

THE POWER OF LOVE

Lesson 1

PASTOR KATY REEVES

What is 'love'?

This is our quest: to get the revelation of what true love is and to understand how to live in its power.

Webster's dictionary tells us that love can be a noun or a verb. The noun means "a **feeling** of strong or constant affection for a person"; **attraction** that includes sexual desire; the **strong affection** felt by people who have a romantic relationship; a person you love in a romantic way.

The verb means "to **feel** great affection for (someone); to **feel** love for (someone); to **feel** sexual or romantic love for (someone); to **like** or **desire** (something) very much; to **take great pleasure** in (something).

Notice:

1. The Western mind-set on love is all about feelings and emotions.
2. But God's meaning is vastly different.
3. If we are to obey His command to love, then we must understand His definition of what love is.

* In Hebrew the word for love is "ahava".

* The root of 'ahava' is 'hava', which literally means 'to offer or to give'.

* It also shares a root with the word, 'ahav', which means 'to nurture, or to devote completely to another'.

* So the essence of the Hebrew word 'ahava' (love) is not an **emotion**, it's an **ACTION**.

4. Love in its purest form is not something that happens TO us, it is a condition that we create when we **give of ourselves**.
5. If we look at the Hebrew word for 'giving', it is 'natan'; which is spelled with the three letters *nun, tuf, nun*.
 - * Whether you read it backwards or forwards, it reads the same.
 - * Built in to the Hebrew word for *giving* is the essence of what giving is all about--when we give away, we always get back--it is a beautiful circle, and a secret to creating love in any relationship.

There's a story of a young boy who once asked a wise man 'why man was created with 2 eyes.' His reply was, "With the left eye you should look at yourself, and see where you need to improve yourself; and with your right eye, you should look at others lovingly, always seeking out their best qualities".

- The moral of the story?
- We have to be willing to take a good hard and honest look at ourselves and see where our work lies in the relationship.
- Most of the times we can improve the relationship when we improve ourselves.
- But, there will be times when the problem lies not with you, but with a difficult person.
- It is at those times that you need to discern a time to let go of the relationship and move on.

Our first revelation on love--God's love--is He doesn't treat love as an ideal, a conviction, a principle, a beautiful concept, or an untamed passion.

1. IT IS AN OBLIGATION.
2. A DUTY.
3. A RESPONSIBILITY.
4. A REQUIREMENT.

Where do we get this from?

Leviticus 19:18 tells us “You shall not take revenge and you shall not bear a grudge; you shall love (**ahav**) your neighbor as yourself, I Am God.”

1. How can ‘love’ be an obligation?
2. Either you love someone or you don’t, right?
3. Who ever heard of legislating an emotion?!
4. Surely it is not something you can obligate someone to do. How is it possible to command ‘love’?
5. You cannot command an emotion.
6. You can command an action; a duty; a responsibility; an obligation.

Consider this: A father comes home from work one day to find his 9 year old son yelling at his 6 year old sister. You ask him, ‘Hey, what’s all the yelling about?’ He tells you, ‘I hate my sister, I hate her, hate her, hate her!’ He says, ‘Well, I can understand that. If you hate her, you hate her. It’s a feeling, so I guess it’s OK. What’s for supper?’ NOT! He really says, ‘Don’t you talk that way about your baby sister! You have to love your sister!’

1. He’s not simply suggesting that the brother love his sister, he’s demanding it.
2. Between brothers and sisters, love is not something that’s just preferable; it’s something we expect.
3. Nothing in the world should get in the way of their love.
4. Our Heavenly Father expects this from His children, too.
5. So not only is demanding love not impossible, it’s actually something that most of us are used to doing all the time.
6. Moreover, it is precisely by accepting upon ourselves the obligation to love someone that we begin to understand the process of how to love.

How do you choose to love?

1. Parents, even before their children are born, are naturally committed to loving their children, and are therefore determined to **focus primarily on what is good** about their child.
2. How can we activate this process in ALL of our relationships~~to be able to love ‘at will’?
3. The foundation is to **focus on the virtues** of the other person.

