

Valentine's Day: A Celebration of Love

Intro: This morning we celebrate Valentine's Day. This is a day that has long been set aside to honor love. It is generally a day for men to honor their wives or sweet-hearts with flowers, candy, red hearts, and romance. If any of you men showed up this morning, and just now realized this is Valentine's Day, well I have some advise for you. It's too late now, but you may want to save this for next year.

I. Advise For Men: *Gift Basics*

Many men have a difficult time figuring out what to do on Valentine's Day. Let me just say, if you expect to make the women in your life happy, you need to know the gift basics. Here it is, guys, in plenty of time, for next year.

Step One: ***Remember***. The minimum requirement is to let YOUR woman know you care. The least expensive way is to look at her—preferably in her eyes, and say, “I love you, [her name here].” If you forget her name, don't bother with the rest of these steps—you already lack the skill to survive.

Step Two: ***Cards***. A Valentine's card is an acceptable nonverbal token of appreciation. Best of all, it's cheap. Good Valentines' cards are pink with lots of lace and have cute words such as “I'll love my sugar bunny forever and ever and ever and . . .” Bad Valentine cards say, “Good for one free oil change.”

Step Three: ***Candy***. While a handful of M&Ms is OK, women tend to expect something a bit nicer. It should be in a box for starters, and wrapped in really nice paper with a pretty bow for that extra touch. The best way to explain why you must do this is: women regard chocolate the same way men view beer. Enough said?

Step Four: ***Jewelry***. A bit pricier, but essential if you didn't bother with Steps 1-3. If you did, you might get by with a small but hideously expensive ring, necklace, or tiara. Note: most women, even in Arkansas, do not consider aluminum, tin or a Mylar balloon to be a precious metal.

Step Five: ***Lingerie***. Caution! Not only does it have to be the right size, caliber, and color it must also match any of the 8 billion feelings she currently has about herself. To be safe, tell the clerk you're looking for something that can't be used to strangle you in your sleep.

Step Six: **Remember**. Although red is a good Valentine's Day color, if you have per chance forgotten the day altogether, green is also very feminine, and is always a good fit if the numbers found on the face are VERY LARGE.

So, who first came up with this day to celebrate LOVE?

II. Origin Of Valentine's Day

The history of Valentine's Day—and the story of the patron saint who initiated this day—is shrouded in mystery. As the legend goes, there was a priest by the name of Valentine, who lived and served in Rome around AD. 250. At that time, Rome was ruled by an emperor by the name of Claudius II. The Roman Empire was in decline, and faced hostile threats on many fronts. Claudius was determined to return Rome to her former glory days, but was having trouble getting men to enlist in his army. He discovered that most men were married, and not willing to leave their wife and children to serve in his army. This made Claudius mad. So, he passed a law outlawing marriage. This earned him the nickname, *Claudius the Cruel*.

Valentine was a priest serving in the church in Rome. It just so happened that performing marriages was one of his greatest delights. He thought Emperor Claudius' edict outlawing marriage was ridiculous! Valentine continued to secretly perform marriage ceremonies. He would whisper the words of the ceremony, while listening for soldiers on the steps outside. One night, he did hear footsteps. The couple he was marrying escaped, but he was caught. He was thrown in jail, and Claudius sentenced him to death.

Valentine tried to stay cheerful, and was blessed as many young people came to the jail to visit him. They wanted him to know that they, too, believed in love. One of these young people was the blind daughter of his prison guard. Her father allowed her to visit him in his cell. They often sat and talked for hours. She believed he did the right thing by ignoring the Emperor and performing marriage ceremonies. On the day he was to die, he left her a note thanking her for her friendship and loyalty. He signed it, *"Love from your Valentine."*

That note started the custom of exchanging love notes on Valentine's Day. It was written on the day he died, February 14, 269 AD. Now, every year on this day, February 14, men and women around the world express their love for one another on Valentine's Day.

Everyone *loves love!* We want to be loved and we want to give love. The problem is—our love is lacking just like we are. It’s often conditioned upon our own mood or our loved one’s actions, appearance, or attitude. When it comes to love, all of us fall a little short, don’t we? Some of us are as confused about love as little five-year-old Kari who told her teacher, “Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne, and they go out and smell each other.”

