



Message Notes

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Wholeness Series | Emotionally Mature | Pastor Zach

A wealthy woman once asked an elderly monk how she could know if God exists. He tells her no explanation or argument can achieve this, only the practice of “active love.” She then confesses that sometimes she dreams about a life of loving service to others. At such times she thinks perhaps she will become a Sister of Mercy, live in holy poverty, and serve the poor in the humblest way. But then it crosses her mind how ungrateful some of the people she would serve are likely to be. They would probably complain that the soup she served wasn’t hot enough, that the bread wasn’t fresh enough or the bed was too hard. She confesses that she couldn’t bear such ingratitude—and so her dreams about serving others vanish, and once again she finds herself wondering if there is a God. To this, the wise monk responds, “Love in practice is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to love in dreams.”

Matthew 22:36-40

³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

To love others well as Christ commands, we must grow into emotional adulthood in Christ. Many people know the truths of the Bible relatively well. People can recite the 10 commandments and give key principles for Christian living. They believe wholeheartedly they should be living these principles, yet they don’t know how.

We hear truths like the following and wonder how we can live them out truly:

- How to be quick to hear and slow to speak
- Be angry and not sin
- Guard your heart above all else
- Speak the truth in love
- Become a true peacemaker
- How to mourn
- How to not lie about others
- How to get rid of bitterness, rage, and envy

To truly love others, we must grow up into adulthood emotionally. How do we know the difference between being a child and an adult emotionally? Here are some signs:

EMOTIONAL INFANTS

- Look for others to take care of them

- Have great difficulty entering into the world of others
- Are driven by the need for instant gratification
- Use others as objects to meet their needs

EMOTIONAL CHILDREN

- Are content and happy as long as they receive what they want
- Unravel quickly from stress, disappointments, trials
- Interpret disagreements as personal offenses
- Are easily hurt
- Complain, withdraw, manipulate, take revenge, become sarcastic when they don't get their way
- Have great difficulty calmly discussing their needs and wants in a mature, loving way

EMOTIONAL ADOLESCENTS

- Tend to often be defensive
- Are threatened and alarmed by criticism
- Keep score of what they give so they can ask for something later in return
- Deal with conflict poorly, often blaming, appeasing, going to a third party, pouting, or ignoring the issue entirely
- Become preoccupied with themselves
- Have great difficulty truly listening to another person's pain, disappointments, or needs
- Are critical and judgmental

EMOTIONAL ADULTS

- Are able to ask for what they need, want, or prefer—clearly, directly, honestly
- Recognize, manage, and take responsibility for their own thoughts, feelings, and actions
- Under stress can state their own beliefs and values without becoming adversarial
- Respect others without having to change others
- Give people room to make mistakes and not be perfect
- Appreciate people for who they are—the good, the bad, and the ugly—not for what they can give back
- Accurately assess their own limits, strengths, and weaknesses and are able to freely discuss them with others
- Are deeply in tune with their own emotional world and able to enter into the feelings, needs, and concerns of others without losing themselves
- Have the capacity to resolve conflict maturely and negotiate solutions that consider the perspectives of others

The religious leaders of Jesus' day were diligent, and zealous, and were committed to having God as Lord of their lives. They memorized the entire books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. They prayed five times a day. They tithed all their income and gave money to the poor. They evangelized. And they never delighted in God or His people. They never linked loving God with diligence, zeal, and commitment. For this reason, they criticized Jesus repeatedly for being a "glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners." He spent too much of his life with people. Jesus did not separate practicing the presence of God from the practice of presence with people.

1 John 4:7-8, ESV

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

If God is LOVE, then LOVE is the greatest power and force for change.

It is love that motivated the Father to redemption's plan.

John 3:16 "For God so loved..."

It is love that motivated the Son to lay down his life for us.

John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."

Love is the single greatest distinguishing mark of a disciple of Jesus.

John 13:35 "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Love is the foremost fruit the Holy Spirit bears in us.

Galatians 5:22 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love..."

The work of the Holy Spirit is to make the love of God known to us.

Romans 5:5 "...God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

Love is more excellent than any gift or miracle.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing."

Pursue Love

1 Corinthians 14:1 "Pursue love..."

To take us off track in our pursuit of Love, the enemy will attack our Trust. Trust is the foundation with others that makes us feel safe to give and receive love. When trust is broken or affected, we respond neurologically with one of the 5-F's: Fight, Freeze, Flop, Flight, or Fawn

Fight: Face a perceived threat aggressively

Freeze: Respond with an inability to move, act, think, or feel

Flop: Collapsing and becoming unresponsive or fainting

Flight: Run away

Fawn: People pleasing to avoid conflict

Interrupt the response. It just takes 12 seconds to create new neuron connections in your brain. Science says laughter is one of the best methods to overcome these responses.

Psalm 126 – He Fill my mouth with laughter

When trust begins to erode, love begins to wither. And when love begins to wither, the greatest evidence of the reality and nature of God on earth becomes obscured.

Things that Affect Our Trust:

1. Lying
2. Being secretive
3. Breaking promises
4. Being hypocritical
5. Manipulation
6. Cheating
7. Not taking ownership or responsibility
8. Backstabbing
9. Gossiping
10. Disclosing trusted information

Biblical Ways to Build Trust

Lead with Repentance

Proverbs 28:13, NLT

People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy.

Practice Forgiveness

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Live Right and Practice Mercy

Proverbs 21:21

He who follows righteousness and mercy finds life, righteousness, and honor.

Listen First

James 1:19, AMP

Understand this, my beloved brothers and sisters. Let everyone be quick to hear [be a careful, thoughtful listener], slow to speak [a speaker of carefully chosen words and], slow to anger [patient, reflective, forgiving]

Matthew 22:36-40

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God loved us first

1 John 4:19, ESV

We love because he loved us first

We love God because we have known this love first.

Ephesians 4:13-21, The Passion

So I kneel humbly in awe before the Father of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, the perfect Father of every father and child in heaven and on the earth. And I pray that he would unveil within you the unlimited riches of his glory and favor until supernatural strength floods your innermost being with his divine might and explosive power. Then, by constantly using your faith, the life of Christ will be released deep inside you, and the resting place of his love will become the very source and root of your life. Then you will be empowered to discover what every holy one experiences—the great magnitude of the astonishing love of Christ in all its dimensions. How deeply intimate and far-reaching is his love! How enduring and inclusive it is! Endless love beyond measurement that transcends our understanding—this extravagant love pours into you until you are filled to overflowing with the fullness of God! Never doubt God’s mighty power to work in you and accomplish all this. He will achieve infinitely more than your greatest request, your most unbelievable dream, and exceed your wildest imagination! He will outdo them all, for his miraculous power constantly energizes you. Now we offer up to God all the glorious praise that rises from every church in every generation through Jesus Christ—and all that will yet be manifest through time and eternity. Amen!

We love others and ourselves best when we love God

Romans 13:8-10, ESV

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.⁹ For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.