4. To be successful at obeying the command to love, it is overwhelmingly dependent upon how one views the other person.
5. If we choose to focus on a person's virtues, we will love them.
6. If we choose to focus on their deficiencies, we will dislike them.
7. This is not as simple as it sounds, but not as complicated as you might think either.
8. This explains how God can obligate us to love someone.
9. The way we choose to view other people is completely within our control.
10. To attain the feeling of love, God obligates us to focus on another person's virtues.
11. By extension, we will love them.
12. And the more intimately we know someone and their virtues, the deeper our love will become.

Western culture, on the other hand is heavily influenced by secular ideologies, in this case, the Greek concept of love--Cupid. You know the story. Cupid flitters around with his wings, shoots a man and a woman with an arrow, and--presto!--they're in love.

1. This concept of love dominates the Western world.
2. It deludes us into believing that love is a mystical 'happening'.
3. You don't work on loving people.
4. It either happens or it doesn't.
5. There's no effort involved.
6. Love is not based on commitment or on any deep understanding of the person that you love.
7. God's outlook is that love is based upon the understanding and appreciation of another's virtues.
8. When people are truly committed to focusing on each other's virtues, they won't 'fall' out of love.
9. This is exactly why so few people completely abandon their kids.
10. Good parents focus on their children's virtues and accept the obligation to love their children despite the aggravation.

That's the key to a successful love walk--focusing on the virtues and accepting the obligation to love despite the aggravation.

Homework:

Think about your most difficult relationship. How can you apply this lesson to improve this relationship?

What are the imperfections and aggravations that you focus on in this relationship?

List the virtues that you see in that person; ask the Lord to show you the good He sees in them.

Next week: John 3:16-a study on God's example of the power of love and how we can walk in it!

THE POWER OF LOVE

Lesson 2

Last lesson we learned that God's love is not feelings or emotions, but rather actions, an obligation, a duty and a responsibility. He can command us to love, like He does, because it is within our power of choice to do so.

Our Scripture was **Leviticus 19:18**--You shall not take revenge and you shall not bear a grudge; you shall love your neighbor as yourself, I am God.

How is not taking revenge and bearing a grudge related to love? There are actually three separate commandments contained within this one verse:

1. Don't take revenge.
 2. Don't bear a grudge.
 3. Love your neighbor as yourself.
- Why are these three commandments in the same verse?
 - What does one have to do with the other?
 - Their placement is not at all accidental or incidental.
 - In placing these commands, exactly where they are, Scripture is revealing yet **another secret** of *how to love!*
 - If you train yourself not to try to 'even the score' by taking revenge, then you won't bother to remember things people do wrong to you and thus you won't be bearing a grudge.
 - Then all that remains for you to focus on are the **good** things.
 - Nothing negative will be holding you back from seeing the virtues and loving the other person.
 - The road is now clear for you to pay careful attention to perfecting the love formula--**understanding and focusing on the virtues of another human being.**

Why does the Scriptures command loving your neighbor as yourself?

- Say you're slicing some cheese and you accidentally cut your finger; would you take revenge by grabbing the knife and cutting your other hand? After all, it was your other hand that perpetrated the offense, wasn't it? Of course not! Your other hand is as much a part of you as anything else. Revenge would be insane!
- Just so, when we learn to appreciate that we are all truly **united**, then hurting the other guy by 'paying him back' is **as ridiculous as hurting yourself**.
- We must realize that each of us is really part of the very same unit-- the **same body**.
- Only until then can we realize that revenge is as silly as hurting ourselves.

Why does Scripture refer to our fellow as 'friend'?

- The Hebrew word *reacha*, 'your friend', conveys more accurately than 'your neighbor' that we're really in this together; we're on the same side.
- That's the attitude everyone should have about each other.
- Gaining a deeper understanding in the dynamics of friendship can also help us in our odyssey to know and attain real love.

Example of true and false friendship: Story of a father and son's discussion and experiment on friendship.

True friendship and unity go hand in hand. That's why **Leviticus 19:18** commands us to 'love your neighbor (friend is the better translation of the Hebrew word)' and ends with 'I AM GOD'.

