

Dear Bible Class Teacher,

Thanks for considering using this Bible Class Study that I put together. I wanted to share a few things about it before you dive in.

When I put this particular series together, I leaned very heavily on material from the book, "**The Love Dare**" by **Alex and Stephen Kendrick**. In some places I borrowed phrases and lesson structure straight from the chapter.

Also-- I only have 11 weeks in the quarter to teach. So there are only 11 lessons included in this series. But there are 40 lessons in the book I used, so if you need to borrow a couple of other lessons to fill a quarter I imagine that wouldn't be very difficult. With the material at hand, obviously this is a series that could last 2 or even 3 quarters.

Of all of the Bible classes I've been part of, this one is my all-time favorite. I hope this series blesses you and your class the way it has me and mine.

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“Love is Patient”
Lesson 1

*If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,
but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*

*If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge;
and if I have all faith, so as to move mountains,
but do not have love, I am nothing.*

*And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor,
and if I surrender my body to be burned,
but do not have love, it profits me nothing.*

1st Corinthians 13:1-3

- I think we all arrive here with an understanding of the gravity & importance of love
 - o That love breathes life into our interactions with one another.
 - No marriage is successful without love.
 - And all relationships become meaningful with love.
 - o We are born with a life-long thirst for love.
 - Our hearts need love like our lungs need oxygen.
 - Studies show that even baby animals develop poorly if they are deprived of love.
 - o Love is one of life’s most powerful motivator
 - It empowers us to face even the most monumental tasks
 - Love changes our motivation for living
 - o ***“Why is this so?”***
 - I think it's because God made us this way.
 - God wired us to seek out love & to ourselves become loving.
 - Because God IS Love.
 - And God wants us to seek HIM.
 - And God wants us to BECOME MORE LIKE Him.
 - So I think it’s important for us to think about love, and study love, and CHALLENGE OURSELVES to become better at loving one another.

- And as we spend time together, I intend to emphasize that last point: I want to challenge each of us to become more loving.
 - o Most of what we're going to talk about you've probably already heard.
 - Shucks-- what I've already talked about so far -- you've already heard that.
 - It's not a big reveal to any of us that love is important
 - I mean... it is THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

"Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, strength, and mind. And love your neighbor as yourself."

- Not a big secret or mystery there.
- o But what **IS** sometimes missing... what **IS** often absent... is actually living it out.
 - Sometimes there's something funny about our Christian subculture in that we spend lots and lots of time studying but not as much time applying to our lives.
 - When we were younger we probably all played a game called, "Simon Says"
 - We've all played it, right?
 - o ...unless you're really young, because there's not an APP for it
 - But it's real simple.
 - o Simon Says pat your head, so you pat your head
 - It's odd to me, though, how oftentimes "**Jesus says**" can be a totally different game for Christians
 - o If Jesus said it, you don't have to do it...
 - o all you really need to do is act pious about it
 - o You can memorize it, you can study it... but obeying it almost seems secondary
 - Like when Jesus says, "Go ye therefore and make disciples..."
 - o How many Christians are actually going and making disciples?
 - o But they memorized it ...
 - When John or Angie tells their daughter, "Emily, go clean your room."
 - o ...She doesn't come back two hours later & say, "*I memorized what you said!*"
 - o "*I can say it in Greek.*"
 - o ...
 - o "*My friends are gonna come over and we're gonna have a study on what it would look like if I cleaned my room.*"
 - o ...
 - o She knows better than that.
 - And so do we. We know what it means to act lovingly.
 - And so we're going to challenge one another to live out what we know.

- **Q: Anyone ever heard of a person named "Mahatma Gandhi?"**
 - o He was actually the role model for a man named Martin Luther King Jr.
 - Dr. King admired Gandhi's commitment to non-violent civil disobedience.
 - And so Dr. King, as the leader of the Civil Rights movement in the 60's, insisted that African-Americans would not hit or swing back when others reacted violently against him.
 - o So who was Gandhi?
 - He was a pre-eminent political and spiritual leader of India, and the Indian independence movement.
 - The reason I bring up his name is that I absolutely love a quote that's attributed to him.
 - One of his more famous lines is this: "Be the change you want to see in your world."
 - o You may be someone who isn't receiving a whole lot of love.
 - Maybe you've been single for a long time, and you feel like the world is a cold place.
 - Maybe you're in a love-less marriage, and you're silently suffering.
 - Maybe your spouse is insensitive.
 - Maybe your family is emotionally abusive.
 - o This class is going to uncover lots of ways in which we as people can unlovingly.
 - AND LET ME TELL YOU what you are going to think when that happens.
 - *"How dare (that person) treat me that way!!"*
 - YOU WIVES... you're going to want to bury your elbow into your husband's waist.
 - Or you're going to recall that time when somebody important hurt you.
 - o And to that sensation I say this, "**Be the change you want to see in your world.**"
 - We can't do anything about how people out there have failed to be loving.
 - But we ourselves can change for the better & become more loving people.
 - o YOU "Be the change"
 - o Or as Jesus put it a long time ago, *"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."*
- That sound good?
- Alright, I think you're ready...
- BTW-- that's probably the most talking I will ever do in this classroom.
 - o I've always gotten more out of classes that are interactive
 - o So that's the way I like to run this class
 - o So when I ask a question, I will expect you to speak up.
- Besides -- I'm a single man. *What am I going to teach you guys married for 30 years about love?* Y'all need to be teaching ME! So please speak up and participate.

Got it? Good.

Lesson #1

Love is Patient

- **Q: Okay – WHAT is patience?**
 - o **A.** Responding in a positive way to a negative situation.
 - o It means ...
 - Being slow to anger
 - Choosing to have a long fuse instead of a quick temper
 - Being more settled (*and in control*) instead of being restless
 - Extending mercy more often than you are demanding.
 - Not rushing to judgment, but listening to what someone else has to say
 - **My favorite definition:** Giving someone permission to be human.
 - It understands that everyone fails.
 - When a mistake is made, it chooses to give them more time than they deserve to correct it.
 - Patience means that you have an internal calm during an external storm.

- **Q: Do you think it has more to do more with how we respond to circumstances?
Or is it more about a way of life?**

- **Q: How well do you enjoy being around an impatient person?**
 - o Not very well, right?
 - o It makes you over-react in angry, foolish, and regrettable ways.

- *“The irony of anger toward a wrongful action is that it spawns new wrongs of its own.”*
 - o Being quick to anger almost never makes things better.
 - o In fact, it usually generates additional problems.
 - o But PATIENCE stops a problem in its tracks.
 - It doesn’t let a small problem grow into an even larger issue.
 - It stops foolishness from whipping its scorpion tail all over the room.
 - o Patience is a CHOICE to control your emotions rather than allowing your emotions to control you.

