

God is Love

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[0 : 00] Well, good evening ladies and gentlemen. Welcome tonight to the season's finale of Dr Pike. Yes, tonight we're going to be looking at the hot topic of love. That's right, something we all desire, something we all think about often.

Well, let's kick off tonight's show with a quiz entitled The Loving Friend. You know the scenario? Yay! Oh, yay! Yes, that's good.

That's exactly what I told Megan to do. All right, you know the scenario, pick A, B or C depending on what your friend is like. Here we go, first question.

You walk up to school on Monday morning and you see your friends standing with a group of people. You walk over to join them. Does your loving friend, A, ignore you totally, B, say hi and include you in the conversation, or C, turn around and start calling you nasty names?

All right, question two. At recess you discover that you've left your lunch at home and that you didn't bring your wallet to school either. Does your loving friend, A, assure you not to worry and lend you \$10 to buy something?

[1 : 11] B, laughs at you and calls you a loser? C, replies sympathetically, oh no, that's no good, but then eats their lunch in front of you. Question three.

You leave the classroom during maths to go to the bathroom. While you're away, the teacher tells you of an upcoming test and what is going to be on it. Does your loving friend, A, share everything with you and let you copy all the notes down when you get back?

B, tells you that there's going to be a test but doesn't tell you what's going to be on it? C, accidentally forgets to tell you at all. And final question of the night. At lunchtime a teacher comes over and accuses you of doing something that you didn't do.

Your loving friend was with you at the time of the offence. Does your loving friend, A, start laughing at you and watches you being taken away to detention? B, agrees with the teacher and together they devise an appropriate punishment?

Or C, lets the teacher know that they were with you at the time and that you actually didn't commit the offence? So, how does your friend stand up? Are they loving or are they not?

[2 : 20] Excellent. Well, I'm sure that Dr Pike would have lots of good things to say about love, but we might actually leave that for another time.

Why don't we pray before we start looking at God's word together? Dear Lord, we do thank you that you desire to speak to us. Lord, that you've given us the Bible so that we can hear you clearly.

Lord, I pray tonight that as we look at this passage from 1 John, Lord, that you would open our hearts, that we'd be receptive to what you want to say to us, Lord. We ask that your spirit would be here working amongst us. Lord, please help us to listen attentively, even though it's been a hot day. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, it's pretty easy to see from the quiz that we know when we're not being loved.

We can tell when our friends or our family, our boyfriends, our girlfriends, are putting themselves first and doing things that are pretty self-centred. But it can sometimes be harder to take the quiz ourselves and to look in the mirror.

[3 : 38] Are we loving people? Well, the reason I ask this is because in tonight's passage from 1 John, there is a key command that we can't avoid, nor should we avoid.

If you don't have your Bibles open, please flick them open. There's some in the pews to page 991 and follow along with me. There is one command that jumps out from this passage, one simple message that we need to understand and take home tonight.

We must love one another because God has loved us. Let's have a look at verse 7 together. It says, Beloved, let us love one another because love is from God.

Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. In verse 11, it says, Beloved, since God loved us so much, we ought to love one another. And finally, verse 21.

The commandment we have from him is this. Those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also. It is very clear. We must love each other.

[4 : 39] This is not an added extra in life. We must love others because God has loved us. But we all know this, right? This is not some new Christian teaching.

This is what God has been on about since the beginning. This is what Jesus commands when he came and walked on earth. And this is a command that is reiterated all the way through the New Testament.

It's something that our Sunday school teachers are eager to teach us when we go to Sunday school. And it's something in particular that our parents want us to learn very, very quickly when we're little. So we've probably all heard it all a thousand times.

So why is it so hard? Why is it that most of the fights we have between our classmates at school or most of the arguments that we have with our brothers and sisters or most of the heated discussions that we have with our parents are because of this issue?

Love. Or a lack of love. Well, I think the reason is because although we live in a world that craves love and is really longing to be loved, the world doesn't actually understand what it is.

[5 : 46] When I think of love, the first thing that jumps into my mind is Hollywood. Movies. You know the genre. Romantic comedy is probably my favourite. And the usual plot.

Boy, girl, meet. Attraction. It's all very nice. But for some reason or another, it can't work out. The tension builds. And then finally, love wins.

It all turns out good in the end and they live happily ever after. Well, the problem is, if that's the idea that we have of love in our head, then it won't really last.

The problem is, we think of love in that context as this warm, fuzzy feeling. Something that makes our hearts skip a beat when we see the person that we like. It's something that is out there if we just find the one.

We need to radically change our mindset if we think this is love. Although those kind of magical moments sound or romantic and really mushy and lovely, love is so much more than that.

