

# Loved and Liberated to Love Outline

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## Introduction

- In the Christian classic, *Mere Christianity*, CS Lewis describes God's interaction within the Trinity as a dance.
  - "In Christianity God is not a static thing—not even a person—but a dynamic, pulsating activity, a life, almost a kind of drama. Almost, if you will not think me irreverent, a kind of dance." (*Mere Christianity*, 175)
  - This is a great picture for me to visualize how the Trinity relates to each other.
  - I imagine the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each moving and encircling each other in order to better appreciate them.
  - They all center on one another, each one orbiting the others to as if to find another beautiful angle they've never seen before.
- If you've ever been in a relationship where you've wanted to make someone else the center of your life, position yourself to admire and serve him/her, AND that person wants to do the same thing for you, it's a beautiful thing! It's a dance!
- This is the reality that existed before the foundation of the world.
  - If you want to know what went on before God created the world, envision a vibrant dance of love.
- I want to play on this reality as we move into this morning's text: 1 John 4:7-12

## Pray

- Let your Word create light out of darkness, and live out of death.

## Text: 1 John 4:7-12

- <sup>7</sup>Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.
- <sup>9</sup>In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup>In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
- <sup>11</sup>Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup>No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

## The Origin of Love

- Verses 7 & 8—<sup>7</sup>Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.
- Love comes from God because love existed within God from the beginning.
  - This means love is not the product of evolution—it's not some kind of chemical advantage to get body parts aligned and pass on genetic material.
    - If God does not exist, that's all love is—it's just some coincidence in the process of natural selection.

- It sure takes some of the magic out of love to say love is simply pheromones triggering the release of hormones.
    - Since love already existed within the Trinity, it is divine.
    - Love comes from God.
- Love exists in the world because love originates WITH God and flows FROM God.
  - Love is not the creation of a lonely God—it's not an ingenious plan in order to get praise and affection from someone else.
    - If God was a uni-personal God, love could not have existed before the world, because love needs relationship.
    - There needs to be more than one for love to exist.
    - A singular God can't be a loving God—he can't know what it is or enjoy any of the affection unless he creates.
    - That type of God can't be love.
    - Because our God is one God is three persons, love can exist within him and flow from him.
    - We can know love because our God is love, it's part of who he is.
  - We see this love between the Trinity on display throughout the Bible.
    - The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit seek each other's glory.
    - When the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus at his baptism, what does God the Father say? You are my Son, whom I love, with you I am well pleased.
    - How does Jesus pray in John 17? Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.
    - Love is the dance within God that's been going on since all eternity.
- Love cannot exist among us unless we are a part of HIS dance.
  - Before we can love one another, we must be born of God and know God.
  - In fact a sign that you don't know God is that you do not love one another.
  - Love is generated within God and exploded into the world because God desired us to experience the joy of a divine dance, so love only flows from people who have entered into a lovely relationship with God.
  - Only those who love God can love others.
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  - Whoa...I know all kinds of people who don't love God but have love for one another—they love their spouse, their kids. How can this be?
    - How can you explain all of the love around the world stemming from people who don't know Jesus?
    - You're insulting every other people group by dismissing their ability to love.
  - We need to know the essence of love.

### **The Essence of Love**

- Verses 9 & 10—<sup>9</sup>In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup>In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
  - We tend to define love by what makes us feel good.
    - Haddaway answers the questions, What is love? Baby don't hurt me. Don't hurt me, no more.
    - Assumption: If it makes me happy, it is love.

- Assumption: If it hurts me, then it's not love.
  - The tendency is then to impose our human definition of love onto God.
    - If something happens to us that doesn't feel good, we assume God doesn't love us.
    - If God does something that we think hurts someone, then God must not be loving.
  - This is overly simplistic and very subjective—heavily rooted in feelings rather than truth.
    - We know it's not really our definition of love falls short—we see evidence of love that hurts all the time.
      - No one calls a mother unloving when she removes a splinter.
        - Now the little boy might THINK his mother doesn't love him because she makes him eat his vegetables, take his foul tasting medicine, or uses a needle to remove the splinter—but every outsider looking into the situation sees this mother as kind and loving.
      - No one calls a surgeon unloving by using a scalpel to remove a tumor.
      - (I was going to use a dentist and a drill as an analogy, but I was at the dentist this week, and I'm not convinced they aren't motivated by hate.)
      - Sometimes the pain is for our good.
    - And the opposite is true—not everyone who keeps us from pain is motivated by love.
      - It's not out of love that parents do not discipline their kids or enforce rules—it's laziness or ambivalence.
      - The parents who let their kids do whatever they want or go wherever they want are not loving parents.
      - Allowing a friend to run freely towards habits of destruction is not loving—it's hate.
      - The farmer who gives extra helpings in order to fatten up his choice pig before Easter does not have the best interest of the pig in mind.
    - What is or isn't love is often distorted in our minds because we lack faith in the one behind the act—we don't believe he/she really has our best interests in mind.
    - If you don't believe someone loves you and wants the best for you, it's easy to interpret actions as unloving.
    - We are all susceptible to inaccurate understandings of what love is.
- John gives us a description of true love.
  - This is so helpful.
  - If you want to know what love is, go to the one from which it originates.
  - If you want to copy love, you should look at the original.
  - Look at his standard of love. Examine what it really is.
- Love is about GIVING.
  - There is a relationship between love and sacrifice.