- From the book: *“Anger is usually caused when the strong desire for something is mixed with disappointment or grief. You don’t get what you want and you start heating up inside. It is often an emotional reaction that flows out of our own selfishness, foolishness, or evil motives.”*
- Bible Verses
 - *“He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly.” (Proverbs 14:29)*
 - *“A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the one who is slow to anger calms a dispute.” (Proverbs 15:18)*
 - From Proverbs – it’s a book of wisdom.
 - They are clear principles with timeless relevance.
 - *Patience is where love and wisdom meet.*
 - *“See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another.” (1 Thessalonians 5:15)*
- Few of us do patience very well.
 - And none of us do it naturally.
 - But practicing patience is an important part of being a loving person.
- **Q: What are your most common triggers for acting impatient?**
 - Had a bad day
 - Will power drained from having to put up with others
 - A personal pet peeve being violated ("1, 2... **10!!**")
 - Something we've mastered, but others lag
- **Q: What do you do to lovingly become more patient with the people you care most about?**
 - Remind myself of my humanity. And their humanity.
 - Ask myself, "How important is this?"
 - Keys locked in the car
 - Favorite show didn't record on the DVR
 - etc.
 -

“Love is Kind” Lesson 2

- God wired us to seek out love & to ourselves become loving.
 - o Because God IS Love.
 - o And God wants us to seek HIM.
 - o And God wants us to BECOME MORE LIKE Him.

- o So I think it's important for us to think about love, and study love, and CHALLENGE OURSELVES to become better at loving one another.

Our theme saying for this series from Ghandi: **“Be the change you want to see in the world ... in others around you.”**

- o Our theme for this series is this quote attributed to Ghandi: **“Be the change you want to see in the world around you.”**
 - Or, as Jesus put it, **“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”**

 - o You may be someone who isn't receiving a whole lot of love.
 - Maybe you've been lonely & isolated, and you feel like the world is a cold place.
 - Maybe you've struggled with relationships, and you're silently suffering.

 - Maybe your family is insensitive.
 - Maybe you've experienced emotional abuse.

 - o This class is going to uncover lots of ways in which we as people can unlovingly.
 - AND LET ME TELL YOU what you are going to think when that happens.
 - *“I wish such-and-such was here to listen to this lesson!”*
 - Or you're going to want to bury your elbow into your husband's waist.

 - Or you're going to recall that time when somebody important hurt you.

 - o And to that sensation I say this, **“Be the change you want to see in your world.”**
 - We can't do anything about how people out there have failed to be loving.
 - But we ourselves can change for the better & become more loving people.
 - o YOU “Be the change”
-
- That sound good?
 - Alright, I think we're ready...

- Today... **Love is Kind**
 - Kindness is love in action
 - If patience is how love **REACTS** in order to minimize negative circumstances, kindness is how love **ACTS** to maximize a positive circumstance.
 - Patience avoids a problem; kindness creates a blessing
 - One is preventive; the other is proactive.
 - Last week we mentioned the concept of Willard Harvey's "Love Bank"

The love bank is simply the idea that every person has an "account" with every other person. Everything you do or say or don't do or say is either a deposit or withdrawal in the love bank account of the person with whom you are interacting. The idea is to have a big account with tons of deposits. It is like your bank account. You want there to be a large amount of money in your bank account and the more deposits the better.

- **Q: Why is kindness important?**
 - Kindness makes you likeable
 - When you're likeable, people want to be around you.
 - They see you as being good TO them and FOR them
 - The Bible says it's important
 - Proverbs 3:3-4
 - Do not let kindness and truth leave you;
Bind them around your neck,
Write them on the tablet of your heart.

So you will find favor and good ^[b]repute
In the sight of God and man.
 - Proverbs 31: 26
 - She opens her mouth in wisdom,
And the ^[t]teaching of kindness is on her tongue.
 - Ephesians 4:32
 - Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven ^[x]you.
 - Fruit of the Spirit

- But Kindness is a little generic; hard to define. **Q: So what exactly is Kindness?**
 - **Nice???**
 - NO!
 - Read "Why I Quit Being Nice" by Allison Vesterfelt
 - <http://storylineblog.com/2015/11/30/why-i-quit-being-nice/>
 - **Complimentary**
 - When we receive compliments, we often respond, "That's kind of you to say."
 - This is often little things: smiling instead of having a scowl.
 - But how often do we compliment those around us? Do you compliment your loved ones regularly?
 - Are you stingy with your compliments?
 - Or do you search for reasons to give a compliment?
 - **Q:** Which type of person are you?
 - **Gentleness**
 - This is being careful with people.
 - Not being unnecessarily harsh.
 - Sensitive. Tender.
 - Even if you have to say hard things, you bend over backwards to make it as easy to hear as possible.
 - How pleasant are you to be around?
 - Are you a difficult personality to get along with?
 - If you're not gentle, people are going to shy away from you.
 - **Helpfulness**
 - Being helpful means meeting the needs of the moment.
 - How many times has someone done a favor for you & you say, "That was so kind of you to do."
 - How helpful are you?
 - At home, do you leave the chores for your spouse to do?
 - Or are you kind enough to do what needs to be done.
 - **Willingness**
 - This is the opposite of stubborn; it means being cooperative & flexible.
 - Rather than complaining or making excuses, you look for reasons to compromise and accommodate.

- **Initiative**
 - Kindness thinks ahead, then takes the first step.
 - It doesn't sit around waiting to be prompted or coerced before getting off the couch.

 - Kindness means striving to greet first, smile first, serves first, and forgives first.
 - It means you don't require the other to get his or her act together before showing love.
 - When acting from kindness, you see the need, then you make the move. First.

- Kindness is a key drawing power in marriage.
 - Even though years can take the edge off your desire, or passion, your enjoyment in marriage is still linked to the daily level of kindness expressed.

- **Q: How would your family rate you on kindness?**
 - How harsh are you?
 - How gentle are you?
 - How helpful are you?
 - Do you wait to be asked, or do you take the initiative to help?

Why I Quit Being Nice



by [Allison Vesterfelt](#)

When I graduated high school, a friend said something to me I'll never forget. She said, "Ally, you're so nice. You might be the nicest person I know. I've never heard anyone say a bad word to or about you. Never change."

Honesty, it felt like the highest compliment I could ever receive. I took it as a personal challenge to be "nice" forever.

I did my best to "never change."