[6 : 51] And this passage helps us to get love right. It helps us to see the truth about love and it helps us to understand what God thinks about love so that we can love others properly. Well, the first thing when it comes to this passage that we need to establish is that God is love.

Verse 8, if you look at it with me, it says, Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. And also verse 16, For we have known and believed the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. God is the source of love. He's the meaning of love. Everything that he does is done in love.

This is actually quite a difficult thing to understand. It's quite different to saying that Lisa is ridiculously good looking. Or perhaps that John T is a redneck.

Although both those things could be true, they're still opinions. God is love is completely different. It's not someone's opinion. But the best way we can understand that God is love is actually by looking at how he outplays that love.

[8 : 01] And that's exactly what he shows us in the next part, or one of the parts in the passage. It shows us that God loved us by sending his son to die for us. So read verse 9 and 10 with me. Now I want to spend a little bit of time on this because it's in this that we see not only that God does love us, but it also gives us good reasons why we should love.

And it also gives us an example of how we can love. Within these two verses we find three reasons why God showed his love so clearly. The first reason why they showed God's love so clearly was because he sent his one and only son.

Now this reason is such a big deal because there's actually no greater gift that God could give you. I want you to think for a moment about the most valuable thing you own. It might be an iPod or a PlayStation or a computer.

Well God didn't have anything more valuable than his only son. Nothing more that he could offer. Nothing more that he could give up. Now I know it's going to be hard to imagine this and because all the teenagers here don't know what it's like to have a son, nor do I.

But if you can imagine when you get older that you or your wife has a baby, has a son, and you love this son. This son has the same nose as you and the same eyes and you spend every day with

each other.

[9 : 43] And then after, say, I don't know, 10 years or so, you had to give that son up. Now that would be pretty challenging I can imagine. Well it's obviously a little bit different with God because Jesus wasn't born.

He wasn't created. He was with God right from the start. And that makes it even more powerful that he would give him up. He's always been with God. He's his son. He's like him in every way.

And they love each other with a perfect love. Yet he decided to send him for us. So how does God show his love? By giving us the most precious thing that he has.

The second reason why this shows God's love so clearly was because of who he gave his son for. He gave his son for us. The reason why this is so shocking is because we actually haven't done anything to deserve that love.

You see, because we have lived our own life, because we haven't always let God in and have his way with us, when God looks at us he sees that we are his enemies.

[10 : 53] He sees people that are actively in rebellion against him and decide that they don't want to follow him. The reason why sending Jesus to us is such a big deal is because we don't deserve it at all.

The only thing we deserve is probably to be kicked out of his family and to face punishment. God loved us. He created us. But we didn't love him back.

Now to love something that doesn't love you back is pretty hard. Why would we love people when they hate us? It's completely counter-cultural. So the reason that sending his only son for us shows his love so clearly is because we've done nothing to deserve it.

And the final point is, the final reason why this showed God's love so much was because of what it achieved. In verse 10 it says that he sent his son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

What this basically means is that although we have done wrong things, sin, Jesus' death on the cross removes our sin. No longer do we carry the guilt and the shame, the dirtiness of sin.

[12 : 06] We're completely forgiven. We are washed clean. We are made perfect before God. You see, people that are disobedient, that's every one of us, are destined to be under God's judgment and to be punished.

That's why Jesus' death on the cross shows God's love so clearly because if we accept this gift, we no longer have to be punished. We are completely forgiven.

So listen very carefully for a moment. God loves you so much that he would send his only son to die for you, undeserving people, so that you can be completely forgiven.

That is love. And what amazing love that is. So we've seen clearly from these two verses the way that God loves us.

And knowing how God shows us this love can help us to love other people. Does that mean that we have to die for each other? Is that what love is when we're expressing it to our friends and family?

[13 : 13] Well, perhaps, but not like Jesus did. There are a few key things that we can actually learn about God's example of love. One thing that we can see is that love is sacrificial.

Love is costly because it costs God to give up his son. This means that love is not always easy. It may be really hard sometimes to give up something that you love so that you can love others.

We can also see that love is freely given because it's not something that other people necessarily deserve. And this is hard. It's hard to love people back when they hate you or when they don't love you.

It's hard to love people when they are undeserving of our love. But God's love for us was unconditional. And we were undeserving. And we should love others in the same way.

Another thing we can learn about love from this is that love is totally selfless. It's completely beneficial for another person to bring them good. Love seeks to bring the best to people despite what you might want or what you might need.

[14 : 22] Love says it's not about me. It's all about you. And this is hard because ultimately we're selfish people. We're people that have self-centeredness oozing out of us.