- You can generally tell how much people love something by how much they are willing to give or sacrifice for it.
- Husbands, what have you sacrificed because you loved your wife?
  - The romantics are leaning over saying, “Baby, I never sacrificed a thing.”
  - That’s sweet, but it’s not true. You’ve made all kinds of sacrifices because you love her!
  - And you should be making daily sacrifices for the ones you love.
  - The reason you drove a minivan to church this morning is proof you love your wife.
  - You could point to the rock on her finger, your guy’s nights every weekend, your love affair with Call of Duty—you’ve given and given up things because of love.
- Parents know this—they make all kinds of sacrifices because they love their children; if they’re good parents they do anyway.
- The bigger the sacrifice, the greater the love.
- There’s also a relationship between love and what you get in return.
  - The love between parents and a new baby is incredible!
  - That baby gives NOTHING in return...in fact, its worse than nothing.
  - The last baby I held leaked from four different orifices in less than 30 seconds.
  - That’s when I was ready to give him back to his mother!
  - But what wouldn’t a mother do for her baby?
  - The only reason to explain the care and sacrifice that mothers make for children is love.
  - We know they love them because there’s no reciprocity—it’s not a scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours kind of relationship.
- We know Jesus loves us because when he came for us he gave EVERYTHING and got NOTHING in return.
  - You might say, well he got worship.
  - I’d say he already had it—and it was a purer and more powerful worship than we provide.
  - He did it because he loves us and wants us to experience the life and love that existed within himself.
  - He gave up his home in heaven, his fellowship with his Father, and came to suffer and die.
  - His coming was the only way for us to experience the life and reality that we were created to experience, so he did it.
  - If you ever question whether God loves you, look at Jesus!
- John 3:16—For God so loved the world that he gave us Jesus.
  - We can thank Tebow’s performance last week for highlighting that verse.
  - For God to demonstrate his love for us, to manifest his love for us, he had to send Jesus—a gift an infinite sacrifice that paid no dividends.
  - Here’s why: Before we could enter into God’s divine dance, God had to deal with our problem of sin.

- God can't simply allow rebel sinners to waltz into his presence and commune with him.
  - Without Jesus, we stand opposed to God as his enemies condemned for our disregard, dishonor, and rebellion.
  - We needed a savior—someone to save us both from the problem of our sin and the penalty of our sin.
- God as a holy and just God must have our sins accounted for.
  - John says God sent Jesus to be the propitiation for our sins.
  - Propitiation is a big word but it means this: Our sins deserve punishment, so God sends Jesus to pay for the penalty of our sin.
  - Jesus, our Propitiation, is our penalty absorbing substitute that satisfies God's wrath.
  - Every time we sin, we store up wrath from God.
  - On the cross, Jesus suffered the wrath that was directed towards us.
  - Every lie, every bitter thought, every selfish act, every betrayal, every horrific thing you've ever done that you hoped no one would ever know—Jesus said, I'll pay for that as your propitiation.
  - The hell that you deserved, Jesus endured it—for you.
- Don't not believe the lie that God's love and God's wrath are at odds with his character—love and anger go hand in hand.
  - You know this; what feelings well up inside you when something hurts the thing you love? Anger.
  - Your anger is proportionate to your love—anger is the appropriate response when harm is done to whatever is precious.
  - If nothing makes you angry, it's not that you're super loving, it's that you don't love anything.
  - Because God loves you, his anger burns against whatever robs you of the life he wants for you.
  - God's love demands anger and wrath for whatever harms his beloved.
- Notice, too, that God's love was GRACE, not a WAGE.
  - Not that we have loved God, but he loved us.
  - God's love was not conditional upon our love for him.
  - It's not that we loved God, so God responded in love for us.
  - We did nothing to earn his love.
  - God doesn't choose to love us on the basis of what we bring him.
  - God initiates the love BEFORE we respond and actually regardless of our response.
- How often is OUR love for others contingent upon how we perceive our love will be returned?
  - I'm willing to leave my circle of friends to introduce myself to someone, as long as that person welcomes me and gives me the same kind of attention as the people I left.
  - I'm willing to give money as long as it is used responsibly.
  - I'm willing to sacrifice something I find precious, just as long as I get something in return.
- Love is not defined by what we GET but by what we GIVE.

