

Live a Life of Love

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[0:00] Heavenly Father, as we come to your word, we pray that you would prepare our hearts as good ground for the seed of your word.

Take away any distracting thoughts, whether it's what's for dinner later on or where are we going, and just help us to focus on your word and you.

And we ask for the help of your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen. If you were listening carefully to that reading that Paul read to us from 1 John 4, verses 7 to 21, there's something, I think there's 27 mentions of love in that wee passage.

And so, what we're going to have a wee look at this morning is living a life of love.

The world today is obsessed with love. And maybe it always has been. We see it on our TVs and in our films, read about it on the front pages of our papers, hear about it in songs.

[1:20] There was one website, and this is quite a while ago, that calculated there were 1,187 songs with love in the title.

And that's probably an underestimate. If I was to test you on, can you tell me any songs with love in the title? I don't want to embarrass anyone to tell you how old you are by the songs.

But I've got here, All You Need Is Love by the Beatles. Love Me Tender, if you're going a wee bit further back, by Elvis. I Will Always Love You by Whitney Houston or Dolly Parton.

Love is just a four-letter word. Bob Dylan. Love is in the air. Films like Love Story, Shakespeare's in Love, Love Actually, Crazy Stupid Love, P.S. I Love You.

Or TV programmes from my era called Love Boat. But probably today is the Love Island. Although, I turned on the BBC website this morning and there was a wee headline which I didn't read into.

[2:34] They said that viewers are saying there's not enough love in Love Island. I have no comment about that because I've never seen Love Island in my life. The Bible is also full of love.

And we've just read there. It's a story of God's love for the world. That well-known verse, John 3, 16. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

And in 1 John 4, 8, we read, God is love. And we read it there in that passage earlier. And verse 19 tells us we love because He first loved us.

So, rather than listening to me expound in these texts, I want to give you a wee report card.

Five questions to answer in your report card. The first, there's only three answers, I think.

[3:51] First answer is yes. Second answer is no. Third answer is don't know. And I'm going to start with the most important one in case you fall asleep by the time I get to the last one.

Do you love the Saviour? Do you love Jesus? A scribe came to Jesus and asked, which commandment is the most important?

You'll find that in Mark chapter 12, verses 28 onwards. Jesus replied, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, your mind and your strength.

And if you were to read through the New Testament, all the New Testament writers agree with that statement. Paul, when he's closing his letter to the Ephesians, says, Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus with an undying love.

John, later on in this letter, says, By this we know we love the children of God when we love God.

Peter says, Though you have not seen Jesus, you love him.

[5:02] And James says, To the person he will receive a crown of life which God has promised to those who love him. And Jesus, in John chapter 21, that beach story, which is very important in my own personal life, and in fact we were talking about it on the walk coming down from Demiah, Jesus said to Peter, Do you love me?

Do you love me? Well, why should we love him? We should love him for who he is. There's an amazing passage in Philippians chapter 2 that Jesus left the glory of heaven.

Another song we could have sung was the servant king. From heaven you came. The servant king. I was looking at, I don't think I've got them with me now actually, but, you know, if you think of all of the old Christmas carols, there is so much, they're not perfect, but there is so much theology about God.

I have to have a look and see if I can find this. In fact, I do have it. Listen to this one. Hark the Herald Angels Sing. I know it's not Christmas, but it's getting quite near.

Christ by highest heaven adored, Christ the everlasting Lord. Late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin's womb, veiled in flesh, the Godhead see.

[6:40] Hail the incarnate deity, pleased with man, with man to dwell. Jesus, our Emmanuel. What is Emmanuel?

Emmanuel is God with us. We should love him for who he is, but we should love him also for what he has done. For what he has done.

And Paul writing to the Galatians church in chapter 2, 20, says, He loved me and he gave himself for me. He's purchased our redemption. It says in another place, He has purchased our redemption for with him is steadfast love and plentiful redemption.

And we just read this passage in 1 John 4, we love because he first loved us. So I'm going to give you five, whatever your answer is to that, and I hope your answer to all the questions is yes.

And if it's don't know, maybe come later on and we have a wee chat. But if you know that God loves you, what is your response to that and Jesus loves you?

[7:50] The first word for the boys to remember is, they all begin with G, is gratitude. Be grateful. Okay? That's Mary's tablet alarm.

So, he says, if you love me, obey my commands, but we are to give thanks. You know, if we're not thankful for all that God has done for us, Jesus has done, gone to the cross, suffered and died, rose again, then, we have to ask a wee question, are we grateful enough?

Do you love the Saviour? Number one. Number two. Do you love the Scriptures? If you're living a life of love, the Psalmist said, oh, how I love your law in Psalm 119.

Psalm 119 has 176 verses and it's devoted almost entirely to the Word of God. And Jesus said to his disciples, abide in my Word if you want to be my disciples.