And we actually live in a world that promotes this kind of behavior. A world that says it's okay to focus on you because that's what life is about. It's all about you and what you want and what you want to achieve.

But this is so opposite to God's view of love. God's view of love is all about others. So what does it mean to be loving to your friends at school?

Well, probably not gossiping about them when they gossip about you. Telling them about Jesus. That's probably the most loving thing that you could ever do for someone. What does it mean to be loving at church with your Christian friends or at youth group? It means listening to your leaders, doing what they say. It means looking out for people who are new and welcoming them. What does it mean to be loving to your brother and sister at home? [15 : 31] Let them go first for a change. Let them go first for a change. Even if it's not their turn. Let them have the better thing, even though you deserve it. Help them out with stuff, even if they haven't helped you out with it.

What does it mean to be loving to your parents? Do what they say, no matter if the request seems silly. Listen to them when they speak, even if you're tired. So now that we have a better idea of what love actually is, we can step out and do it, right?

Now that we know what love is, it should be easy this week when we go and love. Well, I don't think that's necessarily true, because sometimes we can know all this, but it's still hard.

So I want to give you a couple of tips, not because I am the best lover in the world. In fact, it's very challenging to love, especially on hot days when you get grumpy and tired. Firstly, a practical tip when you seek to love others.

We find it hard to love, because even though love comes from God, we often try to find it in other places. The first tip is know God.

[16 : 46] If you want to find love, find God. Understand his love. Don't try and love. Don't try and find love anywhere else. Perhaps you've never heard or never really fully understood the depths of God's love for you.

Perhaps tonight you've decided that you really want that love. Or perhaps tonight you've decided that you actually want to find out more about this love. Well, do that.

Talk to one of your Christian mates. Talk to me. Talk to someone else. And find out. Don't pass up this opportunity to know the real source of love. The second tip is keep knowing God.

Love is at the centre of Christian faith. We don't just realise it one day and then forget. We need to let this concept permeate throughout our lives. We need to remember this love all the time.

And we can do that by reminding each other when we come to church. We can do that by daily Bible reading or regular Bible reading. So as you read the scriptures, we see God's love clearly.

[17 : 51] We understand again that God loves us so much. And that is so opposite to the stuff that often school tells us or often our friends tell us or often the television or movies tell us.

Get back to the truth. Get back to the word. That's where you're really going to find love and be reminded of what God's love is. Because when you realise how much God loves you and the amazing sacrifice he's made for you, you won't be able to help but love.

When you really know it deep down, it's contagious. The last tip is to ask God to love through you. The second part of verse 16 says, God is love and those who abide in love abide in God and God abides in them.

God abides in us by his spirit. We have his spirit and he will help us to love. In those moments when you're tired and you're frustrated and you're grumpy and you're hurt and you're angry and annoyed and we all have those moments, you need to ask God for help.

In those times where you feel like you haven't got one ounce left to give, you have to ask God to help you love. And he will because he wants you to love.

[19 : 11] That's what he's created you for. And if you ask him to do the very thing that you're created for, of course he's going to answer your prayer. Finally, friends, no one who goes to the cross of Christ and really understands the depths of love can go back to a life of selfishness.

We must love others because God has loved us. I'm going to spend a short time now praying, praising God for his love and asking him to forgive us for those times where we find it hard to love. But also asking him to help us to love others each day. So let's pray together now. Lord God, we thank you so much that you are love.

We thank you, Lord, that love is every single part of you. It's your being. Everything that you do and the way you act in our lives and in this world, it's all driven by love.

And we thank you, Lord, that it's such a contrast to the things that we see in this world. Lord, we praise you that you showed your love ultimately by sending Jesus to die for us.

[20 : 27] What a great sacrifice that was for you and an amazing price to pay for our forgiveness. We thank you, Lord, that that's how much you love us. And we pray, Lord, that every day we would

know that, not just in our heads, but deep in our hearts, that our whole life would be living out in response to that truth.

Lord, that your love might flow through us once we really understand what your love is. Lord, I do pray in those times where we find it very hard to love, particularly people who haven't been loving towards us.

God, please fill us with your spirit. Lord, please love through us. Lord, please give us hearts that are willing to cry out and ask for you to empower us.

In this task of loving, we recognise that we can't do it by ourselves. So please, Lord, transform us and change us. And we are sorry for those times that we haven't been loving towards other people. Please forgive us. And Lord, help us to walk forward this week in love. Help us to love in our family relationships, with our school friends, with workmates, with our church friends.

[21 : 39] Lord, please help us to love, because you have loved us so much. In Jesus' name. Amen.