- Love is not manipulation—it’s not doing nice things in order to get nice things.
    - Love is not bribery—it’s not giving something in order to get what we really want.
    - Love is not an investment—it’s not crediting an account and awaiting a big payout in your favor.
    - Serving others in order to reap the benefits from serving is not serving others, it’s serving yourself.
    - Loving others in order to reap the benefits from love is not loving others, it’s loving yourself.
  - Love Languages: Pros & Cons
    - Gary Thomas’ *The Five Love Languages* proposes that different people are wired differently and perceive certain actions as more loving than others. i.e. Some prefer acts of service than acts of physical touch. Some prefer quality time over gifts.
    - I agree that people are wired differently and will find some acts of love more loving than others, BUT the motivation to learn someone else’s love language is NOT “Scratch my back, and I’ll scratch yours.”
    - Husbands and wives should learn to show love to each other...BUT.
    - Learning how to treat someone in order to get love in return is more of a LUST language than love language because it is motivated by deficiency.
    - We don’t love to GET, we love to GIVE.
- Love is about FULLNESS.
  - This is where God’s love is distinct from all other types of “love.”
  - God’s love for us is not rooted in a plan to satisfy some deficiency in himself.
    - Because God had all he ever needed (love, praise, affection) within himself, he was free to LOVE us, rather than USE us.
    - God is free to love us, not for what he will GET but for what he GIVES because he doesn’t NEED anything from us.
    - God does not use us to get something from us.
  - We, on the other hand, are full of deficiencies and quickly turn love into a game in order to get what we need.
    - There are a million reasons to do nice things for people in this world—and people often perceive it as “love.”
    - It’s a fairly easy game to play: Look for the people who have what you need, and do nice things for them.
    - And the game works really well, especially if YOU have the things that THAT person needs.
    - You become mutually dependant upon each other.
    - But what happens when that person fails to deliver the thing you need? The relationship falls apart.
    - That kind of “love” relationship always unravels because it was never really love that kept it together.
    - Couples don’t fall out of love; they were never really in love to begin with.
    - What they mean is they stopped getting the thing they wanted from the relationship, so they stopped giving.
  - It’s easy to love others who love you.

- When our love tanks are constantly being filled, it's easy to be generous with our time or energy or money.
  - It's easier for friends to show grace and patience when they are reciprocating that love.
  - When we fear our love tanks are drying up, we are reluctant to extend love.
- This is the reason it is hard to love: We are needy people.
  - And some people are needier than other—they might make statements like, “This is such an unloving place.” What they mean is, “People aren't giving me what I want here.”
  - Love that uses others to satisfy ourselves is not love, no matter how “loving” it appears.
- We tend to enter into love relationships where we know our love will be reciprocated.
  - We give, but only because the giving makes us feel good about ourselves.
  - We do the dishes, but only because we want our spouse to thank us or serve us.
  - We'll discipline our kid, not because we LOVE our kids but because we don't want obnoxious little brats, or because we don't want others to think we're lousy parents, or because we want to ensure that our kids will be good citizens and eventually leave the house.
  - Our deficiencies can cause us to “love” one another, but this is not true love as it exists in God.
- When you truly love someone you'll serve them unconditionally, not because they're USEFUL, but simply because they are BEAUTIFUL.
- The key to loving others is embracing your fullness in Jesus.

### **The Purpose of Love**

- Verses 11 & 12—<sup>11</sup>Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup>No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.
  - There is a relationship between God's love for us and the necessary consequence of our love for others.
  - Did you ever notice the connection between the Golden Rule that Jesus sets out in Matthew 7:12 and the verses preceding it?
    - The ESV makes the connection easier to see by including an important word at the beginning of the verse that links the two ideas: SO.
    - In Matthew 7:7-11, Jesus reminds us that we have a good Father in heaven who gives to his children all things they need.
    - Then in verse 12, Jesus says, “SO whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them.”
    - By entering the dance with God, by centering your life on him, you have access to a fullness that allows you to love one another.
  - God loves us to free us from not only the penalty of our sin, but the problem of our sinfulness.
    - We sin because we want to make the world all about us.
    - Sinful people are selfish people.
    - We will do whatever it takes to get us what we want.