- Unity and friendship among God's children is so precious that God says, so to speak, 'If you love each other, I want to be your third friend.'
- **If we are united, we have the power of God behind us!**
- Unity is so precious to God that even when we are not as good as we should be, our unity allows us to achieve far more than any one holy, talented, or great individual could possibly achieve alone.

- In sports we call it 'teamwork'. Teams with unusual selflessness and chemistry often topple opponents with greater raw skill and power.

In life we call it 'love.'

- We see examples of this in Jewish history.
- Ahab--despite the fact that he was an evil king--was more successful in battle than any other king the Jewish people ever had.
- Why? Because he had exceptional unity among his people.
- Unity is the quality God wants most for all His children.
- Simply put, when we are united, God is our 'third friend.'
- Infighting and strife amongst us is therefore our most insidious and debilitating enemy.
- Disharmony prevents us from being a predominant force and reduces us to an impotent collection of self-absorbed individuals.
- If we are united, the Almighty is with us--if we're divided, we are on our own.

Unity is the power of love!

Deuteronomy 11:1

And you shall LOVE (ahav) the Lord your God and keep His charges.

- *Ahav* is one of three Hebrew verbs about *love*.
- It is not a 'feelings' verb, it is an **obedience** verb.
- It calls us to action, not emotions.
- That's why it can be commanded.
- Loving God with the verb '*ahav*' means acting in accordance with His wishes even when you don't feel like it.
- Emotionally based 'love' is primarily focused on 'me', not on the 'other person'.
- The success of the relationship is judged on whether or not 'my needs' are met.
- That kind of love cannot be subject to a command.
- But God does **command** us to love Him.
- God knows that emotions follow actions--so God commands actions.
- When we do what He commands, then we discover our emotional connections being changed.

- If love is a command to act, then one cannot love God if they are not acting according to His will.
- To love God is to live God's way regardless of my current feelings.
- There is no better example of this command than the life of Jesus.
- He was obedient to His Father regardless of the consequences and in spite of His emotions.
- That is the message in the Garden before the crucifixion.
- 'Father, I don't really want this to happen (let this cup pass from me), but if this is what you really want, then I give up my right to myself and place everything in Your hands. I will do what You wish to have done.'

That's loving God with *ahav*. It is the love of self-sacrifice. It has nothing to do with 'feelings', but everything to do with behavior and attitude!

- It can be commanded because it is about choices we make.
- It is about commitments we live by.
- It is about directions we take from God.
- It has nothing to do with how we feel!
- God tells us to act with self-sacrifice in every part of our life, then we will be loving Him because we will be reflecting how He acts towards us.

God's love is not a Hallmark card--it is the hallmark of Christ!

- We love God by keeping His instructions for life.
- This prepares us for loving others in the same active way.
- What are His instructions?
 1. Be patient: Jesus and the woman at the well.
 2. Be kind: Jesus feeding the multitudes.
 3. Do not be jealous: Jesus and the religious leaders.
 4. Do not boast: Jesus washing His disciple's feet.
 5. Do not be arrogant: Jesus riding on a donkey.
 6. Do not act inappropriately.
 7. Do not seek your own agenda: Jesus in Gethsemane.
 8. Do not be provoked: Jesus being betrayed, spit upon, mocked...

9. Forgive: Jesus on the cross.
10. Rejoice in righteous behavior: Jesus and the 70 returned from ministry.
11. Be joyful over the truth: Jesus and the centurion's faith.
12. Be content: Jesus dealings with the crowds keeping Him from the towns and having to stay in the countryside.
13. Be reliable: Jesus and Jairus.
14. Hope: Jesus and the cross.
15. Persevere: Jesus and the cross.

Love is not falling head over heels; it is not heart flutters or passionate longing.

It is doing what is demanded even when you don't feel like it.

With this definition in mind, it is fairly easy to determine if you love someone.

- Do these actions apply to your relationships?
- Would an outside observer describe your behavior toward other people with these actions?

Love is a verb folks! It is a call to action! Let's apply these truths to every relationship that we have and every person we come in contact with and see how it changes our world.

