

# Addressing Misunderstandings About Love

## Definition of love

- Love means being just as committed to getting the best outcome for someone else as you are to getting the best outcome for yourself and choosing the what's best for them over what's best for you in situations where only one is possible.

This week I want to give some clarification to make sure we don't misunderstand or misapply godly love for others.

## The Question of "What's Best?" is Complicated

### How it's complicated

- What's best for others isn't always a matter of good vs bad, but is often a matter of good vs great
  - (and it's sometimes a matter of bad vs not-quite-as-bad)
- What's best isn't always obvious and it requires wisdom
  - It requires evaluation, clear thinking, and sound judgement (Proverbs 27:14)

### Some general principles

- Saying yes to one thing almost always means saying no to something else (Mark 7:9-13)
- It might be better for someone to have to work for something rather than you giving it to them
  - Proverbs 20:21, 13:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:10
- It might be better for someone to suffer the consequences of their actions then for you to protect them from consequences (Proverbs 13:24, 3:11-12; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5)
- It might not be best for the relationship to let someone have what they want, and the relationship might be more important than them getting what they want

## What Love Doesn't Mean

### Love doesn't mean always giving

- Sometimes it's not best for the person you'd be giving to
- Sometimes it's better to not give to one thing so that you can give to another

### Love doesn't mean always serving

- Sometimes you should let others serve
- Sometimes you need rest

### Love doesn't mean always saying yes

- If you're always saying yes, then you're not making the best use of your time
  - Paul tells us twice in the New Testament to try to make the best use of our time
- You have to use wisdom
- Saying yes to something you don't want might not be what's best for others

### Love doesn't mean never complaining

- The Bible warns against complaining (Numbers 11:1; Philippians 2:14)
- But complaining is also mentioned positively (Psalm 55:16-19)
- Complaining can be an unloving thing to do, but sometimes sharing what your upset about with someone else is in their best interest

## Love doesn't mean letting people mistreat you

- What about turning the other cheek? (Matthew 5:39)
  - I think Jesus is talking about how far we should go in being merciful, and I think he's using hyperbole to make a point about how merciful we should be, and how we shouldn't retaliate (Acts 23:1-5)
- It's not good for them to allow them to mistreat you (Matthew 18:15-18)
- Love sometimes means letting things slide; Love sometimes means overlooking an offense; Love sometimes means rebuking people
- Love doesn't mean generally letting others mistreat you

## Love doesn't mean not letting others serve you or sacrifice for you

- Sometimes we might get tempted to think that if we love others, we shouldn't let them make sacrifices for us, but that isn't true (Philippians 4:15-17)
- If you regularly refuse to accept gifts from others, that's not love, that's pride (John 13:8)
- Sometimes love does turn down the generosity of others, but often it gladly receives it

## Love doesn't mean not asking for help or for favors

- Just like love doesn't mean not letting others to serve you, it also doesn't mean never asking others to serve you
- Love wants what's best for them, and sometimes them giving to you or helping you is what's best for both of you, and if it's what's best for both of you, sometimes you should ask for it
- If you love others, you won't always be asking them for favors, but you also won't never ask them for favors

## Love doesn't mean never getting angry or never expressing anger

- Love doesn't mean never getting angry (Ephesians 4:26-27)
- Love doesn't mean never expressing anger (John 2:13-17)
  - Sometimes love will keep you from expressing the anger you feel
  - But sometimes it's in the other person's best interest to know that you're angry

## Love doesn't mean prioritizing other people's families over your own family

- Love puts what's best for others over what's best for you, but that doesn't mean putting what's best for others' families over what's best for your family
  - You're called to love your own family just as much as you are called to love others, and maybe even more so in some sense (1 Timothy 5:8)
- You should love other people's families, and you should love your own family, but godly love does not mean prioritizing other people's families over your own family

## Love doesn't mean not taking care of yourself

- If you stop taking care of yourself for long enough, you won't be taking care others either (Mark 6:30-31)
- Paul says he spent many sleepless nights, and I think at least some of them was because how much he was working and or praying. And sometimes love calls for that, but sometimes love calls for rest and for using wisdom in taking care of yourself

## Conclusion

- Love requires wisdom
- Love is complicated, but don't use that to make excuses