

Learning How to Love

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- [0 : 00] How you guys doing? Wow, that was great. That was actually a very good, good. Hey, so we have a little test afterwards to see who can get all the languages that were spoken there.
- There's one there I probably think you might be hard off. Hey guys, so this is your first time at Watermark. My name is Tobin. I'm one of the pastors here.
- Yeah, last week I said that and someone looked at me and goes, well, why do you say that? Because as far as we know, you're like the only pastor here, right? So why do you keep saying that? And I said, yeah, you know, when we started Watermark a couple years ago, we'll be five years old in two weeks, a couple of us put together this document.
- It's on screen. You can't see it. I just want to come out here so you can see a little quicker, closer. And it's basically, it kind of tells who we are and what we do, and more importantly, what we don't do as a church. And our central ministry focus, as we prayed about it, you know, is Ephesians 4.
- We encouraged and equipped everyone to actively use abilities, skills, spiritual gifts, and good works for Christ in the advancement of the gospel. We talked about that last week. We said that it's not an accident that you're here, that you're here because this church needs you to be here.
- [1 : 17] You have gifts. You have talents. You have skills that, if you weren't here, then you, we would miss out on those things. I mean, sometimes people go, why I want to go over here because I feel more comfortable because there's more people with my gifts there.
- So, but then you have a gift church that has all the same gifts and not the broad variety of gifts. And, you know, you might be a leg, and if the leg doesn't show up except for every three weeks, then the body's not very healthy, is it?
- And if you might be a hand or an arm, and if the hand goes, hey, I don't, I'm new to this. I got to go read a couple manuals before I'd be a hand. Well, the hand isn't very much helping the body, is it?
- So we believe that God has you here, and you have these gifts and these talents that we've been talking about in the church when the church needs you. The second part we talked about are up here is our mission. And we just say that the mission of Watermark Community Church is to be used of God in helping people take the next step in their spiritual journey in life to become fully functional followers of Christ.
- And that's what governs everything that we do, that it's here that you take the next step. We're not saying this is where we need to be at the end, but this is the next step. And for some of you, the next step might be just having some of the answers or questions answered that you have here about Christianity.
- [2 : 29] I know some of you are dragged here by friends. You're like, oh my gosh, I have to... But you have a lot of questions. That might be the next step. For some of you here, it might be coming to faith and stop fighting against God and stop fighting against the Spirit and saying basically, okay, I'm trusting you and I'm going forward.

And for some of you, it might be finding out what your spiritual gifts are. And for some of you, it might be using those spiritual gifts. And so the reason I say I'm one of the pastors is I really believe that in this congregation, there's people who are much more gifted than me in apologetics and there's people who are much more gifted than me in teaching.

And there's people in here who have the gift of pastoring and there's people in here who have the gift of healing. There's people in here who have the gift of service. And if you don't do it, then the church is weak and the body is weak and people are hurt.

And so if you're wondering what your gifts are, you're thinking about it, come and see the staff and we want to help you in this journey and to develop those gifts so that you can be a fully functional follower of Christ within the body of this church.

And we're going to talk about that a little more. We put this spiritual gifts in this week, but next week we're going to have places we need you to serve and what does that look like for you to serve in Watermark and be a part of God's family.

[3 : 45] One of the things we also prayed about is the church is when we came together that Watermark, that we would identify all the idols in this world, that we'd identify the idols that we struggle with. The Bible says an idol is anything that captures your heart.

It's anything that you love more than God. It's whatever's precious to you. Whatever, if it was taken away, you'd become angry or you'd get upset. Yet, we have a lot of idols in Hong Kong.

Some of us struggle with the idols of just education and getting the best grades and taking more classes so we can seem competent to our peers. Some of us struggle with traditions and some of us struggle with families.

Some of us cling to wealth and some of us cling to power and some of us cling to sex and our sexuality and some of us cling to control and some of us cling to pride and sports and hobbies and free time and time.

Some of our idols are ourselves. Some of us struggle with love. It was 1997 and Christina and I had been married one year.

[4 : 56] I don't want to know who wasn't born in 1997, please, but I realized after one year that I was in trouble. I was 35. I'd been married to Christina for one year and I realized something was wrong.

