

**SERIES: LOVE NOW**  
**Part 1 - "Love Matters"**

In order for your life to truly make an impact, you have to focus it. You don't have time for everything. Everyone agree with that? Not everything is of equal value.

Jesus said there are two things that are more valuable in life than anything else. He said it's love: Loving God, and loving each other.

Please read out loud with me Matthew 22:36-40, **“Teacher, which is the *most important* commandment in the law of Moses?”** <sup>37</sup>Jesus replied, **“You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.”** <sup>38</sup>**This is the first and greatest commandment. *A second is equally important*: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’** <sup>40</sup>**The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”**

Circle “most important” and “second is equally important.” God says these are the two things that matter most in life: Love for God and love for people. He says if you get these two things you've got it.

The Bible is very clear about it—that God put you here on earth to do two things: to learn to love God, and to learn to love other people. Life is one giant lesson in love. Life is not about acquisition—how much I get. It's not about accomplishment—how much I do. It's not about achievement—how much I earn. It's not about all the other things we're told life's about. Because all of that you're going to leave behind. You're not taking your career to heaven. You're not taking your car to heaven. You're not taking your china to heaven. You're not taking your house to heaven. But you are taking your character. You're taking *you*.

God put you on earth so you can learn to receive His love, love Him and love others. He says when you get that, you've understood your purpose for life. If you don't get it, then you have just wasted your life.

This is our focus for this morning. We're going to talk about the priority of love.

Our culture is greatly confused about what true love is. So I want to look at what I call **the three laws of love**. In order to be a great lover, you will learn to really love God and learn to love other people. To do this you will want to keep the three laws of love a top priority in your mind every day.

Law number one:

### **I. The best way to invest your life is to love**

This is law number one. God says you were designed to make love your number one priority, your primary objective, your greatest ambition, your life purpose. More than anything else, He says you are to commit to wanting to learn how to be a loving person—how to love God and how to love other people. Love is a choice and a commitment.

Why would God say that the best way to invest my life is to love? Here are four reasons why love is more important than anything else.

#### **A. Love verifies my faith**

What does that mean? It proves that I really am in God's family. It demonstrates that I have eternal life. Love verifies I am saved, that I have been born again, that I'm a part of the family of God. The Bible says that true love verifies my faith in Jesus Christ.

Life works this way, doesn't it? To prove your identity you need to have a birth certificate. When you want to visit another country you must have a passport that verifies who you are. If you want to drive legally you have to produce your driver's license. These are all proofs that you are who you say you are.

To participate in God's Kingdom Jesus says you must put your faith and trust in who He is and what He has done for you through His life, death, burial, resurrection, and His ascension to the Father. True love is one of those

indicators that validate your identity as a son or daughter of God. Please read with me 1 John 4:7-8, **“Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”**

How do you validate your identity? The Bible says that God looks at your lifestyle and says, “Do you love? Do you love God with all your heart? Do you love your neighbor as yourself?” The reason why God wants you to learn to love on earth is because He wants you to become like Him. 1 John 4:20 says, **“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don’t love people we can see, how can we love God, Whom we cannot see?”** *True love* verifies my faith. It proves I really am a child of God.

## **B. Love makes my life whole**

God’s love is the only agent that can make yours and my life whole and complete. God has designed our lives so that our dominant life principle is love. That is how my social life, my financial life, my spiritual life, my work life, my sexual life, my friendships can all work together in unity. Every part of my life becomes integrated by love. You need to have something at the core of your heart that draws your life together. Otherwise your life is just fragmented. When your life is motivated by different life principles like anger, greed, lust, pity, unforgiveness, resentment, and pride, you experience disintegration and division at the core of who you are. And when your life is fragmented—when your life is segmented—you lack integrity. Integrity means your whole life is integrated. It is whole. You live in unity with God, yourself and others.

