Ford's Theater. In the little room to which the President's body was taken stood that same Stanton, and, looking down on Lincoln's silent face, he said through his tears, "There lies the greatest ruler of men the world has ever seen." The patience of love had conquered in the end.

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<sup>3</sup> John 13:35 (The Message)

<sup>4</sup> *makrothumein*

Is there someone in your Love Life Connections whom needs this Love Life Action of patience? Write “patience” down by that person’s name on the back of your bulletin.

The second Love Life Action is kindness. “Love is kind.” This means that love is “sweet to all.” 2 Corinthians 6:6 says, “We prove ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, by the Holy Spirit within us, and by our sincere love.”<sup>5</sup>

Throughout history we see that so much Christianity is good but unkind. There was no more religious a man than Philip II of Spain, and yet he founded the Spanish Inquisition and thought he was serving God by massacring those who thought differently from him. There is in so many good church people who have an attitude of criticism. How many of us would have sided with the rulers and not with Jesus if they had had to deal with the woman caught in the act of adultery. Love Life Actions do not criticize; instead, they are kind.

Is there someone in your Love Life Connections whom needs this Love Life Action of kindness? Write “kind” down by that person’s name on the back of your bulletin.

The next Love Life Action is to live in charity. It means not to be envious. It has been said that there are really only two classes of people in this world: those who are millionaires and those who would like to be.

There are two kinds of envy. The one covets the possessions of other people. This kind of envy is very difficult to avoid because it is a very human thing; that’s why it is the focus of one of the 10 Commandments. The other kind of envy is worse. It grudges the very fact that others should have what you do not have. This kind of envy doesn’t so much want things for itself as it wishes that others had not got them.

Paul writes that envy is a sign of living a life that is full of sin and not one lived for God.<sup>6</sup> Instead, to love like Jesus, our Love Life Action of charity must live within us. Is there someone in your Love Life Connections whom needs this Love Life Action of charity? Write “charity” down by that person’s name on the back of your bulletin.

The next Love Life Action is humility. This is a self-effacing quality in love. A true Love Life Action will always be far more impressed with its own unworthiness than its own merit. The real lover cannot ever get over the wonder that they are loved. Love is kept humble by the consciousness that it can never offer its loved one a gift which is good enough.

Is there someone in your Love Life Connections whom needs this Love Life Action of humility? Write “humble” down by that person’s name on the back of your bulletin.

The next Love Life Action is modesty. Now, this doesn’t refer to your clothing. This Love Life Action is not inflated with its own importance. Napoleon always advocated the sanctity of the home and the obligation of public worship – for others. Of himself, he said, “I am not a man like other men. The laws of morality do not apply to me.” The really great man or woman never thinks of his or her own importance. It is the modest people, the lowly, that God loves to use. Jesus said, “God blesses those who

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<sup>5</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:6 (New Living Translation, Second Edition)

<sup>6</sup> See 1 Corinthians 3:3

are humble (meek), for they will inherit the whole earth.”<sup>7</sup> It is the Mother Theresa’s of the world that make a difference because they exhibit the Love Life Action of modesty.

Is there someone in your Love Life Connections whom needs to see this Love Life Action of modesty? Write “modest” down by that person’s name on the back of your bulletin.

The next Love Life Action is being polite. Love is not rude, it is polite. It is a significant fact that in Greek the words for grace and for charm are the same. There is a kind of Christianity which takes a delight in being blunt and almost brutal, like the hell-fire-and-brimstone preacher. But is that love? I think there is a graciousness in Christian love which never forgets that courtesy and tact and politeness are lovely things.

Is there someone in your Love Life Connections whom needs to see this Love Life Action of being polite? Write “polite” down by that person’s name on the back of your bulletin.

The next Love Life Action is self-giving. Love does not insist upon its rights. In the last analysis, there are in this world only two kinds of people – those who always insist upon their privileges and those who always remember their responsibilities; those who are always thinking of what life owes them and those who never forget what they owe to life. It would be the key to almost all the problems which surround us today if we would think less of our rights and more of our duties. Whenever we start thinking about “our place”, we are drifting away from Christian love.