Then, ten years later, I got an e-mail from a girl I didn't remember from high school. A classmate of ours had recently passed away, and she and I crossed paths at the funeral. Seeing me again reminded her of a story.

She asked if I remembered a day, sophomore year, when I was walking up the stairs with two of my friends, and a girl in front of us tripped. She asked if I remembered what my two friends said to that girl, that they laughed and made fun of her under their breath, and that the girl ran off, crying.

Worst of all, she asked if I remembered what I did next. I stood back, she told me, eyes wide, and mouth shut. I didn't tease. Didn't laugh. Wasn't mean. But I didn't say anything to her, or to my friends.

She asked me if I knew she was that girl.

I read the words over and over, to see if the memory would come back, but it wouldn't. I felt a little panicked, actually, trying to summon at least a fuzzy movie in my mind, so I could offer some explanation for why I had done such a thing. I was nice after all. I was the nice girl. Why would the nice girl do something like that?

In that moment, a painful realization came crashing over me: *niceness isn't everything.*

For so many years I worked hard to be nice, trying to live up to that story my friend had told about me. In one sense, it felt good and right and admirable to be the kind of person who never said a bad word about anyone else, and who never gave anyone reason to say a bad word about me.

But now, as I thought through the past ten years of my life, I realized being "nice" wasn't doing for me what I wanted it to do.

Being “nice” was preventing me from saying what I thought about things.

It prevented me from telling my friends that I thought laughing at someone for tripping on the stairs was rude (for fear of being too harsh or judgmental) and prevented me from telling the girl who tripped that I knew how she felt. I’d been laughed at, too.

I wouldn’t want that girl to feel like I was singling her out, or overstepping my bounds.

I wouldn’t want my friends to feel like I was rejecting them.

Because that wouldn’t fit my self-defined identity of being nice.

[...]

These days, I’m using the word “kind” instead of the word “nice.”

Because I think the quality my friend noticed in me on that last day of high school is an important one. I care about people, and want them to feel loved, noticed and important. But “niceness” as I defined it for all those years was actually getting the way of what I was trying to accomplish. *Sometimes... being nice... isn’t very kind at all.*

For some, the words might be interchangeable. But for me, it helps to make a distinction.

1. Niceness stays quiet. Kindness speaks up.
2. Niceness is demure & passive. Kindness is bold & active.
3. Niceness can be toxic. Kindness is healing.
4. Niceness lies to keep the peace. Kindness knows making peace means telling the truth.

Thank goodness we change after high school.

And thank goodness I’m learning, slowly, to quit being so nice.

“Love is Not Rude” Lesson 3

- We’ve covered...
 - Love is Patient
 - Love is Kind

Our theme saying for this series from Ghandi: **“Be the change you want to see in the world ... in others around you.”**

Kinda like Jesus: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

- "Positive emotions don't have as much power to make life wonderful as negative emotions have to make life miserable."
 - **Q:** Agree or disagree?
- 1st Cor. 13:4-5 – “⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It is not rude”
- Nothing is quite as irritating as dealing with someone who is perpetually rude.
- **IBQ: I'd love to hear from everybody... name an instance in the last month where you had to deal with someone else's rude behavior...**
- ***If we were to define what it means to be rude, we might say that it is...***
 - To act unbecomingly, embarrassing, or irritating.
 - And there are some obvious examples, like...
 - Having a foul mouth, or...
 - Having poor table manners
 - “Unnecessarily saying or doing things that are unpleasant for another person to be around.”
 - No one likes being around a rude person.
- I FIND IT INTERESTING, THOUGH... That anytime you hear someone dive into a story that centers on rude behavior... that it's almost always someone else who was rude.
 - ***Have you ever heard someone pain-stakingly relate a story about how they were rude to someone else?***
 - In the human experience, we think of rudeness as an experience that happens to us. Not something that we project onto someone else.

- ***It's amusing to me how...*** when we describe the behavior of the person who is rude to us, the issues are usually BLACK and WHITE
- But if someone were to call us on our foul behavior, we usually have an explanation. We can massage the issue a little. It's not black and white, there are various shades of grey here
- Rude behavior may seem **small & insignificant** to the person doing it, but it is a **big deal & unpleasant** to those on the receiving end.
- ...Which, when you think about it, says something about what it means to be rude.
 - **Q: What are some things we would all consider rude?**
 - Cutting in line
 - Interrupting
 - Cutting someone off in traffic
 - Personal grooming in public -- *if Gary were to pull out some nail clippers right now...*
 - Staring at your cell phone in mixed company
 - BUT...
 - There's also such a thing as pet peeves -- behaviors that get on our nerves, but not necessarily everyone's nerves
 - Because...
 - We all have different values
 - different ideas of what is mannerly & what is not
 - different standards about what is courteous & what is not
 - So...
 - how we define what is rude can be a personal judgment
 - Victoria might think it would be fun to turn up the radio & sing along with Katy Perry
 - But if Alan Bell is in the car & he prefers the peace and quiet, he might consider that rude
 - I might want to whisper a wise-crack in Church, to lighten the mood
 - But Raphael might consider that inappropriate in the assembly, and therefore consider that rude
 - NOW...
 - It is impossible to keep everyone happy all the time.
 - If you try to do that, you will end up feeling suffocated
 - Because we're all different & we have different values, it's inevitable that you will be rude to somebody along the way. It's almost unavoidable.

- But we're not talking about never being rude.
 - We're addressing rudeness today in the context of love
 - With the people we care about the most -- the people we love -- we should not be rude
 - Because love is not rude

- And once again... Rude behavior may seem **small & insignificant** to the person doing it, but it is a **big deal & unpleasant** to those on the receiving end.

- So to be more loving to the people we care, we need to
 - #1) Know what behavior/speech they consider rude
 - #2) Be able to not do/say those things around them.

- So not being rude -- and avoiding taking a withdrawal from the love bank -- requires two things in abundance
 - #1) Thoughtfulness
 - Knowing your values, and know the values of the people you care about
 - Being aware of what makes them happy & what upsets them
 - Thoughtfulness

 - #2) Discretion, or Prudence
 - Making good choices at the right time

AN EXAMPLE...

- ***Proverbs 27:14 – “If a man loudly blesses his neighbor early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse.”***
 - Picture your days in a college dorm... or in a military barracks...
 - If it were 3 am, and someone went around room-to-room yelling at the top of their lungs... “God loves you, and so do I!!”
 - ...How do you think that would be taken?

 - What would you call that kind of behavior?
RUDE!!