The Bible says the only thing strong enough to do that is love—love for God and love for each other. It becomes the center and it brings everything else into focus. Psalm 63:3 says, **“Your unfailing love is better than life itself; how I praise You.”**

***Love is more important than anything else. It is what makes your life whole.***

### **C. Love demonstrates my ability to receive forgiveness and to forgive others**

This is really good news when you understand it. Ephesians 1:7 says, “**God is so rich in kindness and grace that He purchased our freedom with the blood of His Son and forgave our sins.**” Jesus paid the price for our sins, and He canceled the penalty against us. This means that every sin I have ever committed and will ever commit is forgiven. When I confess my sin before Father God, the blood of Jesus cleanses and removes the stain of sin from my life.

When I receive God’s love and forgiveness for me, a leading proof that I have responded to God’s love for me is that I am willing to forgive others. Please read 1 Peter 4:8 out loud with me: “**Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins.**”

Two things I want us to see. Notice what Peter says: “Most important of all.” What is the title of my teaching? Love matters most. Why is this true? Because this is what God says is most important. What is most important? **To continue to show deep love for each other.** The Greek word for ‘deep’ means ‘to be stretched.’ True love is constantly being stretched to the limit by the demands made on it. Dear friends, you and I are called to love the unlovely, the unkind, the rude, the crass, the inconsiderate, and everyone else in between.

One of the most difficult and inconvenient times to extend this stretching kind of love is when someone wrongs and hurts me. In others words, I never have the right to write someone off because of what they have done to me. I don’t know about you, but that really stretches me. This is why I often question how loving I am. I can get bothered and offended rather easily at times. I am stretched by this command to obey what God says is the most important thing: to show deep, fervent love—the kind of love that stretches me for you.

But what really catches my attention is the reason Peter gives to show this kind of deep, stretching love. It is because the God-kind of love we demonstrate to each other literally covers a multitude of sins. The word covers means the willingness to forgive others. Yes, sin must be confronted when it is appropriate.

This in itself is an act of love. However it is just as important to demonstrate our ability to forgive other people. To forgive means that I cancel any debt that you have with me. I am to treat you as your debt has been paid in full.

Forgiveness, like love, is an act of the will, a personal choice. You choose to either forgive or not to forgive. Dr. Wayne Grudem writes, **“Where love abounds in a fellowship of Christians, many small offenses, and even some large ones, are overlooked and forgotten. But where love is lacking, every word is viewed with suspicion, every action is liable to misunderstanding, and conflicts abound.”**

True love demonstrates my ability to receive God’s forgiveness and to forgive others. There’s a fourth thing that love does.

#### **D. Love has eternal results**

What does that mean? It means that when I truly am loving to others, it is those acts of love that will have an eternal impact. Please read 1 Corinthians 13:8b & 13 **“But love will last forever. <sup>13</sup>Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.”** He says it’s going to continue forever. If you want a legacy to last, if you want people to remember you—love. Love lasts. In fact, nothing else does.

The only thing that’s going to last is what you did in love. Nothing else you do on this planet is permanent. It’s all temporary. You didn’t bring any of it in with you; you’re not taking any of it out with you. It’s all temporary. All those trophies will be trashed one day.

As a pastor, I have been with a lot of people as they took their dying breath. Whether it was in a hospital, or whether it was in a home, I have stood at the bedside as many people moved from this life into eternity. I have to tell you that, in over thirty years, I’ve never had anybody say to me as they were taking their dying breath “Pastor, I’m about to die. Please bring me my certificate or award... I want to look at it one more time. Bring me my diploma. Bring me my report card. Bring me the trophy.” Nobody ever asks for things.

When people are dying they don't want things around them. What they want is people. They want the people that they love, and they want to love those people.

The truth is everybody—every one of us—will eventually learn the basic truth of life that **life is about relationships** not accomplishments. Everybody's going to eventually learn it on their deathbed. When you're dying, you're going to want people around you who love you, not things. So we're all going to figure that out.

In fact, the Bible says life without love is worthless. It is a wasted life. The Bible says this, *"No matter what I say or what I believe or what I do, I'm bankrupt without love."* Bankrupt!

Life is not about achievement. It's about love. When your life is lived out in the kind of love that verifies your life, and it makes your life whole and is demonstrated by how you forgive others, you're living a life that will have positive eternal results.