Instead, Christian love is self-giving. Jesus came to earth to give His life as a ransom for you and me.<sup>8</sup> Is there someone in your Love Life Connections whom needs to see this Love Life Action of self-giving? Write “giving” down by that person’s name on the back of your bulletin.

The next Love Life Action is pleasing. It is not irritable or fly into a temper. The real meaning of this is that Christian love never becomes exasperated with people. Exasperation is always a sign of defeat. When we lose our tempers, we lose everything. Kipling said that it was the test of a man if he could keep his head when everyone else was losing his and blaming it on him, and if when he was hated he did not give way to hating. The woman or man who is master of his or her temper can be master of anything.

Is there someone in your Love Life Connections whom needs to see this Love Life Action of being pleasing, not flying off the handle? Write “pleasing” down by that person’s name on the back of your bulletin.

The next Love Life Action is it forgets our faults and mistakes. Love does not store up the memory of any wrong it has received. The word translated store up<sup>9</sup> is an accountant’s word. It is the word used for entering up an item in a ledger so that it will not be forgotten. Kind of like a sticky note to remind you not to forget something. And that is precisely what so many people do. They remember every someone has wronged them, and eventually, resentment builds up. But the kind of love God wants us to have is the kind of love that forgets if we have been wronged. It tosses those sticky notes.

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew 5:5 (New Living Translation, Second Edition)

<sup>8</sup> See Matthew 20:28

<sup>9</sup> *logizesthai*

That's just the kind of love God offers to us. The Psalmist writes, "He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west."<sup>10</sup> And that is the kind of Love Life Action we should have.

Is there someone in your Love Life Connections whom you need to forgive, erase any memory of wrong? Write "forgive" down by that person's name on the back of your bulletin.

The next Love Life Action is that Love delights in good. This love finds no pleasure in anything that is wrong. It is not so much delight in doing the wrong thing that is meant, as the malicious pleasure which comes to most of us when we hear something derogatory about someone else. Think about it: often we prefer to hear of the misfortune of others rather than of their good fortune. "Oh, did you hear what happened to so and so."

Christian love finds delight in the good news and the good things around them. Is there someone in your Love Life Connections who needs to see that you delight in good? Write "delight in good" down by that person's name on the back of your bulletin.

The next Love Life Action is it rejoices with the truth. That is not as easy as it sounds. There are times when we definitely do not want the truth to prevail; and still more times when it is the last thing we wish to hear. Don't tell me I'm putting on weight; I don't want to hear it.

Christian love has no wish to veil the truth; it has nothing to conceal and so is glad when the truth prevails. Is there someone in your Love Life Connections who needs the truth in love? Write "delights in truth" down by that person's name on the back of your bulletin.

The next Love Life Action is that love always protects. Love can endure anything. This could be translated "love can cover anything," in the sense that it will never drag into the light of day the faults and mistakes of others. It would far rather set about quietly mending things than publicly displaying and criticizing them. In addition, it means that love can bear any insult, any injury, any disappointment. It describes the kind of love that was in the heart of Jesus himself.

Is there someone in your Love Life Connections who needs protecting? Write "protect" down by that person's name on the back of your bulletin.

The next Love Life Action is trusting. Love is completely trusting. This characteristic has a twofold aspect. First, in relation to God, it means that love takes God at His word, and can take every promise which begins "Whosoever" and say, "That means me." And the second characteristic of this trusting is in relation to our fellow human beings. It means that love always believes the best about other people.

This can be really hard, can't it? Maybe you have seen the treachery and deceit of people, but love forgets, and love trusts. And when we show that we trust the people of our love connection, is it possible that we can, by trusting them, cause them to become more trustworthy, if for nothing else, so as not to disappoint and betray that trust. Certainly, there will be some people who should rarely be trusted. The devil himself is called the Father of Lies.<sup>11</sup> But for many, if we love through trusting, we have lifted the value we have in them and thus lift the value they have for themselves.

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<sup>10</sup> Psalm 103:12 (New Living Translation, Second Edition)

<sup>11</sup> See John 8:44

Is there someone in your Love Life Connections who needs to know that you trust? Write “trust” down by that person’s name on the back of your bulletin.