Next week: God's Love Defined by Covenant

THE POWER OF LOVE

Lesson 3

This lesson will wrap up our study on the power of God's love. We now understand and hopefully have received a revelation on what His love really is and why it is so powerful.

- God's love is not feelings or emotions, but rather an obligation that is seen in our actions.
- It is obedience to His commands.
- Truly there is freedom living in His love; loving others with His love.
- His love makes us the victors and not the victims!

Hopefully everyone did their homework, but if you didn't have time, I have compiled several confessions that we can use in our daily prayer times that will renew our minds and help us walk in the power of God's love on a consistent basis.

- As a man thinks, so is he.
- Actions follow attitude.

Thank You Abba Father for Your love! I am amazed at Your great love for me, so abundant and full of mercy! I know it will take Eternity for me to understand Your great and wonderful and intense love for me; that even while I was dead, slain by my sin, You gave me the very same Spirit which raised Jesus from the dead. I acknowledge that it is only by Your grace, Your favor and Your mercy, which I certainly don't deserve, that I am saved and delivered from ever experiencing the judgment that I once was headed for; but instead, You made me able to partake of Christ's salvation! Now I am raised up with Christ and seated with Him in the Heavenly realm by my being in Christ Jesus! Hallelujah!

My hope is never disappointed, deluded or shamed no matter what happens, for I know God's love poured out for me by the Holy Spirit Who lives in me. While I was powerless to help myself and just at the right time, Christ died for me; it was an extraordinary act of love that He would give His life for me, a sinner.

I am granted the favor of God and spiritual peace that comes from Christ's Kingdom, from the Holy Spirit before His throne and from Jesus Christ Who is the first to be brought back to life and Who is the Prince of the kings of the Earth. He is the One who has ever loved me and for all times has loosed and freed me from my sins by His own blood and has gathered me into His Kingdom and made me a priest and a king to God the Father. To Him be all the glory and the power and the majesty and the dominion throughout the ages and forever and ever! Amen!

I feast with Abba in His house every day and everyone can plainly see His lavish, unconditional, never ending love for me. I wear the robe of righteousness, that Jesus, my elder brother, bought and paid for with His blood and placed on me; I also wear the ring representing my authority as a child of the King of the Universe, and I wear the shoes made to fit me so I can go out and expand Father's Kingdom by preaching the Good News of the Kingdom of unconditional love wherever I go! Glory to God!

Abba, I am so glad You are my Father! Thank You for granting me out of Your glorious, unlimited resources, strength and reinforced mighty power in my inner man, by the Holy Spirit who dwells in me. Through faith, Christ has actually settled down and makes His permanent home in my heart! I am now rooted deep in Your love and founded securely in Your love. Through Your love I have the power and strength to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ for me. I know this love through experiencing this love for myself. I am filled through all of my being with the fullness of God, the richest measure of the divine Presence, a body wholly filled and flooded with Love, Himself! Amen!

I am called of God. I live in the love of God my Father and in the protection of Jesus Christ, my Messiah. I am experiencing Abba's mercy, peace and love in full measure every day! Hallelujah!

What incredible quality of love Abba has given and shown to me--that I am called a child of God! I really am a child of God! Thank You, Jesus!

The eye of the Lord is always upon me and I honor and respect Him. I can rely on His steadfast, unfailing love to deliver me from death and keep me alive in famine! Glory to God!

I want to praise the Lord, for His unfailing, steadfast love for me is better than life! He satisfies me every morning with His faithful love and so I rejoice and I am glad all of my days! Yes! Every one of my days He pours His unfailing love upon me and in the night time I will sing His songs of love all night long!