 - *“But that's a good message! People need to hear about God's love. That person had good intentions...”*
 - We could come up with all sorts of ways to explain someone behaving that way, and instead of it being black & white making that issue more of a shade of grey.
 - But honestly any person that did that wouldn't be considered (1) very thoughtful, or (2) very prudent

- So does love has something to say about this? Of course it does!
 - 1st Cor. 13:4-5 – “⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It is not rude”
 - **Bottom line:** *love minds its manners.*
 - When a person is driven by love, they intentionally behave in a way that makes them more pleasant to be around.

- I’m convinced that embracing this concept could bring a breath of fresh air to your living environment – could bring a breath of fresh air to your marriage.
 - It says, “I want to be a person who’s pleasant to be with.”
 - It says, “I value you enough to exercise some self-control around you.”
 - When you allow love to change your behavior – even in the smallest of ways – you restore **an atmosphere of honor** to your relationships.
 - Wouldn’t all of that be a breath of fresh air to you?
 - So of course it would be to those around you, too!

- **Q: What are some ways that we let rudeness creep into our relationships?**
 - Double-standard: treat friends/outsideers better than family
 - Our tone of voice: we’ll be nice & kind & chipper with other people, and mean & bitter with family

 - **(Men)** Being ungracious. Solomon writes, “It is well with a man who is gracious.” Ps. 112:5
 - **(Women)** Tend to be better than men in general, but there is one nagging problem...
 - A NAGGING problem.
 - “Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.” Prov. 25:24

- **Q: Why are we rude?** 3 reasons...
 - IGNORANCE
 - SELFISHNESS
 - Nurture (as opposed to “Nature”) – coming out of a home/environment where everyone is rude to one another. It’s hard to break the habits we pick up of being rude to others.

- **Dare to be Delightful...** 3 guiding principles for practicing better etiquette
 - *Guard the Golden Rule:* Treat people the way you wanna be treated (Luke 6:31)
 - *No Double Standards:* Be as considerate to your family as you are to people who would ring your doorbell.
 - *Honor Requests:* Consider what people have asked you to do. If people ask you to pick up more, or to nag & complain less, or whatever – DO IT! Be considerate to honor other people’s requests.

“Love is Not Irritable”

Lesson 4

- We’ve covered...
 - Love is Patient
 - Love is Kind
 - Love is Not Rude

Our theme for this series is this saying from Ghandi: **“Be the change you want to see in the world ... in others around you.”**

Kinda like Jesus: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

- We had a vent session last week about rude events in our lives
- I'd like to start off this morning with something similar...
- **IB:** Can you talk about someone -- someone not in this room -- who is so easily angered that it's like you have to walk on eggshells around them? Or perpetually handle them with kid gloves?
 - You don't have to talk about the person. This doesn't have to be personal.
 - Just describe the experience for us.
 - Dealing with someone in your life who is easily angered, easily offended
 - To the point where you have to treat them differently than you treat others
- *He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.* – Proverbs 16:32
- Last week we began with me noting this: “Nothing is quite as irritating as being rude.”
 - Well, the opposite is also true: “Nothing is quite as rude as being perpetually irritable.”
 - Being irritable is the cousin of being rude

(Explain the Love Bank – “His Needs, Her Needs” by Willard F. Harley, Jr.)

- Love is not Irritable – it is not easily irritated, or easily angered
 - To be *irritable* means “to be near the point of a knife.”
 - **Not far from being poked.**
 - People who are irritable are locked & loaded – ready to pounce by over-reacting at the slightest offense.

- Some people seem to live by the motto, “Never pass up an opportunity to get upset when someone offends you.”
 - When something goes wrong, they take FULLLLLL advantage of it by expressing how hurt or frustrated they are.
 - But this is the opposite reaction of love.

- Love is not this way.
 - When we act lovingly, minor problems don’t yield major reactions.
 - The truth is, love does not get angry or hurt unless there is a legitimate & just reason in the sight of God.
 - For Husbands, this means being patient instead of prickly.
 - For Wives, this means being a rose among thorns.
 - **If you are walking under the influence of love, you will be a joy – not a jerk.**
 - Just ask yourself...
 - **Am I a calming breeze?**
 - **Or am I a storm waiting to happen?**

 - Better yet, let's ask the people that know you the best. What would they say about you?
 - Are you a calming breeze?
 - Or are you a storm waiting to happen?

[PAUSE]

So let’s examine this...

- **Q: Why do people -- why do we -- become irritable?**
 - *Stress*
 - Stress...
 - Weighs you down
 - Drains your energy
 - Weakens your health
 - And invites you to be cranky
 - There are different causes for stress:
 - *Relational*: arguing, division, and bitterness
 - *Excessive*: overworking, overplaying, overspending
 - *Deficiencies*: not getting enough rest, nutrition, exercise
 - **Life is a marathon; not a sprint**
 - That means you need to balance, prioritize, and pace yourself.
 - When you put too much pressure on yourself because one area of your life is out of balance, it can wear away at your patience & your relationships.

- Don't stress your relationships with unnecessary arguments (Col. 3:12-14)
- Don't stress yourself with work you could delegate to someone else (Ex. 18:17-23)
- Don't stress yourself by being overindulgent (Prov. 25:16)
- You know, in the OT, they had a Sabbath Day
 - There's a lot of wisdom in that.
 - Having a day where you can decompress, giving yourself a cushion between yourself & the pressures surrounding.
 - Using a Sabbath Day can be healthy to reduce the stress that keeps you on edge around your loved ones.
- *Selfishness* – Being easily angered is an indicator that selfishness rules where love should reign.
- *He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city. – Proverbs 16:32*

“Love Does Not Envy” Lesson 5

- We’ve covered...
 - Love is Patient
 - Love is Kind
 - Love Seeks Not Its Own
 - Love is Thoughtful
 - Love is Not Rude
 - Love is Not Irritable
 - Love is Appreciative

Our theme saying for this series from Ghandi: **“Be the change you want to see in the world ... in others around you.”**

Kinda like Jesus: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

- Alright, I’ve got three passages for us to look at:
 - 1st Corinthians 13:4 – “(Love) does not envy”
 - 1st John 4:7-8 – “God is love”
 - Exodus 20:4-5... and THEN v. 6 later – “I... am a jealous God”
- **Q: Okay... how do we reconcile all of THAT???**
 - (Make ‘em wrestle with it...)
 - There are two forms of Jealousy
 - *Legitimate Jealousy*
 - This is based on a **COMMITTED LOVING RELATIONSHIP**
 - This is when someone you love – who rightfully belongs to you – turns his or her heart away and replaces you with someone else.
 - If a wife has an affair & gives herself to another person, her husband will probably have a jealous anger because of his love for her.
 - And that is totally justified.
 - We belong to God – He made us, we are rightfully His
 - And so when we worship anyone or anything other than Him, he burns with a jealous anger.
 - That’s what the book of Hosea is about in the Old Testament
 - **Q: Can anyone tell the story of the book of Hosea?...**

- *Illegitimate Jealousy*
 - While legitimate jealousy is based on a committed loving relationship, this jealousy is based on **ENVY**
 - This is in opposition to love
 - When Paul says, “Love does not envy,” he’s speaking of the kind of jealousy that’s based in *selfishness & false entitlement*.
 - THIS is what we want to focus on this morning.