The next Love Life Action is that it always hopes. Love never ceases to hope. Jesus believed that no one is hopeless. The rich young ruler. The woman caught in adultery. Nicodemus, the Pharisee. The condemned thief on the cross. Jesus believed that no one is hopeless. You are not hopeless, and neither are the people in your love connection.

All they may need is encouragement. How many times in history has a person been discounted, yet arose to incredible accomplishments and fame.

Henry Ford once said that the ability to encourage others is one of life’s finest assets. The auto inventor and manufacturer knew the power of encouragement. He had learned of it as a young man. Memorable to him was the time, at the beginning of his career, when he made a drawing of his newly-built engine for Thomas. A. Edison. Young Ford had endured criticism and ridicule. Most mechanical experts of that day were convinced that electric carriages would be the popular passenger cars of the future.

But attending a dinner one evening at which Edison was present, Ford began explaining his engine to men nearest him at the table. He noticed that Edison, seated several chairs away, was listening. Finally the great man moved closer and asked the young inventor to make a drawing.

When the crude sketch was complete, Edison studied it intently, then suddenly banged his fist on the table. “Young man,” he said, “that’s the thing! You have it!”

Years later, Ford recalled, “The thump of that fist upon the table was worth worlds to me.”<sup>12</sup>

Is there someone in your Love Life Connections who needs hope? Write “hope” down by that person’s name on the back of your bulletin.

The next Love Life Action is that it always preserves. Love bears everything with triumphant determination. The verb used here<sup>13</sup> is one of those great Greek words. It is generally translated to bear or to endure; but what it really describes is not the spirit which can passively bear things, but the spirit which, in bearing them, can conquer and transmute them. It has been defined as “a constancy under trial.” George Matheson, who lost his sight and who was disappointed in love, wrote in one of his prayers that he might accept God’s will, “Not with dumb resignation but with holy joy; not only with the absence of murmur but with a song of praise.” Love can bear things, not merely with passive resignation, but with triumphant fortitude, because it knows that “a father’s hand will never cause his child a needless tear.”

Is there someone in your Love Life Connections with whom you need help bearing all things? Write “preserves” down by that person’s name on the back of your bulletin.

The final Love Life Action is that love is everlasting. There is an absolute permanency. At the end of 1 Corinthians 13, Paul writes, “Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.”<sup>14</sup> When all the things in which society says is great and wonderful have passed away, love will still stand. In

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<sup>12</sup> Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations

<sup>13</sup> *hupomenein*

<sup>14</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:13 (New Living Translation, Second Edition)

one of the most wonderfully lyrical verses of scripture The Song of Solomon sings, "Many waters cannot quench love, nor can rivers drown it."<sup>15</sup>

The one unconquerable thing is love. That is one of the great reasons for believing in immortality. When love is entered into, there comes into life a relationship against which the assaults of time are helpless and which transcends death.

Is there someone in your Love Life Connections who needs to know that your love is everlasting? Write "everlasting" down by that person's name on the back of your bulletin.

When you look at these Love Life Actions, one thing remains to be said. These qualities of this love as Paul portrays them, we can see them realized in the life of Jesus himself. Jesus, the greatest example of love the earth has ever seen.

According to legend, the valentine takes its name from a young Christian who once lived in ancient Rome. Like so many of the early Christians, Valentine had been imprisoned because of his faith. Often and longingly, he thought of his loved ones, and wanted to assure them of his well-being and his love.

Outside his cell window grew a cluster of violets. He picked some heart-shaped leaves and pierced them to spell the words, "Remember your Valentine," then sent them off by a friendly dove.

But on the next day and the next, he sent more messages that simply said, "I love you." Thus did the valentine have its beginning.<sup>16</sup>

This Valentine's Day, will it be the chocolate or the jewelry or the flowers or the Hoodie-Footie that tells the people you love how much you love them? Or will your Love Life Connections see Love Life Actions? Will they see that your love is patient, love is kind. It lives in charity, it is humble, it is modest. It is polite, it is self-giving, it is pleasing, it forgets our faults and mistakes. Love delight in good and rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always preserves. Love is everlasting.

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<sup>15</sup> Song of Songs 8:7 (New Living Translation, Second Edition)

<sup>16</sup> Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations