

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:

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Romans 5:5-8 & Selected Scriptures “Expressing Love in the Family”

Intro. This morning I am continuing my series of messages on the Christian family. Today I want to share a message about *expressing* love in your own family, as well as in your church family & other relationships. We know from the Bible that love is the most important obligation of all in our relationship with God, and in our relationship with others. I can also say that to be loved is one of the most important human needs that we have.

This morning I want to challenge us to renew our commitment to love. Jesus said in John 13:35, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” So I cannot emphasize enough the importance of love. But I’m afraid that love is lacking in too many families, and in too many churches. Do you realize that there is almost as much conflict in the typical church, as there is outside of church? There is quit a bit of conflict in too many Christian families. So I believe there is a great need to renew our love for God, and for others. Expressing love will go a long way in improving our family relationships, as well as our other relationships.

Now this morning I want to start out by helping us understand the true nature of love. Then, I will talk about 5 keys ways to express our love for one another. Now with that in mind, I want to share with you first of all:

I. THE NATURE OF TRUE LOVE

Much of the so-called love in this world is far less than the kind of love that will sustain a lasting relationship. The world primarily talks about the kind of love where a person has wonderful feelings toward someone. It is having an infatuation toward someone. But love that is based on feelings is sure to wane or diminish in time. This kind of love will not sustain a marriage through the difficult times. So I want to share with you the kind of love that *will* sustain your relationships. This kind of love has 2 attributes. First of all:

A. True Love Meets Needs – In Romans 5:6 Paul says, “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” He saw our need. We were without strength. The weakness here intended is spiritual weakness, a weakness arising from our sin nature. I say that because the clause in v.8 “while we were yet sinners” is parallel to “while we were still without strength” in v.6. Prior to our salvation, we were powerless to consistently resist sin, and unable pleased God. We were without strength to overcome sin. We’re too weak to resist the temptations of Satan. We’re too weak to resist the peer pressure of the world. We couldn’t live a righteous life even if we wanted to. So God’s great love moved Him to do whatever was necessary to meet our need for righteousness, even if it meant the sacrifice of His Son Jesus. By the death of Jesus we have both forgiveness of sin, and a new power to resist sin. His love met our greatest need.

There are other Scriptures that indicate that meeting needs is an important aspect of love. Romans 12:13 says that we are to be “distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.” If you see someone in need, true love will move you to meet that need. Titus 3:14 says, “And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.” James 1:27 says, “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans

and widows in their trouble....” These verses are probably speaking primarily about meeting physical needs. Some people are hungry and need food. Or they may need clothing or shelter. Some people may need help in finding a job. Acts 2:45 says that the early church “sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.” Ephesians 4:28 says, “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.” But there are other needs as well. For example, there are also emotional & social needs. The greatest emotional need we have is to feel loved. I will talk more about that later. We need positive social interaction. Then there are spiritual needs. People need the Lord. People need to be saved. They need forgiveness of sin. They need the gift of eternal life. If you are not seeking to win others to Christ, how can you say you love them? People need help overcoming temptation & sin.

So the duty and action of true love is to recognize needs, and do what we can to meet them. Are you showing love by meeting needs? If someone is lonely, visit or call them. If someone is hurting or grieving, comfort them. If someone is hungry, feed them. On the other hand, 1 John 3:17 says, “But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?” True love meets needs.

Another attribute of love is this:

B. True Love Is Unconditional – This is clearly indicated from our text. In the last of v.6 Paul says, “in due time Christ died *for the ungodly*.” There is nothing in us that would prompt God to love us. We were ungodly! God’s holy nature is repulsed by our sinfulness. Then in v.7 Paul contrasts the conditional nature of human love. He says, “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.” The most that human nature could be expected to accomplish is that one would die for his benefactor, or for the good man. People have also been known to die for a dear friend. Jesus said in John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” But even then, such love is rare. Nevertheless, human love has sometimes been characterized by admirable sacrifice, but it is limited to our family, friends, and benefactors. Some have been willing to die for their beloved country. On April 23, 2004 we received word that former NFL player Pat Tillman died while serving our country in Special Forces in Afghanistan. After the attacks on 9/11, he decided he wanted to join the Army to defend our country. What is impressive is the fact that he was willing to lay aside a 3-year, 3.9 million contract with the Arizona Cardinals. He gave it up to risk his life in the defense of his country. But the point of v.7 is that not one of us would willingly die for a bad person, or for a country that we thought was corrupt or evil.

Ah, but notice the contrast with God’s love, as stated in v.8, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” V.8 tells us of a different love, an extraordinary love. There is emphasis in the Greek on the words, “His own.” It refers to a love that is peculiar to Himself. It is amazing to realize that God, who is absolutely pure and holy, could still love beings that are repulsive to His holy nature. Although human love is attracted by the nature of the object, God’s love is a vital part of His nature. The death of Christ reveals a love that is its own origin and motive. We love because we discern something lovable in the object. God loves under the impulse of His own loving heart.