So, why should we, why should we bother? There are so many books we could read, so many podcasts we could listen to, so many things we could be doing watching the telly.

[9:09] Why should we love the Scriptures? Well, the Bible itself tells us that the Scriptures are precious, better than gold or silver in 119.72.

The Scriptures are pure. Your Word is very pure. 140. They're powerful. Very powerful. Paul writing, says, the Word of the Cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved, it's the power of God.

The power of God. And the Word of God is going to outlast you. It's going to outlast me. It's permanent. He says, the grass grows, flowers, but the Word of God endures forever.

And it's profitable. Paul writing to Timothy tells him, all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and it's profitable for lots of different reasons. So, if we love God's Word, what should we do about it? We should study it. Study it. Jesus is talking to the Pharisees, but he says, search the Scriptures for they speak about me.

[10:28] We should examine the Scriptures and don't take everything I say to be all true.

I mean, I hope it is. test. Paul commended the Berean Christians because they examined the Scriptures to see if what Paul was saying was true.

So, I have no problems with you examining what we are saying today and finding out. Because the Scriptures are very useful because we need to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter says, like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.

Paul written to Colossians and says, increase in the knowledge of God. How do you do that? Well, you do it by getting dug and stuck in to reading the Bible.

[11:34] There are lots of great books about the Bible and I'm not saying don't read them but go to the source. Go to the source and read the Bible and memorise verses.

You know, we don't know what's going to happen in our world. You know, I read last night that Iran was thinking about the cyber attacks which will paralyze water electricity all over the place. So, stock up in your water but also stock up in the word of God. Memorise it. So, if you're in bother and you have no access to your mobile phone, you bring those words to you and they'll stay in you. So, study, examine them. the word for loving the Saviour is gratitude. The word for loving the Scriptures is growth.

Thirdly, we're getting there. Do you love the saints? Jesus said, we sang it there, by this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another.

[12:59] Kirsty has reminded me to say who the saints are. the saints are every single person, young or old, who loves the Lord Jesus.

It's not some special person up on a statue that people bow down to. Paul's a saint. Jenny's a saint. Well, I know Jenny's a saint anyway. So, the Bible tells us we should love one another.

Peter writing says, keep loving one another since love covers a multitude of sins. The writer to the Hebrews says, let brotherly love continue.

And James says, if you really fulfil the royal law according to Scripture, you shall love one another as yourself. So, how do you do that?

[13:57] And if I'm being absolutely honest with you, that's another sermon. I'm not asking to be coming back here, but that is another sermon. But I just want to focus on one thing.

Be contributing like in the prayer there. Be contributing. Every church needs people to contribute. And if you're a Christian this morning, you've got a gift.

You might not know what it is. Maybe ask somebody what you think my gift is. But every Christian has a gift. But contributing, what things can you contribute?

You can contribute time. We live in a busy world. Society, work, school. Work demands 110%, all of you, doesn't it?

But you can contribute time. you can contribute your gifts, as I've said, the talents that you have. You can contribute your money, your treasures.

[15:02] But one of the big things you can contribute is prayer. prayer, you don't have to just pray on a Sunday.

prayer. And you can pray sitting down, you can pray standing up, you can pray walking, you can pray in your bed, although that's not the best way because you usually end up falling asleep in the middle of it.

But you can pray anywhere, at any time, and that's a huge contribution. You can walk around Winsborough, walk around those houses, all those new houses, and pray for them.

There's people behind that, those doors, who need to know Jesus. So, that's one way you can contribute. Time's passing. Do you love the saints?

And so my G word for that is generosity. So, gratitude, growth, generosity. Be generous with one another.

[16:07] Fourthly, do you love sinners? Jesus said in Luke chapter 6, if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?

Even sinners love those who love them. And Paul writing to the Romans says, God demonstrates his own love for us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

So, why should we love sinners? Well, because they need to know about Jesus. us. That's the bottom line.

We have, and we're not maybe very good at it. We're maybe scared of being rebuffed, scared of being thought strange, but we can show love to sinful folks, make contact.

There was probably a time in my Christian life where I didn't have any friends who weren't Christians. I was surrounded by Christians who would be my friends, couples, or blah, blah.

[17:18] But we moved to Govan. We moved church to helping Govan, although we still lived in Larbert for eight and a half years. And we were surrounded, absolutely surrounded, by people who didn't know Jesus.

this. And my prayer for Govan and my prayer for Winchborough is that in the darkness of Govan, and Govan can be a dark place, but Winchborough is just as dark that a light is shining, that the light of the gospel is shining.

So, we don't want to be a holy huddle. We want to make contact. We want to show care and concern for folks. One of the things we did at the food bank in Govan was we were meant to start at

half twelve.

People were queuing from the eleven o'clock. So, we then brought them in to the food bank. Didn't serve them at that point, but we made them a cup of tea or coffee.