Law number two:

## **II. The best demonstration of love is sacrifice**

Love is best defined as the giving of ourselves for the benefit of another person. The giving of ourselves in this way is what sacrifice is all about. We're to sacrifice our time, our talents, our treasure, and our touch for the express benefit of others.

Please read out loud with me Ephesians 5:2, **"Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered Himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God."**

In the last 15-20 years, there has been developed this idea of identifying people's love languages. What this means is that every one of us while we were growing up developed a sense of what needs to happen for us to feel loved. There are 5 love languages: The language of **quality time, affirmation, physical touch, acts of service, and gift giving**. How this works is that each

one of us here might feel like we have several love languages, but most likely there is one of these five languages that when you experience this from people you feel loved. In other words, what do you need to experience from another person that when you're done you feel loved? Do you need a person to spend quality time with you? Do you feel loved when someone affirms you? Is your love language physical touch, meaning that when you are touched appropriately you feel loved? When people do acts of service for you does that communicate to you that you feel loved? Or do you feel love when you are given gifts? This doesn't mean they have to be expensive or extravagant, but just to know that someone was thinking of you and they went out of their way to get you something special, that says to you, I love you.

How this often works, especially in marriage, is that the couple has different love languages. What most of us do is that we will have a tendency to love people with our own love language. My love language is affirmation. So if your love language is quality time, or physical touch, or gift giving or acts of service, I will have to step outside my language and in a way be willing to sacrifice on your behalf by identifying your love language and then make sure that I relate to you in that way.

Please read out loud with me 1 John 3:18-19, **“Dear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other, let us show the truth by our actions. 19 Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God.”**

Love is action. Love is a choice. Love is a commitment to be willing to sacrifice for others. This is what Jesus did for us and He wants us to love others like He loves us.

Law number three:

### **III. The best time to love is now**

The best time to love is now. Not tomorrow. Not later. Not someday. Not one of these days. Not when I get around to it. Not soon. *Now*. Whatever you intend to do with your life, do it now. If you have an opportunity to show love, do it now.

The Bible says in Galatians 6:10, **“Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone.”** That means now.

Please read out loud with me Proverbs 3:27-28, **“Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it’s in your power to help them. <sup>28</sup>If you can help your neighbor now, don’t say, ‘Come back tomorrow, and then I’ll help you.’”**

What is God saying to us? Never procrastinate in showing love. Don’t delay. Don’t put it off. Do it now.

Question: Who do you need to show love to today? Who do you need to go home after this service and make that phone call and share a word of encouragement and love? Or go home and write that letter? Or go home and make a visit to somebody in a board and care or convalescent home or at the hospital? Who do you need to invite over to your backyard and have a barbecue with them and show some love? Who is it at your work that everybody can’t stand because they’re so obnoxious and that person needs massive doses of love, and you could show love to the unlovely?

Did you know that God specifically puts people around your life so you can show love to them? He wants you to do that.

There are some activities in life that you ought to procrastinate on. There are some activities in life where procrastination is a legitimate response. There are some things where it is appropriate to say, “We’re just not ready to do that. Let’s wait on that. Let’s delay. Let’s put it off. Let’s postpone.” That’s ok.

But there’s one thing that you and I should never, never postpone—showing love. If love is what matters most, if love is the number one goal in life, if love is the reason God put you on earth to learn, then love should always take priority over everything else. Showing and demonstrating love.



Why? Because you don't know how long you're going to have the opportunity. People die.

In the 1972 election, George McGovern was running against Richard Nixon, and McGovern and Charles Colson were on opposite sides of the political spectrum. But they both ended up with the same regrets. Chuck Colson wrote this, "As I think back on my life my biggest regret is not spending more time with my kids. Making family your top priority means going against a culture where materialism and workaholism are rampant. It means realizing that you may not advance as fast in your career as others do. It means being willing to accept a lower standard of living knowing that you're doing it for your kids. It means giving them the emotional security that they'll draw on for the rest of their lives."