- Envy is a real human struggle
 - Your friend is more popular, so you feel a secret hatred towards her.
 - Your coworker gets the promotion, so you can’t sleep that night.

 - Other people find success
 - They may have done nothing wrong.
 - But you become bitter because of THEIR success.

- We may not wanna admit it here among others, but ENVY is a common struggle.
 - It is sparked when someone else upstages you & gets something that you want.
 - This can be a painful experience.
 - Instead of congratulating them, you fume in anger and think ill of them.
 - And then before long -- if you’re not careful -- envy slithers like a viper into your heart & strikes your motivations and relationships.
 - You may even start plotting against this person.
 - It can poison your relationships by welling up inside of your heart.

- In fact, the way that poison really manifests itself is with fighting & quarrelling
 - **READ James 4:1-2**

 - **Think about how envy touched other memorable relationships in Scripture:**
 - The first murder, right?
 - Cain despised ... how God accepted ... his brother’s offering
 - So Cain slayed his brother.

 - **HOW ABOUT...** Sarah sent away her handmaiden Hagar ... because Hagar could bear children ... while Sarah could not.
 - **WHAT ABOUT...** Joseph’s brothers saw that he was their father’s favorite... so they threw him in a pit ... and then sold him into slavery.
 - **Even in the New Testament** – Jesus was more powerful & popular than the chief priests ... so the chief priests plotted how to do away with Him.

 - ALL because of ENVY!

- And here's the funny thing about temptation -- You don't usually get jealous of disconnected strangers; **the ones you're tempted to envy are primarily in the same arena with you.**
 - They work in your office.
 - They run in the same circles.
 - They go to your church.

 - ... or maybe they live in your house.
 - You know, when you get married, you become your spouse's cheerleader in chief.
 - You become President of his or her Fan Club.
 - But if **selfishness & entitlement** have free reign in your heart -- instead of love -- any good thing happening to only one of you can be a catalyst for envy rather than congratulations.

 - Maybe he's hanging with the boys on the weekend while she stays home w/ the dog.
 - And when he wants to tell her what a good time he had, if she's not careful, she resents it.
 - Or maybe she gets a promotion & a raise at work, and he isn't happy about it.
 - He begins to resent her career, her success, or that she's the bread-winner.

- **Q: So ... let's think about this. What is at the root of envy? Why do we give into it?**
 - Selfishness
 - Entitlement
 - The "Poor Me's"

- **Q: So what can we do to keep envy at bay?**
 - Put others first
 - Learn to celebrate others' successes
 - Instead of resenting them.
 - **Can you applaud for someone else?**
 - I think about this in marriage especially: you have to celebrate your spouse's successes.
 - A loving husband doesn't mind his wife being better at something, having more fun, getting more applause.
 - **He sees her as COMPLETING him -- not COMPETING with him.**
 - He celebrates his better half.

 - A loving wife doesn't mind that her husband gets to leave the house & go to work and do more exciting things while she stays home to care for the homestead.
 - She doesn't compare her weaknesses to his strengths
 - She throws a celebration, not a pity party.
 - It's key to learn how to celebrate others' successes.

“Love is Honorable” Lesson 6

- What we’ve covered so far...
 - Love is Patient.. Love is Kind..
 - Love is Not Rude.. Love is Not Irritable.. Love Does Not Envy

Our theme saying for this series from Ghandi: **“Be the change you want to see in the world ... in others around you.”**

Kinda like Jesus: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

- There are certain words in our language that have powerful meanings.
 - Whenever these words are used, an air of respect is associated with them.
 - You don’t flippantly use these words; you don’t over-use these words.
 - One of these words will be our focus this morning: **HONOR**
- **Q:** Scripture charges us with honoring certain groups of people. Can we name some of those?
 - Scripture tells us to **HONOR our father and mother.** (Exodus 20:12, Deut. 5:16)
 - We’re instructed to honor **those in authority.** (Romans 13:7)
 - **Our Church family**
 - Romans 12...
⁹Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.
 - **The institution of marriage...** Hebrews 13:4...
“Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure.”
- **Q:** What does it mean to HONOR someone?
 - To give a person high respect
 - Give someone high esteem
 - To treat someone as being special and of great worth.
 - When you speak to them, you give them your undivided attention.
 - You are courteous and polite.
 - When they ask you to do something, you accommodate them if at all possible, simply out of respect for who they are.
 - When you honor someone, they should know it. Because of the way you treat them.

- I think of the way a bride treats her wedding dress.
 - After wearing it on her special day, she covers it and protects it.
 - She sets it apart from everything else in her closet.
 - You won't catch her in it when she's working in the yard.
 - It is sacred to her, and she treats it that way.

- Right?

- **Q:** What's something in your life you treat with honor?
 - For me... my freshly-painted pickup truck
 - Things I borrow from my friends

- **Q:** For those of you who are married, is this the way you treat your spouse?
 - Would your mate say about you that you honor & respect them?
 - Do you treat them as if they are highly valued, and sacred?

Think back to the story Jesus told of the Prodigal Son.

- Young, rebellious young man
 - Demands his father's inheritance money
 - He goes off & fritters it away on wild living
- His bad choices catch up with him: he's living in a pig pen
- So, humbled and ashamed, he decides to go home and face his father.
- But when he got there, the greeting he received wasn't what he expected ...
- **Luke 15:20:** "While he was still a lonnnng way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him."

²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.