I give thanks to You, Lord; for You are good! Your love for me endures forever! I give thanks to You, God of gods; for Your love for me endures forever. I give thanks to the Lord of lords for Your love for me endures forever! He alone does great wonders in my life for His love for me endures forever! You smote my enemies for Your steadfast love for me endures forever. You bring me out victorious and prosperous over my enemies for Your steadfast love for me endures forever! I have Your strong hand and Your outstretched arm to help me for Your steadfast love for me endures forever. You are my way of escape from my enemies for Your steadfast love for me endures forever! Jesus, the King of kings has made me to rule in this life as a king for His steadfast love for me endures forever! Jesus has given me an inheritance for His steadfast love for me endures forever. Jesus has made me more than a conqueror for His steadfast love for me endures forever. My God, the Great God, meets all my needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus for His steadfast love for me endures forever! I give thanks to You Lord Who deserves all thanks for Your steadfast love for me endures forever! Hallelujah!

This is my testimony: The love and kindness of my God I have experienced are better to me than life itself! He wishes above all else that I would prosper and be in health and so I am going to prosper as a result of prosperous thinking in line with His Word. So I let the Word of God, which is alive and full of power, rule my thinking, rule my speaking and rule my actions in all areas of my life. I expect the prosperity of the Word of God for it is a prosperous Word for me now. Amen!

I just have to say this: If God is on my side, who or what in this world can be against me? God? Who did not even withhold His own Son? Who gave Him up for me? No, surely He will freely and graciously give me everything else. Who can accuse me of anything, for God in His love has justified me in His sight and put me in right standing with Him. Who in this world can condemn me? Will Christ Jesus? NO! He is the One Who loves me the most; Who died for me, came back to life for my justification and is seated in the place of highest honor next to Abba, making intercession for me. And I am seated along with them! Who in this world can ever keep Christ's love from me? My answer is this; if I suffer trouble, calamity, or I am hunted down to be destroyed; it is not because He doesn't love me anymore. If I were hungry, penniless, in danger, or threatened with death, has God deserted me? That is absurd! The Scriptures tell me that for His sake I must be ready to face death at every moment like a sheep awaiting slaughter. But despite it all, overwhelming, surpassing victory is mine through Christ Who loved me so much He died for me. So I am thoroughly convinced that nothing can separate me from His love. Death can't; and life can't. The angels won't; and the powers of hell itself can't keep God's love away from me! My fears of today and my worries about tomorrow, or even if I am high above the sky or in the deepest ocean; nothing will be able to separate me from the love of God demonstrated by my Lord Jesus Christ when He died for me! Glory to God! Praise be to His Name!

I live in God's Kingdom of Love that is established in fairness and faithfulness and truth, where Jesus Messiah, sits on the throne of justice and righteousness on my behalf. Abba's Kingdom of Love is my provision, so I refuse to be anxious and worried like the unbelievers and those who do not know Abba or the operation of His Kingdom. I know that what I focus on expands, so I choose to focus on Abba's love for me and operate out of His Kingdom's provision for me. For I believe that He loves and cares for me far more than the birds of the air; more than the lilies, the grass of the field and everything else He created. My every need is met out of this love covenant relationship that we share. Hallelujah!

I am a child of my Father's love so my life is lived with His love pouring into me and pouring out of me continually. I am patient and kind to all. I do not envy others nor do I go around telling others of great things that I have done. I am not haughty or overbearing or rude. I do not insist on my own rights or my own way, for I am not self-seeking. I am not touchy, nor fretful, or resentful. I do not take account of evil done to me or pay attention to a suffered wrong. I don't rejoice when I see injustice, but I rejoice when right and truth prevail. With Abba's love, I bear up under anything and everything that comes and I am ready to believe the best of every person. With the love of Christ, my hopes are fadeless under all circumstances and I am able to endure everything without weakening.

To love God with all of my heart, soul, and mind and to love others as myself is not a commandment to me anymore for I am not living by the law, rather it is my very nature and desire because Christ is being formed in me daily. My goal in life is simply to promote among others the love of God and live myself in the love of God that is uncontaminated by self-interest and counterfeit faith.

I make it a point to treat others as I would want to be treated if I was in their same situation. My actions are all rooted in God's love for others. God's love helps me to love and do good to my enemies. I am not moved by their words or actions toward me. I return evil with blessings. I choose to love my enemies and my actions show kindness, goodness, mercy, and tender compassions, just like my Father. I judge not or condemn not, but choose to forgive and release. I give to others to benefit them and I always have a return on my giving.