

Love Matters Most – Session One

**40 Days of Love**

**Session One**

***Love Matters Most***

**Motley Crew Group Session Notes**

**February 24, 2010**

**We opened with prayers of praise and intercession.**

**LOOKING AHEAD**

1. If you search the Internet for love songs, you will find more than thirty-nine million entries! Name some of your favorites, and discuss what they say about love.

A number of songs were mentioned and discussed.

**KEY VERSE**

Let love be your highest goal!

1 Corinthians 14:1 (NLT)

The NIV Translation of that portion of 1 Corinthians 14:1 is:

*Follow the way of love...*

Pastor Eddie emphasized that this is a *process* that applies to our lives! Don't just let it be your highest goal. *Pursue* love.

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The Bible can be summarized in one word:

**relationship!!**

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This is a relationship, first of, all to God, and then to each other, in that order.

Let love be your highest goal!  
(1 Corinthians 14:1 NLT)

This *must* be the #1 priority in our lives.

**Watch the video lesson now and take notes in the lesson outline.  
Refer back to the outline during your discussion time.**

### Three Reasons Why Love Needs to Be Your Number One Priority

#### 1. Love is the supreme value in life.

<sup>37</sup>Jesus replied, "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind." "This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>38</sup>A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matthew 22:37-39 NLT)

Both of these two commandments occur in the Old Testament. Deut 6:5 is "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."

Lev. 19:18 says "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD." According to Pastor Rick, the phrase "love your neighbor as yourself" occurs *nine times* in the Bible. Yes, God is trying to make a point!

Get the message: relationships—love—is what matters most in life.

The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Galatians 5:14 N1V)

Human love wears out, but God's love lasts forever.

Pastor Rick told us that he and his wife took the same vow as we all take, to love each other until death do us part. But after two years, they were ready to kill each other! He was only making \$800 a month teaching, but was so determined to save his marriage, that he was spending \$400 a month on a good Christian Counselor. Eventually, they spent over \$15,000 (!!!) to save their

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marriage, and he says now that he would spend any amount of money to save his marriage, and that his wife is his best friend, co-founder of Saddleback church, etc., etc.

By the way, trying harder won't work, no matter what the songs and the movies say. It takes more than human effort. It needs God to make things work. If you're tired of trying harder, and getting no where, this next six weeks will change love in your life.

### **2. Love is the primary objective of life.**

1 Corinthians 13 is the Love Chapter, but words without love are worthless. In this chapter there are five ways to tell us about love:

#### **# 1:**

**If I don't live a life of love . . .  
nothing I say will matter.**

If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal. (1 Corinthians 13:1 NLT)

#### **# 2:**

**If I don't live a life of love . . .  
nothing I know will matter.**

I may have the gift of prophecy. I may understand all the secret things of God and have all knowledge . . . if I do not have love, then I am nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:2 NCV)

Brilliance without love equals zero.

I could have enough degrees to be called Fahrenheit, but without love, I've got nothing!

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### **# 3:**

**If I don't live a life of love . . .  
nothing I believe will matter.**

Even if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, I would still be worth nothing at all without love. (1 Corinthians 13:2 LB)

Faith without love does not matter.

### **# 4:**

**If I don't live a life of love . . .  
nothing I give will matter.**

If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body . . . but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever. (1 Corinthians 13:3 NLT)

Living is not necessarily loving.

Love cannot be purchased. Your kids and your spouse want *you*, not what you can buy for them.

### **# 5:**

**If I don't live a life of love . . .  
nothing I accomplish will matter.**

No matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love. (1 Corinthians 13:3 MSG)

**Relationships are *more important* than accomplishments.**

**3. Love is the greatest power in life.**

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There are three things that will endure—faith, hope, and love—and the **greatest** of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13 NLT)

God has shown us how to leave a lasting legacy— fill your life with love.

To deepen your love:

- Commit to meet with your small group these next six weeks.
- Commit to go to church together each weekend during this study.
- Do the daily reading in *The Relationship Principles of Jesus*.
- Practice acting in unselfish and loving ways. *If you practice this, you may not be perfect, but you'll certainly get a lot better.*
- Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that. (Ephesians 5:2 MSG)

Ephesians 5:2 (NIV): “and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

As a pastor, Rick has spent the last minutes of his life with many of his church members. And in the last moments, no one wanted to see their diplomas, their gold watch, or their bowling trophies. At the end, what people want is the people they love.

*Things* don't matter. *People* matter!

When you get to heaven, God won't ask you about your degrees, your hobbies, or your stuff. He'll ask you about how well you loved others, and especially: how well did you love Jesus?

We *all* need to learn to love much, much better. This will take a commitment of time and energy.

We don't have to *like* everyone, but we do have to *love* everyone.

## **Discovery Questions**

1. "I love ice cream. I love my kids. I love God. I love those shoes." What does this tell us about the meaning of the word "love"?

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The English language doesn't have enough words to adequately describe the various kinds of love that exist. In that respect, the Greek language is much better. The Wikipedia article on Greek words for love has this entry:

**Ancient Greek** has four distinct words for love: *agápe*, *éros*, *philia*, and *storgē*. However, as with other languages, it has been historically difficult to separate the meanings of these words. Nonetheless, the senses in which these words were generally used are given below.