- Of all the scenarios this young man had played out in his mind, I doubt this was one of them
 - **But that's love. THAT'S HOW LOVE ACTS. Regardless of how it has been treated.**
-
- **Q:** So let's ask the question: **What are some ways that we could act more honorably THIS WEEK with the people we care about the most?**

“Love Fights Fair” Lesson 7

- What we’ve covered so far...
 - Love is Patient.. Love is Kind..
 - Love is Not Rude.. Love is Not Irritable.. Love Does Not Envy.. Love acts Honorably
 - **LOVE FIGHTS FAIR**

Our theme saying for this series from Ghandi: **“Be the change you want to see in the world ... in others around you.”**

Kinda like Jesus: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

- **IBQ: React to this statement... “It is alright to have conflict”**
 - Conflict is defined as “a struggle over differences.”
 - That statement cannot be logically denied or refuted.
- Conflict is inevitable
 - We’ve all in this room had arguments with others:
 - Arguments in our homes
 - Arguments amongst friends
 - Arguments with family
 - And if you hang around long enough, arguments in the church
 - Conflict is inevitable
 - It’s par for the course
 - Everybody goes through it
 - But not every group survives it
 - **Q: What are some ways that we can deal with conflict?**
 - Sometimes we seek to avoid conflict
 - Because what makes us wary about conflict is we’re afraid it might not get resolved.
 - We've seen what happened when others couldn't control themselves during conflict
 - They let it boil out of control, and it ruined a marriage or split a church.
 - Those conflicts are heart-breaking.
 - Those conflicts don’t honor God.
 - What I think is important is how do we have conflict in such a way that honors God.
 - How can we have conflict so that we can survive it?
 - In essence, what I’m making case for is peaceful fighting.
- So I think it begins with that realization: Conflict is inevitable, let’s see how we can do it in a Christian manner...

- The deepest, most heart-breaking damage we can ever do to our relationships will most likely occur in the thick of conflict
 - That's because this is when our pride is strongest.
 - Our anger is hottest
 - We're the most selfish and judgmental.
 - Our words contain the most venom.
 - Some of the worst decisions we ever make can be made when we're angry.
 - But when Love takes control, it changes things
 - Love reminds us that our relationships are too important to say or do anything to destroy them.
 - It reminds us that your husband or wife is more important than whatever you're fighting about.
 - It reminds us that respecting your church family member is much more vital than getting your way on any given issue.
 - **But how...?**
- **Q: HOW do we DISAGREE without being DISAGREEABLE?**
- I'm convinced that we should all have RULES for fighting.
 - Guidelines we follow. Rules that we ALL adhere to.
 - I believe that love fights fair
 - And fighting fair means agreeing beforehand on what weapons you can & can't use
 - And when. And how.
 - ... so that you disagree with dignity.
 - ***Conflict should result in building a bridge instead of burning one down.***
- **Q: So, what kind of rules should we follow when we fight?**
 - Eph. 4:3 – “Endeavor to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”
 - **RULE #1** -- Engage in conflict ONLY to seek resolution over a difference
 - We don't start a fight to put someone down, or belittle them
 - We don't start a fight to soothe our own ego
 - We don't start a fight for selfish reasons
 - We only engage in conflict for the purpose of seeking resolution.
 - “Endeavor” – means it's gonna take some effort
 - Matt. 18 – rules of engagement
 - “leave the sacrifice at the altar” ... Don't pretend everything's hunky dory when it's not

- “we” boundaries
 - We will never mention divorce / church split / not being friends anymore
 - The "I'm taking my ball & going home" tactic is out of bounds
 - It's a power grab. It's a reach for control.
 - What's more-- it's childish, it's selfish, and disrespectful to the other person
 - We will not bring up old, unrelated items from the past.
 - This one's tough...
 - **Q:** How do you define “unrelated?”
 - *"Love keeps no record of wrongs"*
 - We will never fight in public or in front of children, especially our's
 - This especially means in conversations with others...
 - Embarrassing your spouse
 - We will call a “time out” if conflict escalates to a damaging level.
 - We will never touch one another in a harmful way
 - We will never go to bed angry with one another.
 - “Don't let the sun go down on your wrath” Eph. 4:26
 - Failure is not an option. Whatever it takes, we will work this out.

- “Me” boundaries
 - I will listen before speaking.
 - “Everyone must be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.” Js. 1:19
 - I will deal with my own issues up-front.
 - “Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?” Matt. 7:3
 - I will speak gently and keep my voice down.
 - “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” Prov. 15:1

- Don't think that you're going to be able to drive out conflict from your life; that would be a futile endeavor.
 - We can't drive out conflict in our church, or in our homes, or in our marriages.
 - This is about dealing with conflict in such a way that you come out healthier on the other side.
 - All of us.
 - Together.

“Love Believes All Things”

Lesson 8

- We’ve covered...
 - Love is Patient
 - Love is Kind
 - Love is not Rude
 - Love is Not Irritable
 - Love does not Envy
 - Love is Honorable
 - Love Fights Fair

Our theme saying for this series from Ghandi: **“Be the change you want to see in the world ... in others around you.”**

Kinda like Jesus: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

- Today will be slightly more targeted on committed relationships
- *“Love bears all things,
believes all things,
hopes all things,
endures all things. Love never fails.” 1st Corinthians 13:7-8*
- **Q: What does THAT mean?**
 - **Turn to James 5:9**
 - *“Don’t grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged.”*
 - Grumbling is a first cousin to fault-finding.
 - It’s expressing dissatisfaction with something out loud.
 - **Turn to 1st Corinthians 10:1-10**
 - Idolatry... Sexual Immorality... GRUMBLING
 - Remember how often Israel grumbled in the Wilderness?

(Read Day 7)

- **Daniel Chapter 6, Verse 3...**

³ Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. ⁴ At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.

- (Give background)
- VERSE 4 – Now, do you see that critical spirit coming through?
- ... and they weren't giving up...
 - **A critical spirit keeps looking through the magnifying glass until it finds something.**

- *“Love bears all things,*

- All the hurts
- All the unmet expectations
- All the disappointments...
- Love means that we can handle these.
- That we don't emotionally cope by punishing someone else for these.
- Love bears all things

- *(Love) believes all things,*

- Love gives the benefit of the doubt
- Love chooses to believe the best about people
- Love believes all things

- *(Love) hopes all things,*

- It refuses to fill in the unknown with negative assumptions
- No matter how it's been hurt in the past, love hopes for the best going forward

- *(Love) endures all things.*

- *Love never fails.” 1st Corinthians 13:7-8*

“Love Keeps No Record of Wrongs”

Lesson 9

Our theme for this series from Ghandi: **“Be the change you want to see in the world ... in others around you.”**

Kinda like Jesus: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

- I'm in training to be a full-service Financial Advisor, and in doing so, I've gotten to know some folks' personal financial situations.
- Some of them are great, and some of them are bad, and most of them are somewhere in between.
- **IBQ:** But sometimes I wonder, in a room like this... how much DEBT are the folks in this room responsible for?
 - How much in mortgages?
 - How much more in car payments?
 - How many credit cards or personal loans have outstanding balances?
 - How much student loan debt remains in this room?
 - Otherwise known as the Bernie Sanders caucus...
 - Oprah used to have this episode that was called "My Favorite Things"
 - And she would give away things that she loved to her studio audience that day
 - To this day people on the internet still make fun with it, because of how excitable Oprah would get when she'd say, "YOU GET A CAR! AND YOU GET A CAR! AND YOU GET A CAR! EVERYBODY GETS A CAR!!!"
 - Well, what if this morning I managed to pull an Oprah... and declared to all of you that all of your debts... they had been forgiven?
 - With those burdens having been taken off your shoulders, **WHAT WOULD YOU DO?**
 - **Q: With the extra cash flow in your budget, what would you do?**
 - ...What a great Bible class answer!
- Well that happened to a man in one of Jesus' parables. Turn to Matthew 18

²³“Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold^[h] was brought to him. ²⁵Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

²⁶“At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ ²⁷The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

²⁸“But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins.^[i] He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded.

