

I. 40 Days of Love - Part 1: Love Matters Most Gee Sprague, Lead Pastor April 11, 2010

A. Connor Mead, played by Matthew McConaughey, a professional photographer and womanizing bachelor, returns to his family's estate for the wedding of his brother Paul. When asked to give a toast at the wedding, Connor, a bit under the influence, gives his philosophy of love.

B. Video Clip

C. An expert in the law questions Jesus. *(Mark 12:28 NIV) One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"*

D. This lawyer had an expectation that Jesus might be able to tell him which one of the 10 Commandments was most important.

1. Most of us are on the lookout for what is the minimum that we need to do to please God.
2. Tell me the number one answer to the Top Ten of God's Commandments, and certainly if I focus on that one all will be well.

E. *(Mark 12:29-31 NIV) {29} "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. {30} Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' {31} The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."*

F. Jesus' answer really disappoints the lawyer. He doesn't reference the 10 Commandments, but instead summarizes all 10 into one concept.

G. At first it even seems unfair; he asks for one command and Jesus gives him two.

H. The first is *(Deuteronomy 6:4-6 NIV) Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. {5} Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. {6} These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.*

1. Jesus even adds mind. When you are the Word made flesh, you can add a bit.

I. *(Lev 19:18 NIV) "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD."*

J. In essence Jesus is saying that love is the overriding principle of all the commandments.

K. A person that loves God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength will naturally obey God's commandments and the product and evidence of that will be love for neighbors.

II. Three Life Principles of Love

A. I shared a little last week about how your dominant life principle guides your life.

B. Jesus is guiding this lawyer, and all of us, into making love our dominant life principle.

III. **The best use of life is love**

A. **Love validates my faith.**

1. "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." 1 John 4:8 (NIV)
2. "If we say we love God, but hate others, we are liars. For we cannot love God, whom we have not seen, if we do not love others, whom we have seen." 1 John 4:20 (TEV)
3. One of the first songs that I learned in my youth group days, and it still appears occasionally, is the song: They Will Know We are Christians by our Love.
4. Though the song falls into the category of Kum Bay Yah and Pass it on, the message cannot be denied.

B. **Love integrates my life**

1. *(Col 3:14 NIV) And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

2. Col. 3:14 (CEV) *“Love is more important than anything else. It is what ties everything completely together.”*
3. In today’s world, most of us feel a bit fragmented.
4. When your life is fragmented, it lacks integrity.
5. Let’s review your Middle School Math. Integers are all numbers that aren’t fractions.
 - a. Is 2 an integer? How about 3.5, $4\frac{3}{4}$, 10?
 - b. The Latin origin means untouched, undivided.
6. Love makes a person whole.
7. When it is a life principle, a person has integrity; their life is one integrated package.
8. They don’t just love popular, pretty people of their same ethnicity and social status.
9. They are equal opportunity lovers.

C. **Love compensates for my sin.**

1. *“Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins.”* 1 Peter 4:8 (NLT)
2. *(Col 2:13-14 NIV) When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, {14} having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.*
3. *“God wiped out the charges that were against us for disobeying the Law... He took them away and nailed them to the cross.”* Col. 2:14 (CEV)
4. Any parent knows this is true. If you show any kind of love, it covers a lot of mistakes, shortcomings, even blatant sins.
5. One of the greatest signs of maturity is watching your child figure this out.
6. I am so glad Hannah went away to college. About a year and a half ago, she couldn’t go far enough away. I’m just kidding.
7. Being away, she has really started to show a greater love for Sandy and me.
8. The smallest acts of love makes a parent just want to do whatever needs to get done. You quit worrying about the small irritating things!
9. Rick Warren states, God says, “My first question is not, did he sin? My first question is, does he love me? Does he love my Son Jesus Christ? If she/he does we’re just going to cover over that sin. We’re going to compensate for it. We know he/she’s imperfect. But what matters most is, do they love me?”

D. **Love reverberates forever.**

1. *“Three things will continue forever: faith, hope, and love. And the greatest of these is love.”* 1 Cor. 13:13 (NCV)
2. *“No matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I’m bankrupt without love.”* 1 Cor. 13:3 (MSG)
3. There was a lot of racial tension in St. Augustine in the 60s. Martin Luther King sent Andrew Young to help give leadership to demonstrations that were occurring.
4. Young has recently produced a documentary about that event. In it he expresses that Dr. King over and over again stressed to Young that the demonstrations must be non-violent.
5. Dr. King was not without flaws. His sins had to be overlooked by God, and his insistence to show love through non-violent demonstrations has reverberated and the United States is a more loving country because of his ministry.

