

I. 40 Days of Love – Part 6: The Secrets of Lasting Love Gee Sprague, Lead Pastor May 16, 2010

- A. I think it was Mark Twain who once said “You don’t really understand perfect love until you’ve been married at least a quarter of a century.” I think there’s some wisdom in that. To me, love at first sight, is no big deal. It’s just attraction and arousal. To me the miracle is when people have looked at each other for an entire life and still love each other. That’s the miracle. Love at first sight is no big deal. Love that lasts a lifetime – that is a big deal!
- B. Let me just ask you how many of you have been married or if your spouse is already in heaven, you’ve been married at least twenty-five years. Congratulations!
- C. Let me ask, those of you who have been married forty years or longer, would you stand up and stay standing a minute? Great! I want to ask all of you to come to the stage right now and help me teach this message.
- D. Rick Warren states: If you’re going to build a love that lasts a lifetime you have to figure out how to overcome what he calls the *Deadly D’s*. Every relationship whether it’s a friendships or a marriage goes through the *Deadly D’s – Difficulties, Disagreements, Differences, Discord, Disappointment, Defeat, Dead-ends, Depression, Delay, Doubt, Distance, Death, Debt, Demands, and Difficulties*.
- E. Those are not easy things to overcome. But those who just stood overcame the *big D – Divorce*.
- F. Here’s my question to you – those of you who have been married fifty years or longer – it was easy, right?
- G. Whenever you’re going through massive change there is one thing you can always count on that never changes. It is the unchanging love of God. It never changes. It is constant. It is steadfast. It is unchanging. It is unwavering. It is enduring. The Bible “*I will SHOW YOU MY LOVE FOREVER. So says the Lord who saves you.*” *Isaiah 54:8 (TEV)*
- H. Now here is the catch, Jesus says: “*I command you to LOVE EACH OTHER IN THE SAME WAY that I love you.*” *John 15:12 (NLT)*
- I. This morning we continue to explore what Paul wrote to the church at Corinth about the kind of Love that Jesus had, and how we are to grow to have that same kind of love for one another.
- J. “*Love NEVER STOPS being patient, NEVER STOPS believing, NEVER STOPS hoping, NEVER gives up.*” *1 Cor. 13:7 (GW)*

II. **LASTING LOVE EXTENDS GRACE**

- A. “*Love never stops being PATIENT*” *1 Cor. 13:7a (GW)*
- B. “*...PUTS UP with anything*” *(MSG)*
- C. “*... PATIENTLY ACCEPTS all things*” *(NCV)*
- D. “*...is always ready to MAKE ALLOWANCES*” *(NJB)*
- E. *Blue Like Jazz, Donald Miller pg. 83* Describes his friend Rick’s understanding of Grace: “looking back, ... he was too proud to receive free grace from God. He didn't know how to live within a system where nobody owes anybody else anything. And the harder it was for Rick to pay God back, the more he wanted to hide. God was his loan shark, so to speak. Though he understood that God wanted nothing in return, his mind could not communicate this fact to his heart, so his life was something like torture.”
- F. Until we fully understand the Grace that has been given us through Jesus Christ, we won’t be able to love others with Grace, unconditional love.
- G. Read this together: “*Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.*” *Eph. 4:2 (NLT)*
- H. “*Love never stops being PATIENT*” *1 Cor. 13:7a (GW)*
- I. “*...PUTS UP with anything*” *(MSG)*

- J. "... *PATIENTLY ACCEPTS all things*" (NCV)
- K. "...*is always ready to MAKE ALLOWANCES*" (NJB)

III. **LASTING LOVE EXPRESSES FAITH.**

- A. "*Love never stops believing*" 1 Cor. 13:7b (GW)
- B. "...*always trusts*" (NIV)
- C. "... *never loses faith*" (NLT)
- D. This is the kind of love if you want a marriage that lasts a lifetime or a friendship that lasts a lifetime, lasting love expresses faith. Faith and love are intertwined because love is built on trust. I'm talking about confidence. I'm talking about trusting people. Believing in people. That's what love is. I believe in you. I trust you. I have confidence in you.
- E. This is the kind of love you want if you chose to have children.
- F. This is the kind of love you need to have if you're going to manage people.
- G. This is the kind of love you need to have if you are going to lead people.
- H. You cannot love someone you don't trust. You can't. So if you're going to love somebody you have to not only extend them grace, you have to express faith. I believe in you. I trust you. I think you can do it.
- I. Recently at Breakfast with a group of Men sharing at breaking. (Kairos May 2010)
 1. Forgiveness and Trust!
 2. Man who forgave and put trust back in his wife.
- J. We express our love for God, by placing our trust in Him.
- K. Read these together:
- L. "*Love never stops believing*" 1 Cor. 13:7b (GW)
- M. "...*always trusts*" (NIV)
- N. "... *never loses faith*" (NLT)
- O. Because the Bible says this, "*The only thing that counts is FAITH EXPRESSING ITSELF THROUGH LOVE.*" Gal. 5:6 (NIV)

