

LOVING LIKE JESUS, JN.13:34-35

40 Days of Love #2

◆**Intro:** If you want to be a rock star, who could you imitate? (Elvis, Beatles, etc.) Right. Someone already good at it.

◆If you want to learn to decorate your house with lunch bags and cucumber slices who would you consult? (Martha Stewart?) Someone who knows decorations, right?

◆If there's something strange, in the neighborhood, who ya gonna call? (That would be the Ghostbusters.) Someone who knows ghosts.

◆You get the picture, right? Well it's the same way with what we're looking at in these 40 days: if you want to become a gold-medalist Dr. of Looove, who do you consult. How about the greatest of all lovers? God himself and his only Son, Jesus Christ. Here's the fail-safe way to become a better lover of your spouse, your children, your neighbors, your weird relatives: copy God; learn what Jesus' love looks like and copy it. **Read text.**

◆**I**n his book, *Connecting*, Larry Crabb writes:

◆"A friend of mine was raised in an angry family. Mealtimes were either silent or sarcastically noisy. Down the street was an old-fashioned house with a big porch where a happy family lived. My friend told me that when he was about ten, he began excusing himself from his dinner table as soon as he could without being yelled at, and walking to the old-fashioned house down the street. If he arrived during dinnertime, he would crawl under the porch and just sit there, listening to the sounds of laughter."

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◆ What do you do when you want to get rid of tension so thick you can cut it? Are you ever tired of walking around the house as if on eggshells? Do you ever wish there was a porch you could crawl under? The best advice I can give you is to find out everything you can about Jesus and copy him.

◆ 1. To love well, I must accept others the way Jesus accepts me.

◆ A. Before we look at how Jesus accepts us, let's run over some faulty assumptions we make about acceptance. The evil one and the world feed us lots of lies about real love. How many of these have gone through your mind?

◆ 1) "The more perfect you are, the more acceptable you are." That's what we operate on but it's a lie; as though we only like gold-medalists! Jesus was the only perfect person and people murdered him! In addition, how much do you tend to like the people who seem to be perfect. There's something about true goodness that repulses hearts addicted to badness.

◆ 2) Now kind of the opposite: "The more flawed I am, the less loved I am." People say all the time, "Oh I'm too far gone." or "It's too late for me." That's a lie we use as an excuse for not dealing with life.

◆ "Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the

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righteous, but sinners to repentance.”” Luke 5:31, 32, NIV.

- ◆ Sorry friend, that excuse is out the window. Paul, writer of much of the New Testament texts called himself the “worst of sinners.”
- ◆ 3) “If my parents didn’t love me well, I must not be lovable.” This is a lie too, but ever so easy to conclude because our childhood fashions our inner assumptions and these take hard psychological work to break. Furthermore, the Bible says “Even if my mother and father forsake me, the Lord will receive me.” That’s how God is!
- ◆ Jesus acceptance of us is perhaps one of the most jaw-dropping, amazing things about him. The Bible tells us that...
 - ◆ B. Jesus didn’t wait to love us until we were nice enough.
 - ◆ *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us... For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” Romans 5:8, 10, NIV*
 - ◆ That means Jesus decided to love *before* we cared, or liked him. That is, while we actually hated him in our hearts; and completely disagreed with his instructions! What? Give good in return for evil? Are you out of your mind? What limit all my sexual activity to one lifelong partner? Are you serious?

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But consider that last phrase, vs10 above. We got reconciled when we didn't want it! If God can embed love into our lives when we don't want anything to do with him, just imagine how better our living would be if we copied his life?

◆C. What else is there to know about how Jesus loves? Many of the biblical prophets remind us that Jesus comes seeking relationship even in the face of our rejection and contempt!

◆"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Isaiah 53:3, NIV."

◆"*I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.' All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations--*" Isaiah 65:1, 2, NIV. (that's the pursuing Mike talked about last week.)

◆So that's how Jesus loves us, friends. That's the kind of love God has. When Jesus stepped off the throne in heaven and through the door into earth it was into a world that didn't want him, like him, or even care who he was. We rejected and reject him all the time moment by moment. He accepted and accepts us all the time, moment by moment allowing us to continue to

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breathe, shining the sun on our skin and sending the rain on our grass –even though we pretend he’s not there, and chose to live all the things he says only lead to misery.

◆What would you do if you experienced the rejection Jesus experienced? Ever felt it?

◆Rejected by a parent who claimed you’d never amount to anything at all. Rejected by the cool kids. Rejected by being picked last. Rejected by a glance, by a name called. Rejected by being ignored. Rejected by avoidance? In one episode of the Simpsons, the creators point out our ridiculous tendency to reject others when Lisa Simpson is attacked by a group of snobbish elementary school girls who point at her clothes and say, “Those are last year’s fashion! Kill her!”