IV. **The Best Expression of Love is Time.**

- A. *"We must show love through actions that are sincere, not through empty words."* 1 John 3:18 (GW)
- B. *"The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."* Gal. 5:6 (NIV)
- C. *"Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins."* Eph. 5:2 (NLT)
- D. *Ten Secrets for the Man in the Mirror* Patrick Morley p. 36 Exercise to see how you use your time:
1. "Make a list of the top five ways you use your time.
 2. Next, make a list of your five most important relationships. Now compare them. Are the ways in which you spend your time actually related to the most important people in your life? If not, what steps might you take to bring them into alignment?"
- E. Pat Morley: I have enough time to do everything God wants me to do.
1. We need to ask ourselves: What am I doing that I should stop doing? What is it I am neglecting that I should be doing?
 2. We need to make decisions based on priorities not pressures. We compartmentalize our families but not our work. We rarely let our families influence our work decisions, but we bring our work home and let it influence our families.
- F. Here's a neat way to think of it.
1. Imagine if you were to check your bank account one morning only to find a direct deposit for \$86,400. And it goes on for weeks!
 2. Each morning you find a new deposit for this amount... but soon realize that your balance is not carried over to the next day. Instead, it is deleted each evening, and the next morning you begin again with a new balance of \$86,400.
 3. What would you do when you finally realized your account balance would be deleted each evening if you didn't use it all that day? Of course...you'd withdraw the balance left over each day!
 4. You and I have such a bank account called time. Each day we are credited with 86,400 seconds. And every night that which we have not used is deleted from our account. However, our time accounts do not allow overdrafts, loans, or savings options.
 5. We must invest our time wisely in this life. According to one time management study, the average person spends two years making phone calls to people who are not at home, six months waiting for traffic lights to turn green, and another eight months reading junk mail!
 6. Have you evaluated the way you use your time lately? Are you using it wisely to glorify the Lord? Psalm 39:6 says, "Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and fro: he bustles about, but only in vain; he heaps up wealth, not knowing who will get it."
 7. Our time on this earth is brief. God wants us to use every minute of our lives to serve and honor Him. Determine to use your time wisely to advance the cause of Christ.

V. **The Best Time to Love is Now.**

- A. *"Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone..."* Gal. 6:10 (NLT)
- B. *"Use every chance you have for doing good."* Eph. 5:16 (NCV)
- C. *"Whenever you possibly can, do good to those who need it. Never tell your neighbors to wait until tomorrow if you can help them now."* Prov. 3:27-28 (GN)
- D. *"Eagerly pursue and seek to acquire love. Make it your aim, your great quest..."* 1 Cor. 14:1 (Amplified)
- E. That is why you should be in a 40 Days small group.
- F. About 370 people have signed up to be in 47 groups all over NE Florida.

G.I am so excited about the number of people who are participating.

H.If, however, you haven't decided to, how about it!

I.We have all had Connor Meade experiences with love and relationships, but give it a try.

J.Starting tomorrow night, groups will be meeting to begin to take this 40 Days of Love journey.

K. Monday night is the first night our groups will be meeting. Actually Sandy and I are hosting a group on Monday.

L.I am looking forward to all the new relationships that are going to form and to increase the level of love at CrossRoad.

M.Remember, we are Imperfect!

VI. Prayer: Father, it's so easy to get distracted from what's most important. Knowing and loving you and knowing and loving those around us. Forgive us for being task driven instead of love driven. Forgive us for valuing things and accomplishments more than people.

Now you pray. In your heart say this, "Father, thank you for this wake-up call today. I needed it. I know what matters most even when my schedule doesn't show it. I thank you for this reminder today. I know the people who love me are a gift from you. Please forgive me for taking them for granted. Forgive me for allowing other things to crowd out my relationship to you and allowing other things to crowd out my relationship to others. I know this is going to mean making some sacrifices. But I want to slow down and make time for loving relationships. I want to change. Jesus, you modeled real love when you sacrificed yourself for me. I thank you for that. I want to love you and trust you. I ask you to forgive me and fill me with your love. I want to follow you in life and love. And I want to make love the primary aim of my life..."