²⁹“His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’

³⁰“But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

³²“Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ ³⁴In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

³⁵“This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

- GUESS WHAT: all of us in this room indeed have had our Oprah moment
- Your faults were forgiven, and your faults were forgiven, and your faults were forgiven... EVERYBODY'S FAULTS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN!!!
- So what happens when we go outside this room & deny forgiveness to others?
- Well, here’s our premise this morning: LOVE FORGIVES
 - Paul writes in 1st Corinthians 13, "Love keeps no record of wrongs."
 - And that's vital for any relationship
 - Because great relationships aren't made of people who never hurt each other
 - But by people who CHOOSE to keep no record of wrongs
- **Q:** I think about that... does that mean when we forgive, we have to FORGET??
 - What about, for example... whenever we talk about 9/11, we often hear it said that we should "NEVER FORGET"
 - **Q:** What's that mean??
 - I think it could mean a number of things.
 - But one thing I think it means is that whenever someone cuts us deeply we're probably not going to forget it. It's probably going to hang in our memory.

- When it comes to forgiving others, I don't believe it means we lobotomize ourselves to remove the memory of the event.
 - As if we could erase memories

- Nor does it mean, I think, that we pretend like we forget, or pretend that the event didn't hurt us.
 - Which I've often found to be pretty passive-aggressive
 - "NAH, NAH-- that little thing!! No big deal!"

 - The FACT that you're forgiving ACKNOWLEDGES that a wrong has taken place.
 - Better to forgive than to put on an act as if you were never hurt in the first place.

- **Q:** So what does it mean to you to forgive someone else?
 - ***To no longer wish harm or retribution on the other person***
 - Forgiveness means giving up on the idea of payback
 - If we haven't let go of the hurt inflicted on us, we probably harbor ill-will toward that other person

 - When Jesus said, "Forgive them, Father..."
 - He was saying, "I don't wish harm on these people"
 - You don't have to deliver retribution on these people
 - Just... forgive them.

 - ***Making the relationship more important than the offense***
 - What we did against God was HIGHLY offensive
 - But God put a higher value on relationship with us than he did the offense

 - ***Giving up on the idea of having what's fair***
 - Somebody got our goat...
 - And it's like they got away with it
 - And that's not fair
 - I feel the need to equal the scales of justice so that it's fair again

 - I gotta tell you, if you want fair... you're devoted to the wrong religion
 - If what you need is fair, then Hinduism (with it's doctrine of "Karma") provides a far more satisfying sense of fairness

 - If all of us got what was fair, then we'd all be on the same path to Hell
 - Because, in terms of what we've done, that's the destination we've earned

- BUT
- Christ came and died for us -- a decidedly UNfair event
- And he did that to pay for our wrongdoings

- When God rewards us, He dispenses **GIFTS** ... not wages

- So being Christians means that we relinquish the idea of "fairness."
- And we embrace the idea of "scandal."
 - Because there is a scandalous twist to the idea of forgiveness
... the idea of grace

 - A righteous, sinless God sacrificing himself for an unrighteous, sinful people
 - That's downright scandalous
 - That's the word Paul uses --

 - ²² Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block (**SKANDALON**) to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

- I happen to believe that's what makes forgiveness so hard for us.
 - Because it just feels SO SCANDALOUS!
 - *"You mean I'm just supposed to let them GET AWAY with doing this thing?!"*
 - *"I'm just supposed to LET THEM OFF TH HOOK?!?"*

 - Jonah couldn't deal with it.
 - It's what the whole book is about... his inability to deal with the scandalous nature of God's grace.
 - He couldn't handle it.
 - (TURN TO JONAH CHAPTER 4)
 - "GOD-- I can't handle the fact that you've let them off the hook"

- Here's the thing about forgiveness-- it's also an act of faith
 - An act of faith... that God will make good on his word
 - An act of faith... that Judgment Day is coming
 - An act of faith... that God will hold all of us accountable for the things we've done

 - DO YOU BELIEVE... that God will one day put all things to rights?
 - If you withhold forgiveness as away to inflict punishment on someone else... I don't think that you do

- Forgiveness is an act of faith
 - And, finally... ***Forgiveness is a release***
 - “Whoever opts for revenge should dig two graves.” (Chinese proverb)
 - “. . .not forgiving someone is like drinking rat poison and then waiting for the rat to die.” (Anne Lamott)

- Love keeps no record of wrongs...

*“So may you forgive as you’ve been forgiven,
may you give to others what’s been given to you,
may you set someone free and find out that it was you,*

and may you do it today, because you might not have the chance tomorrow.”

(Rob Bell)

“Love Makes Good Impressions”

Lesson 10

- We’ve covered...
 - Love is Patient
 - Love is Kind
 - Love is Not Rude
 - Love is Not Irritable
 - ...

Our theme saying for this series from Ghandi: **“Be the change you want to see in the world ... in others around you.”**

Kinda like Jesus: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

- In the first few weeks of this class, I asked everyone to name an experience where someone had been rude to you...
 - There are times where those interactions don't go well.
 - And can even turn into all-out disputes
- I think about a lot of these kinds of interactions, and how a lot of them go
 - And I believe there's a commonality with many of them:

They can go south quickly when they begin poorly

- You get off to a bad 1st step – you get a poor 1st impression of somebody
 - And you never get a 2nd chance to make that 1st impression, right?
 - And then perhaps someone responds to boorish behavior in a similar way
 - And the interaction can just descend further and further downward
- I think that’s why the Bible has some things to say about 1st impressions.

"Greet one another with a holy kiss" (Rom. 16:16).

"Greet one another with a holy kiss" (I Cor. 16:20).

"Greet one another with a holy kiss" (II Cor. 13:12).