My question for today is—how do we develop and nurture a love worth giving on Valentine’s Day and every day? The answer, I believe, is found in God’s holy Word. As believers in Christ Jesus, God commands us to love one another. John writes in 1 John 4:7—“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.” So, how do we love one another? Unlike the expressions of love shared on Valentine’s Day, which are usually shallow and temporary, God wants you and I to follow His example of loving through sacrificial action.

III. Learning To Practice Christ-like Love

What does biblical love look like? We know that our relationships in the family need to be marked by love. Husbands are commanded to love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself up for her.” Wives likewise are commanded to love and respect their husbands. Parents and children, brothers and sisters, are all commanded to love one another. But how do we know what such love looks like in everyday dress?

Paul’s famous chapter on love, 1 Corinthians 13, tells us how to love as God loves. Paul enumerates 15 characteristics of love to show how love acts or what it looks like in everyday life. A New Testament definition of *agape* is “a caring, self-sacrificing commitment which shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved.” Jesus Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross for the sins of mankind is the epitome and embodiment of *agape* love. 1 John 3:16—“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life”

Paul begins with two positive properties of what love is, followed by eight negative traits that love does not do, and then he concludes with five more

positive descriptions on what love does. Look with me at the first two positive properties of love in verse 4a,

A. Two Positive Properties of Love (v. 4a)

1. Love is patient (v. 4a)

v. 4a—Love is patient, and love is kind

The Greek verb translated “is patient” (*makrothumeo*) means literally, “long-suffering” or “long-tempered.” This word is common in the New Testament and is used almost exclusively of being patient with people who wrong us. It is the capacity to be wronged or taken advantage of by a person over and over again, and yet not retaliate. ***The supreme example of long-suffering love is God Himself.*** It is His patience and long-suffering that prevents the world from being destroyed. As believers in Christ, we are to follow His example.

2. Love is kind (v. 4b)

Not only is love patient, love is kind. The verb for “kind” (*chresteuomai*) is found only here in the New Testament. To be kind means to be useful and gracious to someone. **Kindness** is a word suggesting “**goodness in action.**” A kind person actively pursues the good of others. For the believers in Corinth being kind meant giving up their selfish, jealous, and prideful attitudes and adopting a spirit of loving kindness toward one another. Paul, says, “This would allow their spiritual gifts to be truly and effectively ministered in the Spirit, rather than superficially and unproductively counterfeited in the flesh” (John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians*, 340).

Paul follows these two positive characteristics of love with eight negative properties or descriptions of how love does not behave, v. 4c-6a

B. Eight Negative Properties That Love Does Not Do (vv. 4c-6a)

vv. 4c-6a—Love is not jealous; does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 Love does not act unbecomingly, does not seek its own, does not become provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6a does not rejoice in unrighteousness,

1. Love is not jealous (v. 4c)

Jealousy is the opposite of love. Love seeks the good of others, and jealousy wants what belongs to another. Shakespeare called jealousy the “green sickness.” When a person envy’s someone else they are said to be “green with envy.” Jesus referred to jealousy as “an evil eye” (Matt. 20:15). The Bible is filled with examples of the disastrous effects jealousy has had in people’s lives. Consider the following examples: Cain was jealous of his brother Abel *so he killed him* (Gen. 4:3-8); Jacob’s sons, who were jealous of their brother Joseph, *so they sold him into slavery* (Gen. 37:11, 28); Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, along with 250 leaders of the congregation of Israel were jealous of Moses and Aaron’s leadership over them—*so God caused the earth to open up, and they and all who belonged to them went down alive to Sheol* (Num. 16); the high priest and his associates were envious of Jesus, and they had Him condemned to death (Matt. 27:18); later the high priest and his associates were filled with jealousy and so they jailed the apostles (Acts 5:17-18). Once again, jealousy is a vice that is the exact opposite of love. Love and jealousy cannot exist in the same heart.

2. Love does not brag (v. 4d)

The Greek word for “brag” is “windbag.” A braggart’s behavior is marked by an inflated egotism and pride. C. S. Lewis called bragging “the utmost evil.” The braggart boasts about him/herself and his/her accomplishments. A loving person doesn’t brag about his success, but gives praise to God.

