

Live Like You Were Dying! Part 5: Loving Deeper

How many of you like Country Western music?
Sometimes Country Music Songs have some very interesting titles.
Let me give you a few examples of some of the most “unique” Country Western Songs:

1. If You Can't Live Without Me, Then Why Aren't You Dead?
2. You're the Reason Our Kids are Ugly.
3. If My Nose Was Running Money, Honey, I'd Blow It All On You
4. I Would Kiss You Through the Screen Door But I'm Afraid it'd Strain Our Love
5. I'm Just A Bug On The Windshield Of Life
6. She Got The Gold Mine and I Got The Shaft
and my personal favorite:
7. Drop Kick Me Jesus Through the Goal Posts of Life.

Well, believe it or not, we have been using a Country Western Song as the theme of our current sermon series. Unlike the silly songs we must mentioned, this one is a Grammy Award winning, multi-platinum album.

We are at the last sermon of that series titled, “Live Like You Were Dying.” It is based on the Tim McGraw song of the same name. The song is based upon a man who finds out that he has a terminal disease and is asked how he will spend his last days. His response includes some extreme activities such as sky diving, Rocky Mountain climbing, even bull riding!

But it's not all just fun and games in his song.
He talks about being a better husband.
He talked about being a better friend.
He talked about spending time with his dad.
He talked about reading the Bible.
He talks about extending forgiveness.

And he also talks about loving others on a much deeper level.
The two word phrase he uses is “Loving Deeper.”

The word “love” means many different things to many different people. Not everyone thinks of the same thing when they think of the word “love.”

According to Amazon.com,
-there are at least 32,507 books currently in print with the word "love" in the title
-there are over 11,000 CDs with the word "love" in the title.

If you were to do a google-search on the internet, you'd discover at least 121,000,000 web-sites that use the word "love" as one of their key words.

It is what Woody Allen was speaking of when he said “I was nauseous and tingly all over. I was either in love or I had smallpox.”

There is a lot of confusion on exactly what love is.
So, how can we hope to “love deeper,” how can we hope to “improve” our love, so to speak, unless we can agree on exactly what love is?

Fortunately, the Bible gives us the perfect description of love.
It's a very simple, yet, very profound definition of love.

1 John 4:8 “.....God is love.”

If God is love, then it stands to reason that loving like God should be our goal. Loving like God would be the ultimate, the purest, the best, the deepest kind of love. In fact, Jesus says pretty much the same thing when He stated:

John 13:34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

That phrase, "As I have loved you" takes love to a whole new level. It's one thing to love, it's a whole new ball game to love like Jesus loved.

There are thousands of things that impress me about God's love. Let me quickly mention three of them this morning. Three things that take love to a deeper level.

1. God's love is Unconditional

To be loved by God doesn't mean that you have earned His love. It doesn't mean that you deserve His love. It doesn't mean that you are "good enough" for His love.

His love is unconditional. That means that He loves us in spite of ourselves. Regardless of our shortcomings, our inadequacies, even our failures. He just loves us: unconditionally!

Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

God's love is "demonstrated," God's love is shown, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

That's called unconditional love. Love that is not earned. Love that is not deserved. Love that is not due. Love that is not merited. Love that is not warranted.

God loves us in spite of ourselves.

Romans 8:38-39

38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,

39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

He loves us. Shortcomings, flaws, mistakes, sins, imperfections, blemishes and all. He loves us.

God's love is based upon the value of the person.

Not the "performance" of the person.

Not the "success" of the person.

Not the "popularity" of the person.

God's love is not based upon any "condition." He loves you unconditionally.

He values you, simply because you are you. Period.

Let me illustrate with this brand new \$20 dollar bill.

Would any of you like to have this brand new \$20 bill?

What if I wrinkle it all up? Now would you still like to have it?

What if I drop it on the ground? Now would you still like to have it?

Even though it is all dirty and all wrinkled, you'd still take it?

Of course you would. Because the value hasn't changed.

Likewise, you are valuable to God. No matter how much life has wrinkled you up and dirtied you up and messed you up. God's love for you has never changed. God's love for you has never wavered. God loves you unconditionally!

If we are to take our love to a "deeper" level, if we are to love the way God loves, we need to learn and practice unconditional love.

First of all, God's love is unconditional.

2. God's love is practical.

It's easy to say you love someone, but talk is cheap. Actions speak louder than words. The proof of love is in the relationship, not in the rhetoric. You can say I love you a million times, but how you treat someone is the true test of that love. Your actions prove your love.

Love is so much more than how we feel. It is what we do. Love is not merely an emotion, it is an action. It is demonstrated through behavior.

1 John 3:18 "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."

Key word in that sentence is ACTIONS! Love is seen in how you treat people. It's not that words aren't important, because they are very important. But when it comes to love, action speaks louder than words!

Someone once said, "What you DO shouts so loud I can't hear a word you say!"

So the principle to apply in your relationships is to love in practical ways. Love will be demonstrated in the way you treat the person, the things you are willing to do for the person. Love is seen in actions, not just in words.

Speaking of the practical side of love, I like this greeting card I saw the other day. You open up the card and it says:

If I had an ice cream cone, I'd give you half.
If I had six candy bars, I'd give you three.
If I had two apples, one would be yours.
If I won the lottery, I'd send you a post card from Tahiti.