I had this crisis of faith in my life. I realized that I didn't love her as much as she loves me. I realized, what I mean by that is I just didn't understand what love was the way she did.

And I was just totally freaking out. I mean, I was just, I couldn't sleep. I was in seminary. I'm trying to take these classes. I had been a Christian for, since I was 10 years old, but I just didn't understand love and I didn't see and experience it the way that she did.

And there goes my name. And, you know, I went to my mentor, Dr. Hannah, and I said to him, hey, I have these big problems. You see, I grew up in a family where love was just because people did things for you.

You love people because they took care of you. You love people because they made you feel good. You love people because they served you. That's the kind of love I experienced. In my family, love was always conditional.

[6 : 13] And sometimes love would be withheld and sometimes love would be withheld and sometimes love would be removed. And that was the worst as a kid when you really messed up and your parents just removed your love from you.

But here, my wife, I realize that she seemed to love me just because of me. I know it sounds really weird.

I mean, it sounds stupid. I just couldn't comprehend it. And I'm not saying she's perfect. I mean, if you have two hours a day, we can sit together and I can just share with you all her imperfections. I love you, honey.

But what I'm saying is that she understood love and she had the capacity to do it that was so much different than mine. And I didn't understand love and I realized that.

And I shared with Dr. Hand, I said, hey, this is what's going on and he just looked at me and he listened to me and he said, you know, Tobin, the difference of what you are experiencing between you and Christina is just a speck in the totality of the gospel.

[7 : 20] What you're experiencing in that difference and in love is just a speck compared to God's love for you. But God's love for you is so much greater than Christina's love for you.

And I thought about that and I have to be honest with you, I still struggle. I struggle with God's love. I struggle with the love of Christ. I struggle with gospel-centered love.

What does it mean? You know what? The church at Corinth, they really struggled with this also. I mean, the church at Corinth was a mess.

You know, we've been talking about for like 12 weeks now, God for some reason allowed Paul to plant this church in the middle of probably the most immoral, the most out-of-control city in the world. The city was all about money, sex, and power.

And the people who came to Christ and the people who came to church, they still struggled with money, sex, and power. They struggled with the idols of their past just like you and I do. They struggled with the scars that were on their heart from bad choices that they made in life just like you and I do.

[8 : 29] They struggled with pride and selfishness and self-centeredness just like you and I do. And in the midst of this, because of God's love and His grace, He gives these gifts to this church, these gifts of the Spirit, they're gifts of grace and they're these empowerments, these supernatural empowerments that are allowing them to do things that people just were freaking out when they did them.

And He gave them to them for two reasons. The reason was to build up the body of Christ, but the main reason was to bring Him glory and to bring Him honor. And we're told in the passage that all the people in the church had gifts.

When you come to Christ, you have gifts and everyone in the church had these gifts. They had the gift of prophecy and preaching and serving and ministries and tongues and everything, but in their pride and in their selfishness and in their self-reliance, they pushed away all those gifts and they just elevated three.

They said, these are the only three gifts that really matter and that everything else is rejected. And so they had this body, this Christian body, like we're supposed to be like a church and the body was totally dysfunctional and there was these splits happening in the church and there was these fragmentations and people were angry at each other and only some people could speak the heavenly language, Texan.

And everybody else couldn't speak Texan and there was, that's a joke, okay, but I do think it is the heavenly language. But they could only speak that and so Paul, in chapter 13, he comes to them and he reads this passage and you guys, you don't understand it when Paul wrote these letters, this letter to the Corinthians, this passage, we read it and we go, oh, that's so cute.

[10 : 00] Marriage, love, true love. It's so beautiful. But that's not how Paul intended it. I mean, when Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians, it was intense.

And so this passage is so intense we've decided to divide it up into two sections so we're going to take a part of the section today and all I want to do is I want to look at love. I want to look at the importance of love in our life as we go on this journey with God and with each other and then I want to look at like how we get love, what does it mean to get love and then we'll cover the rest of it next week, okay, so next week.

So this week is love, the importance of it in our journey and then how do we get it? How do we pursue it? How do we grab onto it? And I have a couple questions like we've been doing all this time because I learn through questions.

I don't know how you learn but I learn through questions. So in verses one through three, Paul's looking at this church and it's crazy. Remember at the end of chapter 12 we talked about last week, he said they're looking at their gifts and they're misusing their gifts and Paul says, hey, let me teach you something better.