And we sat down and we got to listen to their stories. And we got week by week that they would trust us. And that they would trust us enough to tell us their problems.

[18:40] And they would allow us to pray for them and share sometimes with them the gospel and just hope and pray that they would get seed planted in their hearts that would bring forth a fruit.

heart. And if it doesn't, then we're sad, but we've left them knowing that we have told them about Jesus.

Galatians 6:9 says, we want to be like Jesus who went about doing good, but Galatians 6:9 says, let us not be weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. and we have to be able to give a reason for the hope that is within us. So that's incumbent on us to know the gospel so that we can share that gospel.

But can I say it, and this is very important, do it with gentleness. Do it with gentleness. I have heard folk preaching the gospel and it sounded so harsh that I would not want to have anything to do with that kind of gospel or that kind of God.

[20:01] We have great news, but we need to respect people and treat them with gentleness. That's obviously my fourth G.

It says, a gentle answer turns away wrath. And Paul writing to the Philippians says, let your gentleness be evident to all. Wouldn't that be lovely?

Wouldn't that be lovely if someone passed comment? Not to you because you probably get puffed up. If someone passed comment and said, well, I remember hearing this story about a Christian couple whose friend wasn't a Christian and the man witnessed to him for a long, long time, for years.

Christian and eventually the lad became a Christian. And the man who had been witnessing to him came up to him and was so delighted, but said, what was it?

What was it, I said, that made the difference? And he said, it wasn't nothing you said, it was your wife's life. And that's the case.

[21:13] We want to draw people, not drag them to Jesus. So, be gentle. And lastly, and this might be the most difficult one for you, do you love yourselves?

Do you love yourselves? And I can see some of you smiling there because sometimes we don't like ourselves. You know, but Genesis reminds us that in the image of God, God made mankind.

But if we are totally honest with ourselves, we would realise and know that we are broken by sin and we're unable to fix the problem. And also, Paul says in Romans, do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to, but rather think of yourselves with sober judgment.

Nevertheless, nevertheless, if you're a Christian this morning, God loves you. God loves us, but he's not content to leave us as we are.

He's put his spirit within us and what he's doing is changing us. Now, Kirsty will be fed up hearing this story because in fact, almost everywhere I've preached, I've used this story, we were on a cruise, we were on a cruise a number of years ago and everyone was called up onto the deck of the cruise, the liner, and the chef comes out with this trolley with a huge, I mean, an absolutely massive block of ice.

[23:09] And he's got this big, jammy kind of thing and he starts hammering, chipping things off, hammering and hammering, chipping and chipping and chipping.

And you think, what's he doing? What's going on here? Well, the chef knew what he was doing because by the end of this, there was a perfect dolphin made of ice.

You would not have known at the beginning that that was going to be the case. But as each bit got chipped off, you could see the beginning of a likeness.

And maybe that's what God's doing in your life just now. Maybe he's chipping off bits that he doesn't want there. And you've got to leave some things behind.

Because he's conforming us to be like Jesus. And Jesus is perfect. That dolphin was perfect. It didn't look like it at the beginning.

[24:14] But step by step, that likeness began to appear. So, what G will be for this one, for yourself?

Be genuine. Be genuine. Sometimes we can put on a face, a front, that everything's hunky-dory. We're not on Facebook, thankfully, but we remember hearing a story of a girl who posted all the time on Facebook, tell you what she had for breakfast and everything was going hunky-dory. But if you spoke to her mum, her mum said her life was in turmoil, but she presented a good face. And that's what we do.

Sometimes life's a performance. And if you're going to work actually, you've probably got to put on a wee face and perform, but not in front of God because he sees your heart and he sees what you're like inside.

God's love. amazing thing is that he loved us so much, loved the world so much, that he sent his only son into the world to die an accursed death on the cross, but to rise again so that we could be called the children of God.

[25:48] There's a beautiful verse in 1 John the chapter before we read, Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed or lavished on us that we should be called children of God.

And that's what we are, children of God, if we have come to know Jesus. My prayer is if you don't know Jesus this morning, and none of those five answers are yes.

I was like that. I walked into church one morning and I wasn't a believer. We were going to church but I wasn't a believer.

But the reading that was that passage in John 21 and I felt as if I was the only person in the hall. and he said, do you love me?

Do you love me more than these? I left that place loving Jesus and I pray that that's the case for anybody here and if we can speak to you later, we'd be delighted to do that.

[27:04] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we pray for the youngsters here that something of even those letters all beginning with G will stay in their minds whether it was gratitude maybe gentleness maybe growth maybe generosity we pray for each person here and myself that we would be able to say yes I love you and mean it and by the power take away anything that was said that is wrong today Lord and just bless your word to each heart this morning for we ask in Jesus name Amen