◆Ever felt it? Does it fill you with love? Of course not. Rejection hurts enough that to avoid it we’ll do all kinds of things we don’t even really want: we’ll smoke, shoot up, steal, curse like a sailor, sleep with our boyfriend, wear skimpy clothing, change our hairstyle, and our glasses frames, or buy a car we can’t afford. We hide behind our makeup and our outfits hoping for acceptance. We utterly and desperately want it.

◆Friend, your Maker send his Son to death, to make you acceptable before heaven. It’s no claim of your own. It’s his loving offer to you. The greatest thing you ever did cannot

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make God love you more, and the your most shameful secret cannot make him love you less. Did you hear that? That's how Jesus loved. And that's how Jesus' people are to love. Casting Crowns captures this beautifully in one of their songs:

Who am I, that the Lord of all the earth Would care to know my name

Would care to feel my hurt

Who am I, that the Bright and Morning Star Would choose to light the way

For my ever wandering heart

Not because of who I am But because of what You've done

Not because of what I've done But because of who You're

I am a flower quickly fading Here today and gone tomorrow

A wave tossed in the ocean A vapor in the wind

Still You hear me when I'm calling Lord, You catch me when I'm falling

And You've told me who I am I am Yours, I am Yours

Who Am I, that the eyes that see my sin Would look on me with love and watch me rise again

Who Am I, that the voice that calmed the sea Would call out through the rain

And calm the storm in me

◆ Learning to feel this down deep is the only thing that can make you accept other people like you've been accepted. Acceptance doesn't mean approval! Oh no, in fact it is truly love when we can offer acceptance of a person, that is, love a person when their behavior is unacceptable. Jesus doesn't accept our sins as if they don't matter. No, he let himself be killed for those sins. So no, love is not standard-less, but godly love is not withheld until the other measures up. To love like that, we must pray for a new kind of heart.

◆ *"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you."*

Romans 15:7

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◆ **2. How do I accept people like Jesus did?** How do I love wrong people, bad people, difficult people, sinners? Break it down further: what is it about the way Jesus accepts sinful me, that I could imitate? Or, "How did Jesus view fallen human beings such that if I adopted this view it would lead me toward other peoples worlds like it led Christ toward us and ours?"

◆ A. I can accept people by valuing them like God values me.

How does God value me?

◆ *"Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." Luke 12:6, 7, NIV*

◆ Understand that valuing a person does not require you approve all things. Valuing, is deciding to place/see worth on/in someone. You don't have to approve of the way I joke, or of my fashion choices, or even of my activities. But if you value me, you will work at looking past those things.

◆ It's like looking at the world through your windshield when there's bird dukie spots on it. You don't drive around looking at the bird dukie. You look at the road, the scenery. (If you look at the spots only, you'll soon also be looking at the scenery up close!) Some people look at other peoples spots only. All they see and constantly mention is the warts, or the flaws, or the

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misbehavior that so irritates them. But real lovers don't do that, do they? Lovers see deeper. Lovers see all the way to the bone. How are you doing at looking at people? Do you see spots? How are you doing at looking all the way to the bone?

◆ I noticed this in my wife when our sons were young and became at times inexplicably crabby, or hot headed (say, in the morning when they only have 7 minutes to get their butts from the bed, into clothes, through the kitchen, and out to the running car. She had the superpower to reprimand them sternly, absorb their scowls and cheerfully say "I love you" as they slink, slank, slunked... whatever, out the door. I remember watching it time and time again and marveling at her, thinking "how can she be like that?" Although I did love them, I wasn't thinking "I love you." I was thinking "why you little...I teach you to..."

◆ When your child, or your friend, or your neighbor for that matter is merely an object, say someone who you have to raise because the law won't let you bring them back, or someone you have to hang around with because you both made the team, or someone you are forced to experience because they live next door – when you allow a person to be merely an object all you see is spots. Love is seeing past the spots. This is what God does! This is godliness.

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◆ God doesn't see primarily your spots. No. He looks at you like you look at old photos of when the kids were little. (Ah, so precious, ...and so easy to boss around.) He sees his own artistry and doesn't mind saying his kids are better looking in his view. We call that value. The biblical term is "honor" or "respect".

◆ The Apostle Peter wrote, "Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king." 1 Peter 2:17, NIV. "Show respect" is the greek term τιμαω. "Honor" later in the verse is the noun τιμη. It means "price, value". Give people a high price! That's loving like Jesus.

◆ **Conclusion:** There are more ways to accept people that you'll talk about in your Life Group materials this week (like "I can accept people by forgiving them." And "I can accept people by believing in them." We don't have time to dig into them here. Time to pick someone. Complete this sentence: This week I believe God would have me affirm the value of _____. (Don't pick someone in your family. Even pagans do that. Unless of course you are particularly at odds with someone in your family. Then pick them!) Remember this, our object is to learn to love from the inventor of the concept, God. Copy the pro!