Then George McGovern, one time presidential candidate, wrote a book about his daughter, Terry, who died in 1994. She was an alcoholic. They found her frozen to death in a snowdrift in a drunken stupor. After his daughter died, George McGovern poured over her diaries and contacted many of her friends, and he discovered that he hadn't been the parent that he thought he was. While he was reading her diaries he discovered this, while he was spending eighteen hours a day working for political causes, Terry was writing in her diary how much she missed her daddy. And that he probably didn't care about her anyway." McGovern's message to parents: "Show more love to your kids by spending more time with them. Especially as teenagers. No matter what it costs your career. That way," he said "neither of you will have regrets."

Then this was a very poignant quote. He said "I'd give everything I have—and I mean *everything*—for one more afternoon with Terry. Just to let her know how much I loved her and to have one more of those happy times that we used to have so infrequently."

Friends, the question is not whether we're ever going to regret living an overloaded, furiously driven life. The question is just *when*.

There is a title of a book on the subject of anorexia entitled Starving for Attention. You know anybody like that? I do. I think everyone is starving for attention.

As I close this morning (this afternoon), I want to ask all of us a question? So what am I, what are you, going to do about it? Are you willing to make the changes necessary so that you are living out a life that demonstrates that love is what matters most? Are we just going to talk about love and then say, “That was nice,” and that’s it? But not become any more loving?

Let me tell you what my goal is for our four week series, LOVE NOW! My goal is that I will become more loving. I don’t know about you, but I’m fed up with the level of loving I’m at. When I do serious looking at my life, I can see a whole lot more of me than I like. I know that one day I’m going to stand before God, and God’s going to say to me, “Scott, did you do what I put you on earth to do? Did you learn to love Me more than anything else? Did you spend time with Me? That’s how you show love. Did you learn to love everybody else? And did you spend time with them?”

I, more than anything else, want to be known as a loving person. I want people to look at me and say, “Scott knows how to love people. He is learning to receive Jesus’ love and love other people with the love of Jesus.” This is the person I am committed to being.

I hope you want to be that too. I hope you’re not satisfied with your shallow love because shallow love only loves people who love you. Serious, mature love says, “I love people who are unlovely. I love people who don’t love me. I love people who irritate me. I love people who attack me. I love the way Jesus loved.”

This is our purpose for doing this four week series entitled LOVE NOW!

Are you ready to get serious? Each week I’m going to give you some homework. This week I want you to take five minutes, ten minutes, fifteen—you decide—every day spend some time with each of your family members—talk with each of them. Take the time. Look them in the face and listen. You may

need to apologize. You may need to ask them to forgive you. You might need to say that you're sorry for what you have done or not done. But spend some time with the people God has put in your life. If you can look me in the eye and say, "Scott, I do this on a regular basis," then I am asking you to pray about that person or persons in your CVCHURCH family that you need to sit down and talk with them. If there is something between you and them, take the initiative to have that loving discussion, and take responsibility for your part, whatever it may be. Maybe you have misunderstood them. Maybe you have wronged them. Whatever it is, do it. The best way to invest your life is to love. The best demonstration of love is sacrifice. The best time to love is now.

Prayer: "Father, it's so easy to get distracted from what's most important—knowing and loving You and knowing and loving those around us. Forgive us for being task-driven instead of love-driven. Forgive us for valuing things and accomplishments more than people."

Now will you pray this in your heart with me. "Father, thank You for this wake-up call today. I needed it. I know what matters most even when my schedule doesn't show it. I thank You for this reminder today. I know the people who love me are a gift from You. Please forgive me for taking them for granted. Forgive me for allowing other things to crowd out my relationship to You and allowing other things to crowd out my relationship to others. I know this is going to mean making some sacrifices. But I want to slow down and make time for loving relationships. I want to change. Jesus, You modeled real love when You sacrificed Yourself for me. I thank You for that. I want to love You and trust You. I ask You to forgive me and fill me with Your love. I want to follow You in life and love. And I want to make love the primary aim of my life."

COMMUNION: "As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, 'Take this and eat it, for this is My body.' And He took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them and said, 'Each of you drink from it, for this is My blood, which confirms the covenant between God and His people. It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many.'" Matthew 26:26-28