I'm going to teach you something even greater than your gifts. I'm going to teach you something that's even more fantastic. I'm going to teach you something that's going to sustain you even when your gifts disappear. I'm going to teach you love.

[11 : 15] So in verse one, he says, if I speak with the tongues of men's or of angels but do not have love, I become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. You see, in these first three verses, the church has learned five ways they're trying to live.

There's five different lifestyles in this church that the church has been trying to live and they're all in these first three verses. So when he says this, he says, if I speak with the gift of angels and tongues of men and angels but I don't have love, he's talking about these people who've come together in a church and they said, hey, we're going to be about these supernatural gifts.

We're going to be about speaking tongues, we're going to be about healing, we're going to be about doing miracles. These are the things that are going to center around our whole life. We're going to focus on these things and we're going to allow them to impact us and they're going to change us and we're going to be so awesome.

And Paul says, if you do that, the Greek actually says, you're just a noisy piece of bronze. Now you don't understand this but even in this scripture there's a lot of history here.

So Corinth was the center of bronze production in all of Europe. I mean, it was the most famous place to get bronze. If you were in Rome, because mirrors were not made out of glass, they were made out of metal, really metal.

[12 : 26] And so that's what he says in looking in the mirror dimly. You're seeing this reflection out of metal. But everybody wanted mirrors from Corinth because that was the place to buy bronze stuff. And so the historians tell us that when you went into the center of the city that there were like five or six hundred bronze makers and they were in the middle of the center of the city and when you walked in there all you heard was this.

Five hundred people just in the middle you can't hear anything. And historians say if you want to talk to people you got to get like this close to their ear and you go okay, okay, okay, okay.

But you couldn't hear anything because it was just like and Paul says that's what we're like if we use our gifts and we don't have love.

That's what we're like if we're not other centered. That's what we're like if we're thinking about ourselves. That's what we're like. And he says in the end it's nothing. And he's not saying that your life produced nothing.

What he's actually saying is that your life is nothing. Nothing. In verse two there's another group of people and they've come up and they said hey, we know how to live.

[13 : 39] We're going to live by prophecy. We're going to get we know all of God's mysteries. We know all this knowledge. We have all this wisdom. We have all this discernment. We have all these teaching skills. We just know all these things.

We know how to read the Bible. We know how to study it. They have the gift of teaching. They have the gift of preaching. They have the gift of pastoring. They have all these gifts and they're saying I'm going to use these gifts to the fullest and I'm going to do it.

And Paul says yeah, you can do that. But if you don't have love it's worthless. But you can be the best pastor in the world but if you're not thinking that up other people if you're not loving other people if you're not being outwardly focused it's worthless.

It means nothing. Verse two there's some people in the church who say this they say I have faith I believe I trust I have the vision of the future I can dream God has given me these intuitions I know what to do I know where to go we're going to do these things Jesus said if we just had the faith the size of a mustard seed we could say to that mountain mountain get up and the mountain would jump up and the mountain would go into the ocean.

So faith is powerful and it's incredible and it can control your life and it can do amazing things but Paul says if it's just doing things for you if you're just serving yourself if you're not thinking about other people if you're not helping other people if you're not outwardly focused you're nothing.

[15 : 18] There's another group of people in the church and they go well we know how to do it this is the best way to live in verse three we know how and why God has called we know what to do with our lives so that God loves us that God is pleased with us that God gives us all the things that we need and this is what we're going to do we're just going to give everything we have to the poor the imagery is almost like a piece of bread and they're just picking pieces off and throwing it away and so this is what we're going to do with our life we're just going to pick off pieces of our life and we're going to we're going to give it to the poor we're going to serve we're going to do mercy we're going to do justice and if we do all these things if we give our life away surely God is going to be pleased with us we're going to surrender our body we're going to surrender our body to the church we're going to surrender our body to ministry we're going to surrender our body to families we're going to surrender our body to our colleagues we're going to do incredible awesome things and Paul goes yeah you can do that but if you don't have love if you're not thinking of other people if your desire isn't outwardly focused if your desire isn't to enrich and bless the people around you it's no profit to you