"Salute every saint in Christ" (Phil. 4:21).

"Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss"(I Thess. 5:26).

"Greet all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints" (Heb. 13:24)

"Greet one another with a kiss of love" (I Peter 5:14).

- Next time someone tells you that their church is more Biblical, ask them if they practice this
- **Q: Why don't we do this today?**
 - Because in the 1st century ANE, this was a common practice
 - In the 1st century, it was common to anoint with oil, but we don't do that today either
- So- back in 1st century times in Europe & Asia, people greeted each other with a kiss.
- That was the culture.
- But beyond the practice of literally kissing one another, ***there's a principle there!***
 - When you're going to interact with somebody, ***start it off on a high note.***
 - Make a good Impression.
- ***Love ... makes a good impression***
- You can tell a lot about the state of any relationship by watching the way two people greet
 - You can see it in their expression and countenance
 - You can see it in how they speak to each other.
 - It is even more obvious by the presence or absence of physical contact.
- You can tell a lot about neighbors, too, can't you.
 - Which raises the question: How do you greet your friends, co-workers, & neighbors?
 - How about acquaintances and those you meet in public?
 - Maybe that's what you're good at:
 - You encounter someone you don't necessarily like
 - ...but you acknowledge them out of courtesy.
 - So if you're this nice and polite to other people, doesn't your family deserve the same?
 - Doesn't your spouse deserve the same?
 - Times ten?
- It's probably something we don't think about very often.
 - ...the first thing you say to your spouse when you wake up in the morning.
 - ...the look on your face when you get in the car
 - ...your tone of voice when you answer the telephone
 - ...the energy in your voice when you carry a conversation on the telephone
 - ***But here's something else you probably don't stop to consider—what kind of difference would it make in your relationships if everything about you expressed the fact that you were really, really glad to be with them.***

- What kind of difference would that make in your spouse's day if you presented a "Happy to see you" expression on your face & in your attitude?
 - ...rather than being absorbed in a TV program or Facebook
 - What kind of difference would it make in your home if you did the same with your children?
 - What kind of difference would it make here at Church if you did the same with your brothers & sisters?
 - ...instead of plopping down in a pew expecting others to come greet you
 - It would probably make a big difference, wouldn't it?
- When someone communicates that they are glad to see you, your personal sense of self-worth increases.
 - You feel more important and valued.
 - That's because a good greeting sets the stage for positive and healthy interaction.
 - It puts wind in your sails.
 - "Hey, look-- (so-in-so) is happy to see me!"
 - ***It makes you feel loved.***
- Think back to the story Jesus told of the Prodigal Son.
 - Young, rebellious young man
 - Demands his father's inheritance money
 - He goes & fritters it away on wild living
 - His bad choices catch up with him: he's living in a pig pen
 - So, humbled and ashamed, he practiced his apologies and tried to think of the best way to go home and face his father.
 - But when he got there, the greeting he received wasn't what he expected was it...
 - **Luke 15:20:** "While he was still a lonnnng way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him."
 - Of all the scenarios this young man had played out in his mind, this was likely the last one he expected.
 - **But that's love: THAT'S HOW LOVE ACTS**

- **Q: So let's ask the question... What could you do to be more loving with your greeting?**
 - A simple word?
 - A touch?
 - A tone of voice?

- A loving greeting can bless your family & friends through what they see, hear, and feel.
 - Think of the opportunities you have to greet each other on a regular basis.
 - When coming through the door.
 - When meeting for lunch.
 - When talking on the phone.
 - When saying good-night.
 - **LISTEN**-- it doesn't have to be bold and dramatic every time.
 - But adding warmth and enthusiasm gives you the chance to touch people's hearts

 - Love is a choice.
 - Choose to make good 1st impressions; choose to greet more lovingly

“Love Never Fails” Lesson 11

Our theme for this series from Ghandi: **“Be the change you want to see in the world ... in others around you.”**

Kinda like Jesus: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

- **IBQ: This is sort of a two-part question...**

If you're married what do you love most about your spouse? What feature? What trait?

If you're not married, what is it you're looking for in a mate? What's attractive to you?

- For Men
 - Beauty
 - Sense of Humor
 - Kindness
 - Cooking
 - Her knack for decorating
 - What a good mother she is
- For Women
 - His good looks
 - Personality
 - His steadiness
 - Consistent Character
 - He's always there for you
 - He's helpful
- But what happens if over the course of many years, your spouse stopped being every one of those things? Would you still love them?
 - I think based on our answers, the logical answer would be “no”
 - If your reasons for loving your spouse **HAVE A BASIS IN** his or her qualities...
 - ...and then those same qualities suddenly or gradually disappear...
 - ...your basis for love is over.
- **The only way love can last a lifetime is if it's UNCONDITIONAL.**
 - The truth is this: love is not determined by the one *being* loved
 - Rather -- love is determined by the one *choosing* to love.

- Paul puts it this way in 1st Corinthians 13: **Love never fails**
 - He punctuates his description of how love acts with this statement

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸ **Love never fails.**

- Memory may fail
 - But love never fails
 - Beauty may fade
 - Love doesn't ever fade
 - Love doesn't quit
 - It doesn't put a condition on the person receiving the love
 - Love is not determined by the one *being* loved
 - Rather -- love is determined by the one *choosing* to love
 - It's unconditional
 - Love never fails
- God loves this way:
 - **Romans 5:8** – “God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”
 - **1st John 4:10** – “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins..”
 - **1st John 4:19** – “We love because He first loved us.”
 - Of all the things that love dares to do, this is the ultimate
 - This is what separates love from everything else.
 - Though mistreated and rejected, it refuses to give up.
 - Though challenged, it keeps moving forward.
 - **Love never fails**
 - Outside of God, we have other tender examples for us today.
 - **Q:** Can anybody explain the movie “The Notebook?”
 - What’s that about?
 - There are other real-life examples of that a story just like that one
 - In this room right now
 - Another that we memorialized a few weeks ago, brother M.C. Pippin
 - His wife, Lillie, came down with Alzheimer's

- These are examples of love that touch our heart
 - Because they personify what true love is intended to be.
 - Love never fails.
- So what does this mean for us?
 - It means we have a high standard to live up to.
 - If love... is really love... it doesn't waffle
 - It's not in one week, and out next week
 - Love doesn't hedge on whether the other person does their part
 - If love can be made to quit loving, then it's not really love.
 - So we have a high standard to live up to.
 - **Q: How do we live up to that standard?**
 - Imperfectly
 - By reminding ourselves of God's love for us

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”^[j]

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,^[k] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.