3. Love is not arrogant (v. 4e)

Bragging and arrogance go hand in hand. Arrogance is a more serious sin than bragging, because bragging praises oneself. Arrogant people on the other hand destroy others in order to gain power and position. Paul had already warned the Corinthians “not to think more highly of themselves than they should, in order that no one among them might become arrog-ant, favoring one against the other” (4:6). Many of the Corinthians had become arrogant indeed. They prided themselves on possessing a superior knowledge and rejected Paul’s apostolic

authority. Paul reminded the Corinthians that everything good in their lives came from the Lord, and therefore they had no reason to be arrogant.

4. Love does not act unbecomingly (v. 5a)

To “act unbecomingly” means to behave rudely. Some of the saints at Corinth had become models of unbecoming behavior. For example: the young man in chapter 5 who was living in sexual sin with his step-mother. Paul condemned the churches tolerance and acceptance of such sin, which he said was not even practiced among unbelieving Gentiles. The rudeness of many was seen in their coming together to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. The wealthier members took their own supper first, leaving the poorer members hungry. Some of them over indulged in wine and became drunk (1 Cor. 11). During the worship services each one tried to outdo the other by speaking in tongues (14:40). The believers in Corinth routinely practiced behavior that was rude and unbecoming.

5. Love does not seek its own (v. 5b)

A love that seeks its own is the root evil of our fallen humanity. Alan Redpath said, “The cause of every discord in Christian homes, communities, and churches is that we seek our own way and our own glory.” This was the original sin committed by Adam and Eve. They lived in perfect fellowship with God, and enjoyed a perfect environment. However, as we all know Eve was deceived by the Serpent, who suggested to her that she could become like God by eating the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:1-7). Human beings have been eating forbidden fruit and seeking to fulfill their own selfish and sinful desires ever since.

God’s type of love, *agape* love, is the opposite of the self-seeking and selfish love practiced by mankind. It does not strive to seek its own way, but strives to meet the needs of others, to the glory of God.

The story is told of a chauffer who drove up to a cemetery and asked the minister who served as the caretaker to come to the car, because his employer was too ill to walk. Waiting in the car was a frail old lady with sunken eyes that showed years of hurt and anguish. She

introduced herself and said she had been sending five dollars to the cemetery for the past several years to be used for flowers for her husband's grave. "I have come in person today," she said, "Because the doctors have given me only a few weeks to live and I wanted to see my husband's grave one last time." The minister replied, "You know, I am sorry you have been sending money for those flowers." Taken aback, she said, "What do you mean?" "Well, I happen to be a part of a visiting society that visits patients in hospitals and mental institutions. They dearly love fresh flowers. They can see them and feel them. Flowers are therapy for them, because they are living people." Saying nothing, the elderly lady motioned to the chaffer to leave. Several months later the minister was surprised to see the same car drive up, but with the woman herself at the wheel. She said, "At first I resented what you said to me that day when I came here for a last visit. But as I thought about it, I decided you were right. Now I personally take flowers to the hospitals. It does make the patients happy and it makes me happy too. The doctors can't figure out what made me well, but I know. I now have someone else to live for" (John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians*, 345).

The Lord Jesus serves as our perfect example. Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life for others (Mark 10:45), so we are to go and do likewise. **Love others for Christ's glory!**

6. Love does not become provoked (v. 5c)

The sixth characteristic of *agape* love is that it does not become provoked. The Greek verb means "to stimulate," "provoke" or "rouse to anger." Phillips provides the following paraphrase, "It is not touchy." Love is not given to emotional outbursts. It refuses to let someone else get under one's skin. If you blow your top with little provocation, you need to ask God to help you walk in the love of Christ.

7. Love does not take into account a wrong suffered (v. 5d)

The seventh negative property is a word used in bookkeeping. *Logizomai* is an accounting term that means "to take into account." The purpose of the entry in the ledger is to provide a permanent record that can be consulted whenever needed. A loving Christian

doesn't record the wrongs people commit against them. Love does not keep an account of evil deeds.

