



Above all else,
LOVE



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MONDAY – This Kind of Love Cannot be Overlooked



James 13: 35 (NIV) *By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”*

When you think of standing out, what comes to mind? Perhaps it's the celebrity with thousands of Instagram followers. Maybe, it's the colleague who seems to always be going ahead or a girl who is popular with all the boys. Perhaps standing out is the five-storey house that towers over its neighbours, or the teenager whose bright pink hair and wild fashion choices make people look twice.

To most of us, standing out, or to put it another way, getting other people's attention, means having to be bigger or bolder or better than anyone else. But Jesus describes a different way to get others' attention — through the way we love one another.

We don't have to push the boundaries with what we wear or climb the corporate ladder to stand out. As Jesus followers, we are called to love others as Jesus loves us (John 13: 35). That kind of love can't be hidden. Like a light breaking into a dark room, Jesus' love shining through us breaks through the mundane of our day to day lives.

Anyone can profess love verbally. But the selfless, unconditional love

Jesus demonstrates is more than just words. Jesus proved His love for us through action. He left heaven and came to Earth to live among us. He travelled from town to town healing and helping those who were hurting. And in His greatest act of love, Jesus gave His life so we can be with Him forever.

These days, love that proves itself through action is not always the norm. Many people don't even know such a love exists, nor do they recognize their need for it. That is why Jesus put so much emphasis on freely and consistently loving those around us.

Real love is more than surface level. It is not fickle, and it does not demand anything in return. When we've been loved, we know it. It often causes us to do a double take, to feel deeply, and to tell others about it. Tangible love that reflects Jesus' heart shines too brightly for people to ignore.

Reflection: What's one way you can love someone intentionally and actively today?



Prayer: Loving Father, fill my heart with the **love** that You so freely give. Make my spirit a spirit of joy, happiness, and **love** for both my friends and my enemies. Help me to **love** as abundantly as You have always loved me. AMEN.

TUESDAY – Are You Doing Enough?



Matthew 22: 37-39 (NIV) *Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.*

You serve at church, volunteer with local charities, and lend a helping hand at school. Every second of the day seems to be accounted for, yet so much is still left undone. Your days are long, and your body is exhausted. At the end of the day, you wonder “*what have I achieved?*” It can be overwhelming to look at a hurt and broken world – especially now with the uncertainty caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Too often, we see needs all around us, but in our striving to help with these needs, we leave ourselves burned out and even more importantly, too busy to hear from God.

In Matthew 22, Jesus reminds the religious elite (and all those listening) that what is indispensable in our lives is to focus on loving God and loving our neighbours.

We won't be able to end world hunger in an afternoon or heal every broken heart in a day. God understands this and says that the most important thing we can do is

love Him and love others. That's our charge.

So rather than getting overwhelmed by all that we can't do, we start with what we can do. Loving our neighbours can be as simple as cooking an extra meal to take to the new mom next door or the widow across the street.

When we are loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind, we are more in tune with His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our helper and guide and we can trust Him to show us opportunities to love people one at a time.

That's how we make a difference — not by burning ourselves out trying to right every wrong. We change the world by loving God and showing visible love to all those that He puts in our path.

Reflection: What is one thing you could do to meet a need that God has laid upon your heart today?



Prayer: You desire all Your children to love others as Christ loved us, but my love is often poor and weak and far removed for all that You desire of me. Fill me with the love of Christ that I may love others in the same way that Christ loved me, so that as Your love pours into my soul, I may be used as a channel for Christ's love to stream out to all others with whom I come into contact. AMEN.

WEDNESDAY – What do I do When Someone Hurts Me?



Luke 6: 27-28 (NIV) *“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”*

Even Christians can experience rage. Our bodies shake. The heat rises to our cheeks. Our minds can't comprehend how someone could mistreat someone so badly. We are seething as we think “how could they”?

The reality of being a human on planet Earth is that someone, someday, in some way, will hurt us. When that happens, what should our response be?

Jesus gives us an answer in Luke 27-28 – We need to love people, even when they are not lovable and even when we don't want to. No one knows more about loving people who don't deserve it than Jesus. No one else can sympathize with you more than Jesus. He was hurt, made fun of, and talked about. Yet, He was willing to die for those who hurt him.