I mean it might help those people but to you it's no profit you gain nothing you are nothing Paul says that you could have your name on a hundred buildings and if you don't have love it means nothing the church is kind of deflated right there's this passage in Matthew 7 and this passage has kind of haunted me guys I mean I'm being very honest all these things we're sharing we're honest we're real that's one of our values in the church and this passage has haunted me for a long time and in this passage in Matthew 7 Jesus is talking about the end times and he's talking about the fruit in our lives and he's talking about the fruit of the spirit that grows up in our lives and he says in the end times people are going to come to him and they're going to go Lord Lord we cast out these demons Lord Lord we spoke in tongues we heal people we did miracles we did all these amazing things we had prophecy we could understand tongues people were brought back to life people were healed we did all these massive things for you

Lord Lord in Matthew 7 Jesus says depart from me for I never knew you you weren't my child you didn't have love you didn't have a relationship with me and what we learn is without love there were people who were doing miracles there were people who were speaking in tongues there were people who were healing people there were people who were doing all these great things but they were doing it in their own strength and through other things that we talked about three weeks ago and he says these people at the end they think they're doing well but in the end they're not doing well no matter how gifted you are outwardly if there's not love at the core of your being you're just a noisy gong does that make sense?

you can move your head up and down I just want to make sure I'm not talking to myself so in verse 4 when you read the Greek in verse 4 it's almost like there's this pause he goes 1, 2, 3 and he gets to 4 and it's almost like this pause and you kind of know what the people want to ask him because he's writing these things and you have to realize that everything he's saying the people were doing the exact opposite that's the reason he's writing these things because they were doing all the things that he's writing against and so when he says this is what love is you know that they're doing the exact opposite and so he kind of pauses and he asks this question and you know what the question is what is the question people want to ask then?

what's the question? what does the Pharisee ask? the Pharisee ask well what is love? what does that mean? what really is love? what does it really mean for me to love?

[19 : 21] okay guys my kids are a mess I'm trying to figure them out I'm trying to help my kids and my kids they're not in here so I can share this because sometimes I share it and I get in trouble they're just a mess and so I'm doing some stuff in the house and all of a sudden I hear my kids cry and scream and so I've learned from Christina because usually I go in and I say who did that?

but I don't do that anymore I say so what happened here? right? that's good guys you gotta learn that okay so what happened here? so people are more willing to talk and one kid says to the other kid this kid he hit me you know who it is it's the boy right?

I was gonna say the kid who remained nameless but it's always the boy right? and so I look at Kip I said Kip do not hit her anymore do you understand me? he says yes sir so I go off and I'm doing stuff and all of a sudden I hear screaming and there's all this screaming and I walk in there and this time I'm a little angry and I'm like okay what's going on here?

and Kip goes he hit me and Kip goes I didn't hit her I pinched her I said okay no hitting and no pinching do you understand?

yes sir okay so I go back and about 10 minutes later I hear the scream this is true okay I don't know your kids are probably much better than my kids so you guys can come teach me because I need help with this but I come back in and my daughter's screaming and I said okay what happened?

[21 : 00] I know who did it she goes Kip hit me I said Kip I told you not to hit her because I didn't hit her I flicked her so I'm like okay no hitting no pinching no flicking the question is does Kip want to obey me?

no he doesn't want to obey me he just wants to find out the least minimal things he can do to make dad happy and when he doesn't do that he tries to rearrange things and he does these things and he just does it right?

Kip is a good Pharisee I'm a good Pharisee I read God's word he says hey I want you to to give give your time give your talents give your money what's the first question I ask?

how much time? 10% of my time? 20% of my time? and I keep going on I go well how much talents? do you want me to give it all? or can I keep some for myself?

100%? or do I just keep it? how much money? I'm a good Pharisee right? I am a good Pharisee I struggle with this well how much money? 10%? 20%?