- *Agápe* (αγάπη *agápē*) means "love" in modern day Greek, such as in the term *s'agapo* (Σ'αγαπώ), which means "I love you". In Ancient Greek, it often refers to a general affection or deeper sense of "true love" rather than the attraction suggested by "*eros*". *Agape* is used in the biblical passage known as the "love chapter", 1 Corinthians 13, and is described there and throughout the New Testament as sacrificial love. *Agape* is also used in ancient texts to denote feelings for a good meal, one's children, and the feelings for a spouse. It can be described as the feeling of being content or holding one in high regard.
- *Éros* (έρως *érōs*) is passionate love, with sensual desire and longing. The Modern Greek word "*erotás*" means "(romantic) love;" however, *eros* does not have to be sexual in nature. *Eros* can be interpreted as a love for someone whom you love more than the *philia*, love of friendship. It can also apply to dating relationships as well as marriage. **Plato** refined his own definition: Although *eros* is initially felt for a person, with contemplation it becomes an appreciation of the beauty within that person, or even becomes appreciation of beauty itself. It should be noted Plato does not talk of physical attraction as a necessary part of love, hence the use of the word **platonic** to mean, "without physical attraction." Plato also said *eros* helps the **soul** recall knowledge of beauty, and contributes to an understanding of spiritual truth. Lovers and philosophers are all inspired to seek truth by *eros*. The most famous ancient work on the subject of *eros* is Plato's *Symposium*, which is a discussion among the students of **Socrates** on the nature of *eros*.
- *Philia* (φιλία *philia*) means friendship in modern Greek. It is a dispassionate virtuous love, a concept developed by **Aristotle**. It includes loyalty to friends, family, and community, and requires virtue, equality and familiarity. In ancient texts, *philos* denoted a general type of love, used for love between family, between friends, a desire or enjoyment of an activity, as well as between lovers.
- *Storge* (στοργή *storgē*) means "affection" in ancient and modern Greek. It is natural affection, like that felt by parents for offspring. Rarely used in ancient works, and then almost exclusively as a descriptor of relationships within the family. It is also known to express mere acceptance or putting up with situations, as in "loving" the tyrant.

Wikipedia contributors. "Greek words for love." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 22 Feb. 2010. Web. 25 Feb. 2010. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek\\_words\\_for\\_love](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_words_for_love)>

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Questions 2 and 3:

Who is the most loving person you have ever known, and what did their life look like?

What practical advice do you think they would give about how to show love to the people in your life?

A good discussion of people whom we've known over the years. Common traits include people who love each other as God loved them, and those who loved unconditionally.

One of our members told of the day that she got a phone call from her mother, who said: I know that you *love* me, but do you *like* me? [the answer was yes.]

“Love” is a permanent thing. “Like” is a more temporary thing.

The following *will* be discussed next week in the group.

## Putting It into Practice: The One Person Assignment

How does a person go from talking about love to living a life of love? This One Person Assignment exercise will give you an opportunity to show love to at least one person each week. Take time as a group to read and discuss these guidelines, then follow the suggested action for this session.

### **The One Person Assignment Guidelines**

Turn talk into action by reaching out to one person in a loving, unselfish way this week.

1. You can pick the same person or a different person each week.
2. It can be a close relationship or a distant one. The relationship doesn't have to be one in crisis—it can be a good relationship you want to improve.
3. The individual you choose can be:
  - a person in your group
  - a family member
  - your spouse
  - a person who needs the Lord
  - your neighbor
  - someone you work with

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- a person on the fringes of your life or church
- a lonely person
- anyone the Lord puts into your heart

4. Each week you will receive a suggestion on how to reach out to the person you have chosen. You may want to write down the person's name next to the key verse in the Group Resources section (page 116). Pray for that person at least once next week and make a connection to develop or deepen your relationship.

### **ACTION FOR SESSION ONE**

Think of someone you haven't shown love to recently — a friend, family member, colleague, etc. In what way can you apply this week's lesson to that relationship? Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Take them out for coffee.
- Send a note, card, or e-mail.
- Give them a call to see how they're doing.
- Ask how you can pray for them.
- Invite them to join your group.

Choose a practical **action** step and **tell your group** what you are going to do.

We closed with prayer.

### **Post Script:**

While working on incorporating some additional sermons of Martin Luther into the Lenten Devotions section of the page where the Motley Crew notes are located, I came across the sermon for the Thursday before Easter (e.g., Holy Thursday). A portion of it is especially appropriate to our discussions on Wednesday. Concerning the Gospel text of John 13:1-17, Martin Luther had these observations:

[While some think that this ceremony of feet-washing is a mandate or a command,] Christ does not mean the outward act when He says: "Ye also ought to wash one another's feet;" for He immediately explains this in the words : "I have given you an

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example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord." These words are plain enough. If we are honored on account of our position in life, we ought to remain humble and serve our inferiors with such gifts as they do not possess. In full accordance with this, the Lord afterwards gives His mandate concerning love when He says: "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another."

Now the true nature of love is humility and charity, kindness and compassion. When Christ commands the washing of feet, He requires the presence of such a love. It is evident that our Lord, by His action in the Gospel, did not intend to teach us the outward washing of feet, which is done by means of water; for then it would be obligatory to wash the feet of all; or rather, which would certainly be more serviceable, to prepare a regular bath for the people, in which they could wash their whole body. This of course cannot be the meaning of Christ's command in this regard. He simply gave us by His example an important lesson, that we should be humble, and properly employ the gifts and graces which we have, to the advantage of our brethren, and that we should despise no one, but rather excuse the shortcomings of our fellow-men, and help them to become better.

In this sense, washing of feet must be practiced not merely upon this day, but every day of our life, and we must not grow weary in well-doing towards our fellow-men. For such a purpose, and for such feet-washing, Christ set us the example which we are now considering. Let us remember this.

Source: Martin Luther, "Sermon for the Thursday Before Easter," Translation by Prof. E. Smid. Matthias Loy, ed., Dr. Martin Luther's House-Postil, or, Sermons on the Gospels for the Sundays and Principal Festivals of the Church Year. Volume 2. Two Volumes. Second Edition. (Columbus, Ohio; J. A. Schulze, 1884), pp. 24-41.