One lesson from the unconditional nature of God’s love is the assurance that God will never stop loving us! Since nothing in us caused God to love us in the first place, what could make Him stop loving us now? Nothing! What assurance that gives us!

Now the point of this discussion of God's unconditional love is this: His love must become the pattern of our own love for others. We need to love our brothers & sisters in Christ with unconditional love. I know that's sometimes hard to do! As someone has said, "To dwell in love with saints above, That will indeed be glory. But to dwell below with saints I know, Well, that's another story!" We also need to love our friends unconditionally. We need to love our spouses with unconditional love. We need to love our children with unconditional love.

I want to share a story I read about the power of love. It's about a young woman called Diane. Diane was every parent's worst fear. By her own account, she grew up in a good and loving home. They went to church. There had family outings & birthday celebrations. Her parents took her to softball games, dance classes, and other activities. But for some reason Diane never felt quite OK, and somewhere in high school, things went wrong. There were drugs, alcohol, stealing, staying out late. The family suffered social embarrassment and seemed increasingly in crisis. They kept trying to reach out to Diane, while also struggling to maintain the family's life and values. There was counseling, rehabilitation, tough love, tears and prayers. But the more they reached out to her, the more abusive and rebellious she became. Finally, she ran away, living a life she did not want to talk about later. She was not seen or heard from for some time.

When she was well in her mid to late twenties, healing and reconciliation began. Diane said, "At first, I felt my parents' love was smothering. Then eventually, as things got worse, I began to feel unlovable. During my rebellion I thought if I was unlovable, I could do what I wanted and it would not matter. But as long as I suspected I was loved, I wasn't free "to do my own thing." So I needed to destroy my parents' love in order to be "free." But she said that they never stopped loving her. Even when she got arrested and they refused to bail her out of jail, she could see the pain of love in their eyes. She came to realize how much she needed their love; that it was probably their love and prayers that kept her alive all those years. But when she looked back on those years, what amazed her most of all was that her worst could not destroy their love for her.¹ That's unconditional love! That's the kind of love we should have.

The kind of love that parents typically have for their children is the kind of love we should have in our other relationships. Do you have unconditional love for your spouse? Do you love your husband or wife even when they are not showing love to you? Or do you sit back & wait until they express love to you? Do you have unconditional love for your fellow church members?

Now let's move on from the nature of true love, to:

II. THE EXPRESSIONS OF TRUE LOVE

I want you to understand how you should express love. I said earlier that love meets needs. One need that we all have is the emotional need to *feel* loved. Inside every person is a love tank. If it is empty, there will be problems. So how do we fill the love tank of our spouse, family member, or fellow church member? I will tell you. I want to get very practical here. Let's look at some concrete expressions of love. The basic outline of what I am about to share is based on a teaching I heard from Dr. Gary Chapman, author of *The Five Love Languages*. This book is in our church library. This does not exhaust all possible expressions of love (e.g. commitment, protection), but these are some of the most important expressions of love.² First, we show love by giving:

¹ The Protestant Hour; "Easter: The Manifestation of Undeclared Love"; Episcopal Speaker Rev. Nathan Baxter; April 7, 1996.

² At least 3 of the 5 are found in Luke 7:44-46: service (44), affection (45), and gifts (46).

A. Words of Affirmation – In other words, we show love by giving commendation & appreciation. Look back at Rom. 1:8, “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.” Those are words of appreciation & affirmation. Paul quite often began his letters with similar words of affirmation. When Jesus sent letters to 7 churches, as recorded in Revelation 2-3, He began 5 or the 7 letters with commendation. Furthermore, He gave commendation before criticism whenever possible.

All of us have a need for significance. We need to feel that our lives matter, that they are worthwhile. So when people commend us, or express appreciation to us, it meets an important psychological need in our lives.

We need to look for opportunities to commend others, and express appreciation to others. I have already spoken several times in this sermon series about parents giving affirmation to your children. I have spoken about wives giving respect and words of admiration to your husbands. Now let me turn to the husbands. When was the last time you spoke words of affirmation to your wife? How about, “You look nice” or “You did a good job.”

A new couple was visiting a Bible study class, so before starting the session, the leader asked everyone to introduce himself. It came time for the new couple to introduce themselves. The wife, who was a very pregnant young woman said, “I’m Judy, Ron’s wife.” Then, paraphrasing a Biblical passage, she added dramatically, “And I’m ‘great with child.’” Her husband gave her a loving look and said to the group, “Yes. And she’s great without child too.”³ That’s a man who understands one way to show love: with words of affirmation.