- God's love provides us with a fullness that allows us to take the emphasis off our need and allows us to love one another simply for the sake of love, not for what we get out of it.
  - Have you ever asked yourself why you refuse to do certain loving things or are even sometimes oblivious to what to do in the first place?
    - Here is where I feel totally convicted as the one to preach a message on love—I drop the ball all the time!
    - Here are three reasons I don't love others: (I feel safe sharing this here because I don't think I'm alone.)
      - I'm scared—What if I stick my neck out and it gets chopped off? I'll be embarrassed, defeated, and in a worse spot than if I don't risk it. So I don't love.
      - I'm proud—I credit my current situation to my set of gifts or work ethic or morality, so people don't actually need my help; they just need to get their act together.
      - I'm heartless—I don't pause to consider how anyone else might be feeling because I'm totally consumed with myself.
    - This is what I have to do in those moments— I need to remember...
      - That in the gospel, God is for me and not against me, so I have nothing to fear.
      - That in the gospel I am a sinner who receives good gifts only by grace.
      - That in the gospel I enter a dance that isn't all about me.
    - God's love for us displayed in the gospel frees us to be selfless lovers.
    - We can love like God loves because we aren't reliant on the benefits of love from others.
    - Because God loves us, we are full to love others.
- Because Jesus loves us we are liberated to love him and love others.
  - God's invitation into his divine dance is what allows us to love.
  - When we love God, we do it not because of what loving God gets us—forgiveness of sins, an eternity in heaven, health, wealth, and prosperity.
  - We love God because we find him beautiful, not useful.
  - The natural consequence of loving God is loving others.
  - All our deficiencies are met in Jesus, so we no longer need people in order to feel valuable, appreciated, respected, honored, cared for.
  - God meets those needs for us in the gospel, so we are free from searching for them in people.
  - We can truly love God and love others simply for the sake of love, not for what it gives us.
- Our love for others is what puts God's love on display.
  - No one has seen God; but if YOU love like GOD loves, others will see God through you.
  - This is an incredible thought—people can get a glimpse of the character and nature of God as a result of our love for the world.
  - The church should be an agency of love within itself and within its community—a pulsing heart pumping love to everyone around the church.

- This kind of love is unique to those who know God.
  - The love that should flow from those of us who have entered this divine dance should stand in stark contrast the all over imitations of love that exist in the world.
  - It's not a selfish love; it's not a dependant love; it's not a conditional love.
  - People should be drawn to the church because of the love it witnesses in it.
- Are we that witness?
  - The church has an advantage in this world when it comes to self-sacrificing love— are we showing it?
  - When people look at Keystone, do they see a dance—people orbiting each other to serve one another and sacrifice for one another?
  - What's that look like on a Sunday morning?
    - It means you're willing to sit next to someone you might not know and introduce yourself and talk with them after the service.
    - It means you're willing to park away from the building to free up spaces closer for other, attend a different service to free up seats for others, take your rotation in the Keystone Room.
    - Do you see how you'll have to make sacrifices in order to love one another?
    - The moment you make the morning about you, you stand still and demand that everyone else dance around you.
    - If people wait on others to love you, the dance falls apart and no one will be loved.
  - What's this dance look like during the week?
    - Well, you'll have to be in contact with the church in some way!
    - Does the church cross your mind on the other six days of the week?
    - The reason we want people in CARE groups is because we want Keystone to love one another!
    - CARE groups are the place where you will find testimonies of incredible love for one another.
    - CARE groups require sacrifice—you'll have to give time, you'll have to give emotion, you'll have to give patience—but the result is a beautiful dance.

## Conclusion

- CS Lewis goes on to explain the importance of this dance we described in the beginning.
  - “And now, what does it all matter? It matters more than anything else in the world. The whole dance, or drama, or pattern of this three-Personal life is to be played out in each one of us: or (putting it the other way round) each one of us has got to enter that pattern, take his place in that dance. There is no other way to the happiness for which we were made.” (Mere Christianity, 176)
- If you are captivated by God's love for you, I want to invite you into that dance.
  - Jesus entered into history to invite you into this divine dance.
  - He came to glorify you so that you might begin to glorify God—center your life on him and free you to display that love in the world.
  - Today can be the day that you cry out for Jesus to saved you from your sins and center your life on him and enter the dance.

- For those of us who already love God, I urge you to love one another, for love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. If God so loves us, we also ought to love one other.
- For our happiness, God's glory, the health of the church, and the evangelism of the world, we must enter into this dance of love.

**Pray**

- Make it happen!

**Benediction: Revelation 1:5b-6**

- To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood <sup>6</sup> and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.