Our goal as Christians should be to mirror Jesus' response. He knows all the so called “*unlovable*” people in our lives, and He will equip us to love them the way He does, if we let Him.

The best way to begin changing our hearts and attitudes toward someone, is to pray for them. We need to be honest with God about our frustrations. We must talk to Him about how hard it is to love a particular person, and then see how God starts to transform our hearts and minds.

It's easy to respond to pain with pain. But only love will lead to healing. The more we love those who hurt us, the more our hearts are opened to letting Jesus heal our pain. Jesus is able to understand our pain, turn our hearts toward forgiveness, and help us love. That's exactly what the grace of Jesus does.

Reflection: Make a list of all those whom you consider an enemy of some kind. Pray for them. Ask God for the eyes to see them as His children and a heart to love them.



Prayer: Dear Lord and Heavenly Father, one thing I know is that I can't love my enemies without Your help. I can't offer kindness to those who have wronged me unless Your Spirit stirs within me. Thus, even as I pray to be able follow Jesus' commandment to love those who persecute me, I am asking for Your strength and guidance every step of the way. AMEN.

THURSDAY – The Power of Love



Song of Solomon 8: 7 (NIV) *Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away. If one were to give all the wealth of one's house for love, it would be utterly scorned.*

Those who have never experienced true love cannot imagine its power. It is so powerful that Solomon said that it is “*as strong as death.*” It is not mere emotion but *much* deeper, cutting to the core of our being. It consumes us, body, soul, and spirit.

Many emotions seem similar to love. Admiration, friendship, interest or lust. But true love strikes deeper. It cannot be extinguished or quenched, no matter how many waters may be thrown onto it. If entire rivers were to be redirected onto love they would not overflow. It is also priceless. This is a love that cannot be measured or counted. True love cannot be purchased. It is all about the heart and spirit and our very lives. These are things that money cannot buy.

The Bible tells us true love is not a passing feeling but an entirely new way of living. It is a by-product,

not of human emotion, but of the fruit of the Spirit. This Spirit-inspired love is patient, kind, never jealous or arrogant and “*never fails.*” Faith, hope, and love may abide, “*but the greatest of these is love*” (1 Corinthians 13:4-13).

Solomon may seem to have written about romantic love. But ultimately he described a love that can come only from God, the kind of love that He has for us, but also a picture of the kind of love we need to have for Him. A love of passion and selfless devotion, of giving and not receiving, a love that actually “*consumes*” us. It is this all-consuming divine love that *changes* our lives.

Reflection: How do I demonstrate to others my true love of God?



Prayer: Dear Father, thank You for loving me so much that You sent Jesus to die for me. I am so profoundly grateful for that love. Help me, with the help of the Holy Spirit to share that same love with others.
AMEN.

FRIDAY – God's Unfailing Love



Psalm 119: 41 (NIV): *May your unfailing love come to me, Lord, Your salvation, according to Your promise.*

Some people have compared Psalm 119 to a string of pearls. Rather than develop one theme, the psalmist adds one pearl at a time so that all together they create a beautiful strand of truth and wisdom. The pearl of this section is God's "*unfailing love.*"

God's "*unfailing love*" is, I believe one of the most important terms in the entire Bible. Over and over, we read stories that show God's steadfast, unfailing love for His children - through thick and thin - and often despite our own tendencies to wander from His desired path for us.

In this section, the psalmist highlights God's unfailing love and reminds us of the relationship

between God's Word and His people. God reveals Himself and His unfailing love for us through His promise that He will never leave or forsake us. When we read of God's love and promises, a chain reaction should be set off within us. God's Word fills us with awe and wonder for God Himself, and we, in turn must grow in our desire to love, please and serve Him as well as others.

Do you want to grow in your faith? I believe the answer is to be found in the continual and dedicated study of God's Word. As you delve deeper, you will grow in knowledge and grace, with a desire to love and serve God with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love others as yourself.

Reflection: What am I doing to grow my knowledge and understanding of what God, through His unfailing love, desires for my life?



Prayer: Father God, Thank You, for the truth contained in Your word and thank You, for all Your perfect and unconditional love and grace towards me. Give me the grace and understanding to assimilate these truths deeply within my soul. I glorify You for the unconditional love that You, by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus, have poured out on me. AMEN.