Another way we express love is with:

B. Gifts - God is a gift giver. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...” Rom. 5:5 mentions “the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” God’s love is mentioned in that same verse. Not only has God given us His Spirit, but prior to that, God’s Son Jesus gave Himself for us. V.6 says that “Christ died for the ungodly.” V.8 says, “Christ died for us.” God’s love shrinks from no sacrifice. God even gave up His Son. Furthermore, Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” God loves us, and He expresses His love by giving.

We should be like God, and express our love by giving. Sometimes our gifts express love by meeting a need. However, our gifts can express love in another way. Giving gifts communicates that we are thinking about the people we love. Guys, women really like it when we do something that communicates that we have been thinking about them. Giving gifts is just one way we do that. There’s a beautiful song that says, “When He was on the cross, I was on His mind.” Christ was thinking of you when He gave Himself to die on the cross.

Just in recent days I and my family have been recipients of this kind of love, and I appreciate it so much.

Application: When was the last time you gave a gift to someone? We give gifts at birthdays, anniversaries, & Christmas as an expression of our love. We should consider giving gifts at other times to meet a need, or just to let that loved one know you were thinking of them.

Another way we express love is with:

C. Acts of Service – Gal. 5:13 says, “...do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Paul links love and service. Jesus said in Matthew 20:28, “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister....” A husband should

³ Submitted by Colleen Mason of Sarasota, FL in *Readers’ Digest* (issue unknown).

follow Christ's example. Our wives serve us out of love, and we should be willing to serve our wives. When you show love by serving someone, you are saying, "What can I do to help you? How can I make your life easier?" After Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law, the Bible says that "immediately she arose and served them" (Lk. 4:39). Surely, this was an expression of her love and gratitude. At the last supper, no one else offered to serve others by washing their feet. So Jesus expressed His love by washing the feet of the disciples. Then He said in John 13:14-15, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." So one expression of love is to offer your service.

Richard and Judie Wheeler began building their dream house, in Winona, Texas. They did much of the work themselves to save money. But less than a year after they had begun the project, Richard learned he had esophageal cancer. He began taking cancer treatments, which took time and money. For the first time in months, the saws and hammers were silent around the Wheeler's new home. Then a member of the Wheelers' church stopped by the house they were renting and asked Judie for the plans to the new dwelling. What happened next resembled an old-fashioned barn raising. Members of the church started up where Richard had left off. Word spread through the community, and people began offering their services. Some knew a little about plumbing, while others could install wiring. A local restaurant fed volunteers all the chicken-fried steaks and hamburgers they could eat. As the house neared completion, Richard Wheeler's battle with cancer ended. He never saw the house finished. But Judie, who moved in with their daughters in October 1994, a month after Richard's death, said it had been easier for him knowing that the compassionate church members & neighbors of Winona were taking care of his family.⁴ Here we see a clear example of love being expressed through service.

Busy mothers need help. Gal. 6:2 says, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Guys, you can express your love for you wife by offering to help out around the house. Don't complain when she gives you that honey-do list. She is just giving you an opportunity to express your love for her! Children & youth, don't complain when your parents ask you to do something for them. They are giving you an opportunity to express your love to them with loving service!

Yet another way we express love is by:

D. Giving Quality Time – We show love by spending time with someone. If you don't have much time to give, you should at least give *quality* time to them. I define quality time as giving focused attention. You give them eye contact. You engage them in conversation and you do some activity with them. Look back at Romans 1:10-13. There Paul tells the Romans that he had been praying, "making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established– that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles." Do you see how Paul understood that spending time with someone is an important way to show love? Likewise, in Mark 3:14 we read that Jesus "appointed twelve, that they might be with Him...."

Do you remember the story of Mary & Martha in the Bible? That story illustrates two different expressions of love. Mary sat at Jesus' feet & listened to Him, and probably talked to

⁴ Kim McGuire in Tyler, TX, Morning Telegraph (told in Reader's Digest).

Him. She showed her love for Jesus by giving Him focused attention. However, Martha showed her love for Jesus by serving. She worked hard in the kitchen preparing a nice meal for Jesus. Martha thought Mary should come to the kitchen to help her, but both were showing love to Jesus in their own way.

So another way you and I can express love is by giving some focused attention to our wives, to our children, and to our friends. I want to tell you that watching TV is not spending *quality* time with someone. There is a place for watching TV. Sometime we just need to sit back and relax, and engage in a passive activity. But since the advent of TV, the American family spends less time taking to each other, less time doing things together like playing games, or entertaining each other. So I want to suggest that you turn the TV off for a while and spend some time together as a couple, or as a family. Go for a walk. Play together. Because our lives are so busy, I believe we should set some goals for spending time with those we love. A married couple may set a goal of having a date night each week. After all, someone has said, “The best present a man can give a woman is his undivided attention.”⁵ Parents should spend quality time with their children. I have heard that Chuck Page takes each of his children out on a rotating basis for a special time with dad. I think that’s a great idea.

