

HEALING WORDS
Word Power – Part 4
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Every human being was born with an innate craving for love. We want it, need it, and seek it more than practically anything else in life. This is why words of love are among the most powerful words in the human vocabulary. In this final installment in our series, we're going to discover what has happened in our broken world that has exasperated this search for love and how God has unleashed us as agents of transformation – speaking and sharing His love with a desperate and hurting world.

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The Greatest Thing in the World by Henry Drummond

"I've never met a person whose greatest need was anything other than real, unconditional love... It is the common fiber of life, the flame that heats our soul, energizes our spirit and supplies passion to our lives. It is our connection to God and to each other." – Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, The Wheel of Life

"Love is the birthright of every person." – Mother Teresa

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man." For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. Genesis 2.23-25

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." Genesis 3.8-10

The god who rules this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers. They cannot see the light, which is the good news about our glorious Christ, who shows what God is like. 2 Corinthians 4.4 (Contemporary English Version)

1. THE STRUGGLE AND SEARCH FOR EDEN

"In all our hearts lies a longing for a Sacred Romance. It will not go away in spite of our efforts over the years to anesthetize or ignore its song... It's a Romance... set deeply within us..." - Brent Curtis and John Eldredge, *The Sacred Romance*

God has set eternity in our hearts, without which no one would seek God. Ecclesiastes 3.11

...they were naked and unashamed. Genesis 2.25

"After twenty years of listening to the yearnings of people's hearts, I am convinced that all human beings have an inborn desire for God. Whether we are consciously religious or not, this desire is our deepest longing and our most precious treasure. It gives us meaning. Some of us have repressed this desire, burying it beneath so many other interests that we are completely unaware of it..." - Gerald May, *Addiction and Grace*

2. GOD BREAKS INTO OUR BOX

But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman... Galatians 4.4 (KJV)

The goal is for all of them to become one heart and mind; just as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, so they might be one heart and mind with us. Then the world might believe that You, in fact, sent Me. The same glory You gave Me, I gave them, so they'll be as unified and together as we are; I in them and You in Me. Then they'll be mature in this oneness, and give the world evidence that You've sent Me and loved them in the same way you've loved Me.
John 17.21-23 (The Message)

God the Father loves you as much and in the same way He loves Jesus.

"I have a word for you from your brother Jesus: Welcome home." - Brennan Manning

"Dear Jesus, if it's a fault for being too kind to a sinner, then it's a fault I learned from you." – Brennan Manning

3. HEALING THROUGH WORDS AND ACTIONS OF LOVE

The Greatest Thing in the World

"Once, when I was working on a woman in Cleveland, I called and asked him [Dr. Bob], 'What do I do for somebody who is going into D.T.'s?' He told me to give her the medication, and he said, 'When she comes out of it and she decides she wants to be a different woman, get her Drummond's 'The Greatest Thing in the World.' Tell her to read it through every day for 30 days, and she'll be a different woman.'" - Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers

Souls are not made sweet by taking [ill tempers] out, but by putting something in - a great Love, a new Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. Christ, the Spirit of Christ, interpenetrating ours, sweetens, purifies, transforms all. This can only eradicate what is wrong, renovate and regenerate, and rehabilitate the inner man. Will-power does not change men. Time does not change men. Christ does. Therefore 'Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.'" - Henry Drummond, *The Greatest Thing in the World*

We love because He first loved us. 1 John 4.19

So this is my prayer: that your love will flourish and that you will not only love much but well. Learn to love appropriately. You need to use your head and test your feelings so that your love is sincere and intelligent, not sentimental gush. Live a lover's life, circumspect and exemplary, a life Jesus will be proud of: bountiful in fruits from the soul, making Jesus Christ attractive to all, getting everyone involved in the glory and praise of God. Philippians 1.9-11

□ The defining characteristics of love

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 1 Corinthians 13.4-7

- Love is patient

Patience comes from the Greek word makrothumeō. It's a compound word from makros, "long" and thumos, "anger" or "heat"

"The great Greek virtue is the refusal to tolerate any insult or injury and a readiness to strike back at any hurt."
- Aristotle

Instead He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3.9

- Love is not self-seeking

We love other people when we stop using them as means to supply our deficiencies.

"My old nature feels a deep emptiness and grabs at whatever is within its reach to fill that emptiness. If my old nature is religious, it may use law, keeping the rules as a source of pride. If it's not irreligious, it may use alcohol, drugs or relationships. But one thing is certain: the old nature is not free. It's enslaved to one futile desire after another in its effort to fill an emptiness which only Jesus

can fill. So, works of the flesh are motivated by a desire to fill our emptiness. But love is very different—it is motivated by the joy of sharing out fullness." – John Piper

- Love is not rude

How does God want us to respond?

_____ is patient and kind. _____ is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. _____ does not demand his/her own way. _____ is not irritable, and _____ keeps no record of when he/she has been wronged. _____ is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. _____ never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance." (NLT)

"...this is a portrait of Jesus Christ." - John R. W. Stott,
Baptism and Fullness: The Work of The Holy Spirit Today

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"We Christians have almost forgotten that God is a person. He thinks, wills, enjoys, feels, loves, desires and suffers as any other person may...He communicates with us through the avenues of our minds, our wills and our emotions...The continuous and unembarrassed interchange of love between God and (us) is the throbbing heart of New Testament religion." - A.W. Tozer

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Matthew 22.37-39

If love guides our hearts, rules become redundant.

"To say that I am made in the image of God is to say that Love is the reason for my existence, for God is love. Love is my true identity. Selflessness is my true self. Love is my true character. Love is my name." – Thomas Merton, Seeds of Contemplation

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We were made to crave for love. What have been your most formative positive and negative experiences as it relates to love?
2. Even our best experiences in love leave us desiring something more simply because no human being is capable of meeting our need for perfect, unconditional love. Ultimately, this either leads us to God or we attempt to fill our love hunger with lesser things. How have you seen this truth played out in your life and the life of others?
3. Pastor Keith referenced part of Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17 (John 17.21-23). In it, Jesus clearly prays

that you and I would know that we are loved as much and in the same way as He is by the Father. Is that the way you see yourself? Why or why not? If not, what is your biggest struggle with this truth? If so, how does that manifest in your life?

4. Take some time to re-read this section from 1 Corinthians 13...

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 1 Corinthians 13.4-7

What did you learn about this passage today? What words or phrases stand out to you and why? How do you see these characteristics in the life of Christ?

5. In Biblical Christianity, love is the central controlling ethic. Everything revolves around the two great commandments – love God and your neighbor as yourself. In truth, Christian growth is best defined as love formation. You and I are to be continually immersing ourselves in God and as a result, becoming more like Him in our capacity to love. Why is love so important in the Christian faith? What happens to our witness when we fail to love as Christ did? What are churches and Christians best known for today? How might God want to use you in your family, neighborhood, job, or school to express His love to someone who desperately needs to experience it?