One married man said to his friend, "You know, every time my wife and I get into a confrontation, she gets historical." His friend said, "Historical? Don't you mean hysterical?" "No, I mean historical. She rehearses every-thing I've ever done wrong in the whole history of our marriage." That's keeping score!

That's not love. Who are you keeping an account on? Perhaps you need to ask God to set fire to your ledger of wrongs suffered.

8. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness (v. 6a)

Love takes notice of the evil in this world, but never takes satisfaction from sin, whether our own sin or that of others. To rejoice in unrighteousness is to justify it. As we noted in our study of the Truth Project, our society has rejected God and is turning His truth upside down. Popular magazines, books, and TV programs are glorifying sin. They literally rejoice in unrighteousness. The programming on the major networks parade nudity, profanity, and homosexuality through most Americans' homes every night of the week. Christians are not immune from enjoying such vile programming because their carnal flesh likes to indulge in sin vicariously. **Turn it off friends!**

C. Five Additional Positive Properties (vv. 6b-7)

Now, after eight sobering negatives come five glorious positives of how love acts, vv. 6b-7.

1. Love rejoices with the truth (v. 6b)

The first of these positive properties of love is actually a contrast with the last negative: *Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth.* Since all truth is predicated on God's Word, love always rejoices with truth that is in accordance with God's Word and righteous standards. As believers we must bring our behavior into conformity with God's Word. We rejoice in truth and reject the lies of Satan and his corrupt world system.

Paul concludes his poetic treatise on love with a fourfold summary of the positive force of love in v. 7

v. 7—Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

2. Love bears all things (v. 7a)

Love never gives up, but patiently endures all things. The verb also means “to cover.” Peter writes, “Love covers a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8). The idea here is that *agape* love is a virtue that throws a cloak of silence over what is displeasing in another person. Rather than picking each other apart, believers should pray for and encourage one another to press on in Christ. Christians are the only ones that kill their wounded!

3. Love believes all things (v. 7b)

The third positive characteristic of love is that it believes all things. Love says, “I choose to give you the benefit of the doubt as long as there is reason to do so.” In every situation we need to pray and seek guidance from God’s indwelling Holy Spirit. God’s love should be willing to trust and to believe the best about people. Love says, “I am willing to wait for the evidence to come in before making my decision.”

4. Love hopes all things

The fourth positive characteristic of love is the ability to hope all things. Paul is not advocating a blind faith that overlooks the difficulties that come into every one of our lives. He is picturing a love that refuses to take failure as final, either in oneself or in someone else. Love never gives up on people. And the reason the believer can exercise such hope is because God is in the business of taking human failures and producing spiritual giants out of them.

5. Love endures all things

The final positive characteristic of love in 13:7 is *endurance*. The

word “endures” is a military term that means to hold a position at all costs, even unto death, whatever it takes. The battle may be lost but the soldier keeps on fighting to the very end. The word pictures an army surrounded by superior forces, being attacked and slowly overwhelmed on every side. One by one your comrades fall at your side. Through the noise of battle comes one final command: “Stand your ground, men. And if necessary, die well.”

Agape love holds fast to the people it loves. It perseveres. It never gives up on anyone. Love won't stop loving, even in the face of rejection. Love takes action to shake up an intolerable situation. Love looks beyond the present to the hope of what might be in the future.

Conclusion:

Saint Valentine may have become infamous for defying the Emperor and standing up for marriage, but what really made him a saint was that he received the love of Jesus, reciprocated that love, and recycled it through a life of service. When you and I do that, we are no less saints than Saint Valentine.

I want this church, more than anything else, to be a community of love. I want you to be able to come here, and feel totally and completely loved. Nothing, according to Jesus, is more important than loving God and loving people. Let's make that our goal for 2016. If we love each other as God has loved us, then we will become a church of love that will act like a magnet, drawing people who are starving for love into the presence of Jesus and the salvation that he offers.

Invitation:

If you're here this morning and you have never believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior, will you accept Him as your Savior and Lord today? Not only will He give you the gift of His eternal love, but He will equip you to love the way God intends for us to love. If we want to love one another, we must focus on God's love for us and walk in the power of His indwelling Spirit, who produces His love in us (Gal. 5:22).

Closing Prayer:

Closing Song: *What The World Needs Now*