Talk is cheap, love is seen in the way you treat people. It is pragmatic, it is practical. Love is action oriented. It's seen in the doing.

1. God's love is unconditional.
2. God's love is practical.
3. God's love is Self-sacrificing.

I think perhaps the best way to illustrate the kind of love we are talking about is to share with you a story I ran across a few years ago. It is written by a licensed nurse named Patricia Rosales:

"It was 6 AM on a bright Sunday morning in April. A solemn, blond six-year old boy was admitted to our small pediatric unit for a procedure not very common to young children: blood donation.

Little Todd and his four-year old sister shared a rare, genetic blood condition and now Jenny was to undergo major cardiac surgery to save her life. The operating room crew was briefed on the procedure. One of the complications that the doctor was anticipating was hemorrhage, and since Jenny's blood was almost impossible to match from another donor, the parents were asked to bring Todd in for a blood donation the day before the scheduled operation. So it was that Todd, Jenny and their parents were greeted by a hushed atmosphere of suppressed anticipation.

At six years, Todd was already a veteran of multiple surgeries. He had been a patient of ours many

times, and his shy, serious face and gentle manner had won our hearts long ago. Jenny was a skinny out-going redhead. A tendency to tire easily was the only outward evidence of her life-threatening heart condition. Once Todd had been admitted and his height, weight and vital signs taken, he took his sister by the hand and led her around the room, showing her the decals and pictures that had enthralled him as a four-year old. The way he held her hand and looked at her revealed many unspoken things about the special relationship that existed between them.

Geri, the head of the pediatric department moved quickly about the room setting up the transfusion equipment, and Jenny's mother and father found a chair and sat down. Just then the doctor breezed in, briefly patted Todd and Jenny on the head, then turned his attention to the parents. With one hesitant question from Jenny's father he launched into a dissertation on certain technical aspects of his procedure. It was heavily laden with high-sounding medical terms, and

Jenny's father took notes furiously. About this time I was called in to serve in the capacity of assistant, equipment holder and procurer of needed supplies.

I loved watching Geri's technique with children. Todd was now lying face up on the bed and Geri was talking quietly as she swabbed his arm prior to inserting the needle. Her voice was friendly and easygoing. "O.K. Todd, just a little stick and that's all you will feel." Todd's face was grim and pale. I remember thinking I'd never seen him endure a procedure in such stoic silence before, but I attributed this to the adoring presence of his little sister, who by this time had climbed up on the bed and settled in beside him, thumb in mouth, a doll clutched in her arm.

Fifteen minutes went by. I had gone after a glass of orange juice and on returning I stopped in the doorway. From that vantage point the room resembled a three-ring circus; the parents still listening raptly to the doctor's monologue, Geri was fussing over the stubborn I.V. equipment.

But in the core of this field of nervous energy Todd and Jenny seemed to form an island of stillness. Todd lay stiffly on his back, his face impassive as he watched the dark, red blood travel slowly down the clear plastic tubing.

Jenny sucked her thumb intently, her head resting on her brother's shoulder. It seemed to me that Todd was trying to get Geri's attention. I was about to intervene when the speaker paused and Todd's quivery voice came through: "Geri, excuse me, but how long will it be now?"

"Well, Todd, what do you mean exactly?" All of Geri's attention was on him now.

"I mean, how much time before I die, after all my blood is gone out of me?"

In the shocked silence that followed there was an exchange of looks between us. Nobody trusted his voice enough to speak. In a series of still-life pictures that remain forever etched in my mind, I saw Jenny's mother put her hand to her mouth and look away; I saw his father break a pencil and hurl it down; and Doctor Sutter mutely contemplated his shiny black shoes. I am ashamed to say that I could only stand frozen in the doorway. Only Geri, bless her, had the composure to speak. She crouched down until her eyes were level with his and said in a soft voice, "No, sweetie, you aren't going to die. We are not taking all of your blood, and, your body is already making more blood right now."

With that, Todd's body crumpled. He turned away and buried his face in the pillow, shoulders shaking as he cried uncontrollably. Gone was every last shred of pretense.

As we came to our senses we became aware of the full magnitude of Todd's sacrifice for his sister. On that bright, clear morning we felt grateful to have witnessed an unparalleled gesture of love. As mother and father blindly groped to embrace their two children, the rest of us crowded around awkwardly.

We had something intangible in that hospital room, the five of us. And though we may never attain his level of selflessness, we had learned the most valuable lesson in love from a little child."

--Patricia Rosales, L.V.N.

John 15:13 Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

There is no greater proof of love than to give your life for another.
There is nothing more you can do. That is the ultimate in self sacrificing love..

1 John 3:16 "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us."

Odds are, you will probably not have to give your life for the life of someone else.
Nonetheless, any time you put someone else before yourself, you are practicing self sacrificing love.

- any time you deny yourself for the sake of someone else
- any time you do without, so that someone else can do with
- any time you don't retaliate, even when "justified"
- any time you give up something of value, something that you really want or really need
- any time you choose to forgive
- any time you offer to help, even when you don't really "feel like" helping
- any time you love someone who is difficult to love
- any time you go last so that someone else can go first

Any time you put someone else before yourself, you are practicing self sacrificing love.

And THAT is a God thing. That is loving like God.. That's loving like Jesus.

God's love is unconditional.

God's love is practical.

God's love is self sacrificing.