[22 : 30] 30%? 30%? do I want to obey? come on guys you can be honest do I want to obey?

no I see God's word there and I try to parse it in ways that make it convenient for me but I don't really want to obey it I just want to do the least minimal thing so I don't get inconvenienced in my life and that's my struggle I struggle with legalism and Pharisees so if you ask any questions that ever do a percentage what you're really saying in your life is you're a Pharisee and you're saying to God okay God I know you want me to do this because your word says this love but what does that really mean?

give what does that really look like? and we're struggling just like the church of Corinth is because we don't really want to obey we just want to be inconvenienced in our life and so it's really interesting because in this passage Paul doesn't give a definition for love he doesn't define love and say technically in the Greek this is what love means now he actually creates a new word for love in this passage it's never used before but he doesn't define what it means I mean he doesn't give us this technical definition but instead what he does is in these next couple verses three verses actually he gives us about 15 verbs to describe love so he's not going to give us a definition but he's going to say this is what it looks like now remember for the first 12 chapters the people have been disobeying they've been bad they've been naughty they've been prideful they've been boastful they've been rude they've been proud they've been self-serving they've been self-assessed and Paul could just say stop doing that don't do those things those are bad things but he doesn't do that he just starts to describe love for us the first thing he says is love is patient it means long suffering it means it restrains itself it means it actively waits for the other person it doesn't mean you're patiently waiting on MTR it means you're patiently waiting on somebody else a person love is patient it means that you're slow to anger it means that you bear other people's faults it means that you know that people are different than you but that's okay it means that people make mistakes and you cover those mistakes you don't bring those out into the open but you try to love them you don't look down on people you know the church hated these words they hated them because we've already seen that they can't wait on anybody

I mean when dinner happens and the communion happens two chapters earlier they're eating up everything because they can't wait on people a chapter ago they're taking people to court because they just don't want to be patient with people they don't want to do those things they had no patience with each other they always put each other first how about us how patient are we how are we doing with love is patient the next thing he says is love is kind now patience is the passive part of love kindness is the active part kindness means that you seek out the good of the other person that you are proactive you have mercy the Greek word actually means to be helpful it means you come alongside people you help people I mean you look for people in need I mean that's what kindness is it's other centered the Bible says that it's because of the kindness of God that you and I come to him that it's because of God's kindness that we are able to see the gospel that we're able to see

Jesus kindness motivates people to change you know that the Bible says that when you're kind to people they change I never learned that in my home I always learned to be tough be authoritative get it done and that's what makes people change get the job going but the Bible says that kindness is what changes people love is kind so here's the question what does it look like for you to be kind what does kindness look like in your workplace what does kindness look like in your home what does kindness look like in church the next thing Paul says is love isn't jealous he says that jealousy is this eager desire to covet and it's the opposite of love it means greed and selfishness it means that you want to have what other people have it means that you want to prosper at the expense of other people and the church was jealous the church was jealous of their spiritual gifts they were elevating some they were despising others they were jealous of each other's finances they were jealous of each other's positions there were a lot of slaves and there were a lot of masters all these things shrugged in there and people were jealous of each other

[27 : 35] James is going to say later on in his church in Jerusalem that the problem with the whole church the problem the church is having all the problems is because everybody's jealous of everybody else so Paul says love is not jealous love is not elevating yourself and putting other people down but love is elevating other people sometimes at the expense of yourself and you get put down when I hear that I go that's hard I don't know if I like that part of love I don't know if I want to do that finally Paul says this love does not brag love is not arrogant both of these are kind of like the twins to jealousy bragging is when you try to make yourself look good so other people are going to be jealous of you and the focus again is on self and on me it builds me up and boasting is when you let other people know how well you've done

I've done so well look at what I've done and this was arrogance arrogance is taking the credit for it so we elevate we boast and we take the credit for it Paul says that love doesn't do that Paul says that love builds up Paul says that love builds up other people Paul says that love is humble Paul says that love understands that everything you have everything you have everything you're wearing everything at home everything you have your family your kids everything your gifts your talents your health everything everything is from God Paul says that's what love understands And when love understands that it changes And it becomes meek and mild and gentle How we doing?

I mean it's a little different than the wedding verse right? Now do me a favor do not go to your friends at their wedding and go You know that verse really doesn't mean what it says it means Because you're going to crush your wedding day right?

Don't be crushing your wedding day Now there's applications for that verse in the wedding day for sure But that's not what it means And I could keep going down for the next ten things but you know where Paul's going You know what he's talking about He's just giving these examples that we need to go back tonight and look at them And we need to ask ourselves well how are we doing in this?

So let me ask you a question How are we doing with this? Are we other people focused?