IV. **LASTING LOVE EXPECTS THE BEST.**

- A. "*Love never stops hoping*" 1 Cor. 13:7c (GW)
- B. "...*always expects the best*" (LB)
- C. "...*always looks for the best*" (MSG)
- D. I don't know if you know this or not but people tend to live up to your expectations of them. We tend to shape the people around us by what we expect of them. Whatever you tend to expect much or little, people tend to live up to the expectations of other people. You set people up all the time. You set your husband up by what you expect of him and what you don't expect of him. You set your wife up by what you expect and what you don't expect. You set your children up by what you expect of them and what you don't expect of them.
- E. You don't change bad people into good people by telling them they're bad. Which is, by the way, why I never preach that kind of message here. It doesn't work. What I talk about is how God sees us and what we could become.
- F. Whatever you want the people in your life to become, treat them the way you want them to become, not the way they are.

- G. Guys, you want your wife to treat you like a king? Treat her like a queen. It's real simple. Real simple. Treat her like a queen. Emphasize the positive. Forget the nagging. Tell it like it is? No. Tell it like it can be. Visualize potential. Start expecting the best from them.
- H. You want your children to show you respect, make sure you show your spouse respect.
- I. Do you know what kills love? What kills marriage?
- J. It is not hate.
- K. It is not discord.
- L. It's not differences.
- M. What kills love is neglect. You stop doing the loving things that you did to woo the person and now that you've won them you stop doing it. You don't treat them that nicely any more. It is neglect.
- N. *Daughters Gone Wild Dads Gone Crazy* Charles Stone & Heather Stone pg. 164 "Secondly, while my 'friends' just left me at my house, it was my dad who carried me to his car and rushed me to the ER. I was eighteen years old; he could have easily thrown me out of the house for good. However, he gave me yet another chance that I didn't deserve. Even when I gave him no reason at all to hope I would ever change for the better, he refused to give up on me. He never lost hope."
- O. "Love never stops hoping" 1 Cor. 13:7c (GW)
- P. "...always expects the best" (LB)
- Q. "...always looks for the best" (MSG)

V. **LASTING LOVE ENDURES THE WORST.**

- A. "Love never gives up" 1 Cor. 13:7d (GW)
- B. "...endures through every circumstance" (NLT)
- C. "...always perseveres" (NIV)
- D. "...never looks back, but keeps going to the end" (MSG)
- E. *Hiram Johnson Tragic Redemption* pg. 155 "Endurance is a form of mental agility and offers a sense of performance, firmness, or steadiness. Endurance implies 'over a length of time.'" The Greek translation of perseverance is the quality which does not easily surrender to suffering circumstances, and is opposed to cowardice or prolonged despondency. When we endure we reflect God's image. "We increase our endurance by various forms of exercise. Trials, hopes, joys, and encouragement are what exercise our endurance the most. Spiritual transformation requires endurance.
- F. When God wants to make a mushroom, he takes six hours. When God wants to make an oak tree, he takes sixty years.
- G. Do you want your love to be a mushroom or an oak tree? Do you want your life to be a mushroom or an oak tree? There are things you will learn hanging on that you will never learn any other way.
- H. The purpose of relationships, especially marriage, is not just to make you happy but to make you holy. To teach you how to grow up. To be unselfish. To be less thoughtful of yourself and more thoughtful of others.
- I. Great people are just ordinary people with an extraordinary amount of determination. They just don't know how to quit.
- J. "Love never gives up" 1 Cor. 13:7d (GW)
- K. "...endures through every circumstance" (NLT)
- L. "...always perseveres" (NIV)
- M. "...never looks back, but keeps going to the end" (MSG)

VI. Prayer:

A. *“Love NEVER STOPS being patient, NEVER STOPS believing, NEVER STOPS hoping, NEVER gives up.” 1 Cor. 13:7 (GW)*

B. *Would you pray this prayer with me? Dear God I need to feel your love. Today I'm opening myself up in a way like never before. Put your love in every room in my heart. Fill my mind, my life, my body, my hands, my feet with your love. Jesus Christ, thank you for loving me. Thank you for creating me. Thank you for dying for me. Thank you for forgiving me. Thank you for giving the promise of your Spirit to be put inside me. I don't understand it all but I want to be filled with your love and I want to learn to love you and I want to learn to love the people in my life. Forgive me for my immature love. I want to become a mature lover. I ask you to do in me and in my relationships what I could never do on my own. I want to learn to offer grace. I want to learn to express faith and trust. I want to learn to expect the best. I want to learn to endure the worst even in sickness and in health. I pray this prayer, humbly, in Jesus' name. Amen.*