One final way we express love is this:

E. Be Affectionate – We should certainly express love in our physical family with appropriate touches of love. Family members should hug and kiss each other every day. Husbands & wives should express love with more intimate affection.

Scientific studies have demonstrated the importance of receiving love by physical touch. These studies have shown that there are physical, emotional, & mental health benefits from physical affection. Hugging and handholding reduces the effects of stress. Touch also releases two feel-good brain chemicals, serotonin and dopamine. It increases the amount of hemoglobin in our blood. So I believe breast-fed babies not only get a better start nutritionally, but also emotionally by receiving extra physical closeness. Children need to receive lots of hugging. As we grow up we still need that kind of affection. Remember, love meets needs, and we need physical affection, starting with our own families.

We should also express *appropriate* physical affection in our church family. Rom. 12:10 says, “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love....” I believe the early church was known for having a family-type atmosphere in their relationships with one another. In fact, one mark of love in the early church was the way they greeted each others with loving touch. In fact, several times the word translated “greet” is literally translated “embrace,” as in Acts 20:1 & Hebrews 11:13. Paul said in Romans 16:16, “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” That same command is given 4 other times in the New Testament (1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Th. 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14). Turn over to Mark 10:13-14. There we read, “Then they brought little children to [Jesus], that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.’” Now look at v.16, “And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them.”

Now we need to be careful about expressing love in this way. Before you hug someone, you need to get to know them well enough to discover their comfort level with such expression of love. People from Western European descent tend to be less close & affectionate than those from Eastern Europe or the Middle East. A hand shake is a Western greeting, and a hug is more of an Eastern

⁵ *Readers Digest*, Feb. 05, page 71.

greeting. Italians are huggers. Since I have been around my good friend George Angone I have loosened up a bit when it comes to hugging. The Bible was written in a Middle Eastern & Eastern European context, & that is why we read the command to greet one another with a holy kiss. That's just the way those people tended to greet one another.

Of course, there must be appropriate limits to the type of touching we do, depending upon the relationship. There are no limits regarding intimate touching between husbands and wives, except in public. But touching that stimulates sexual desire is inappropriate between unmarried people. So let's examine how far we can go in expressing love by touching. The primary problem is knowing the limits between men & women. I believe Paul lays down the principle quite well. He says in 1 Timothy 5:2 that we men should treat "older women as mothers, younger as sisters, with all purity." If you will follow that principle, that will help you keep any physical expressions of affection within appropriate limits. For example, I believe we can certainly express affection to people of the opposite sex with a warm handshake. The next step would be both a handshake, and a hand on someone's shoulder or arm. I believe that is certainly appropriate. The next step would be a hug that is not a full embrace, either a side hug or a "lean-in" hug. You probably know what I'm talking about! Some would go further and say that even a kiss on the cheek can be appropriate between believers. Such affection outside the family unit should certainly be limited to *public* expressions of greeting, which provides protection against it going any further.

Another important application is this: Each of us has a *primary* love language. One speaks more deeply to us than others. Which of these 5 expressions of love is most important for you? Which is most important to your spouse? Well spouses almost never have the same primary love language. Now that creates a potential problem. You see, we tend to express love by our own primary love language. If you primarily like to receive love with affection, you will tend to express love primarily with affection. If you like to receive gifts, you will probably be the type person who gives gifts as an expression of your love. But as I said, our primary love language is probably not your spouse's primary love language. Real love means that we give our spouse the specific expression of love that they need or desire most. In other words, we must learn to speak our spouse's love language. We must learn to speak our children's love language. Remember, love is something you do for someone else. If you express love in the way that other person really wants to be loved, it will enhance your relationship.

How do you know the primary love language of your spouse? One way is by listening to their complaints. Do they complain that you hardly ever give them gifts? Do they complain that you do not help out around the house? Do they complain that you do not spend enough time with them? Do they complain that you are not affectionate enough? Another way to discover the primary love language of your spouse is by asking them to fill out the little [form](#) I have provided this morning. Put "1" by the love language that is most important to you. Then put "2" by the second most important, and so forth. Then compare lists.

Conclusion: Will you make a commitment to learn your spouse's love language? What expression of love is most important to your child? Once you find out, ask God to help you express love especially in the specific way that meets their greatest need. Then, work on expressing love in the other ways that I have shared with you. Let's do more than talk about love. Let's express love unconditionally, and in the 5 ways I have talked about today.

Sources: F.F. Bruce, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963); Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages* (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 1995); Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950 reprint); John MacArthur, Jr., *Eternal*

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