[30 : 28] Do you realize that everything that you have Is this amazing awesome gift from God who loves you so much? Do you realize that God gave you All the things that you have right now Your gifts, your talents, everything he's given you And they weren't just for you But they were for a body of Christ And Christians coming together on a journey And they were for his glory Do all of our actions In our life, Tobin Point outwards to other people Or do all of my actions In my life Point inwardly To me You know 18 years ago When I left Dr. Hannah's house It was actually his office at DTS I started on this journey

To try to understand love It's amazing Because you know when I first came a Christian The very first bookmark I ever got in my church 40 plus years ago Was this bookmark on love It was the only thing I had in my Bible at that time Next week we hope to give you guys one We're getting them made right now This bookmark has changed my life Because I realized that learning about love And growing in love Isn't going to be something that I can do like that I'm not going to be able to say to God Okay God I want patience Give it to me now Because love is patient That's not how it works But what I've learned in my life Is that just occasionally Every so often At least once a week I read this And I ask myself these questions So I think love is patient And so I ask myself this question Am I Patient I mean what does it look like for me to be patient with my friends

What does it look like for me to be patient at my work What does it look like for me to be patient with my family What does it look like for me to be patient with my kiddos Specifically in different situations in their life And what does it look like for me to be patient with Christina And then I ask the question How am I doing And if I'm honest I get hit immediately with this flood of fail Fail, fail, fail, fail, fail, fail And you know that's okay Because we're in this broken world And we're broken people And God is changing us moment by moment And so all I do is I just confess I say God I'm so sorry that I'm not patient Will you please forgive me And then I go to Christina Or I go to my kids And it happens a lot more than I would like And I would say I'm so sorry That I've not been patient Will you please forgive me And you know as I've been doing that over 40 years

God has been changing me I learned more about grace I learned more about love I learned more about forgiveness I learned more about kindness And so what I just do is I just ask God to forgive me I say God can you give me patience And I just surrender That area of my life to Christ And say God I have a really hard time with this Can you change me I want to look like you I want to be patient like you are And you know sometimes If I'm really honest Sometimes if I'm really honest It's just easy to live life And to not love Because things get so busy You know sometimes if I'm really honest It's easy to live life And not love And not look at Christ at all

I don't know if you struggle with that But what I'm learning Is that the more that I see Christ The more that I see how awesome he is And how much he loves you Do you know that Christ came to earth for you Do you know that Christ Lost his love From God the Father For you When Christ cried out on the cross My God Why have you forsaken me What that means in the Greek Is that God Stopped loving him God stopped loving Christ On the cross For you So that he could come back And start to love you again

[35 : 35] Do you realize that? And I realize that the more I think about that The more I think about his love The more I think about what he's done The more I think about his kindness He changes me He changes us The passage says that God's love Is out of control for you The only question is Will you accept it?

Will you accept it? Father we thank you for this day We thank you for your mercy And your grace We thank you that you are kind And that you are gentle That you're not wanting anyone to perish But you're wanting all of them To come to a knowledge A saving knowledge of your son Jesus And what I realize That there's some of us in here right now Who we're still trying to figure out What this Jesus thing is all about And we've hated God And we've hated what God's allowed to happen in our life We've had these dreams And these aspirations And these things didn't turn out the way they did Maybe there's loss Maybe there's sickness Maybe there's death Maybe there's loss of something in there And we're just angry at God Because it doesn't feel like he's for us And what I pray for are those brothers and sisters in here right now

Correct us when we're wrong Show us and energize us Where we're right But in all of it
Help us just to realize That it's the center of who we are As your people And without it
we're lost And you don't know us And what I pray for Hong Kong As this church goes out I
just think What would this church be like What kind of impact would happen In Watermark
If everybody understood This passage of love And what does it look like And what would it
look like When we engage people today In our eating In areas we come back to In our
homes And what would it look like tomorrow And we go back to the office And we're
practicing These ideas of love And not because we can do it Because it's impossible The
only way any of this Could happen Is because Christ is changing us His Holy Spirit is
Equipping us He's gifting us He's changing us What would it look like If Hong Kong If 300
people left today And they were different tomorrow Well I pray that You've brought us here
To be a church That's on a mission For those who are not