

Life's Ultimate Value

April 20, 2003
1 Corinthians 13:1-8

Each day on E-bay.com, someone bids on an item that they value. Each item purchased on E-bay.com is worth whatever someone is willing to pay—the greater the value, the greater the price. If your life were up for auction, what would you be worth? The Children's Activities on Day 2 of our church-wide Family Devotional Guide ask that your children to place price tags for the real value of household appliances and then on Bible and on children. What is our life worth? Can we put a price tag on our lives? We found that Bible and People are invaluable. So, what then reflect a life's supreme value? We can find the answer from this paragraph of Scripture. When Jesus went to the cross, He paid the highest price that could ever be paid for your life. You are worth to God the death of His Son. And the ultimate value of Christ's short and solitary life is revealed in the special way God shows His love to mankind. That is why this paragraph is preceded by such a statement: and now I will show you the most excellent way.

Love

¹If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. ⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸Love never fails.

Love is the supreme value of one's life, and in the first three verses, Paul gives a 5-point summary of why LOVE is the ultimate value in life. First he says, "**Without love all that I say is INEffective.**" Verse 1 says, *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.* Words without love are empty. In our society, we are impressed by great communicators. They just overwhelm us with their elegance in eloquence. But God's not impressed with communicators. He is impressed with love. Paul writes to the Corinthian church and says if you don't have love in your life, you've missed the boat. Without love, all that I say is ineffective.

Second summary statement is "**Without love all that I know is INcomplete.**" You may be a walking Bible encyclopedia, and you can split a theological hair 16 different ways, but, if you don't have love, forget it! You've missed the point. All that I know is ineffective and incomplete without love. In fact, Paul was even more emphatic about this by saying "I am nothing!" even *if I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, ..., but have not love.*

Third point is "**Without love, all that I believe is INSufficient.**" On the 2nd half of verse 2 Paul says *if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.* There is a lot more thought to the Christian life than just believing. That's just the first step. You might say here, "I believe in God. Well, so does Satan! I believe in Jesus. Well, so does Satan! I know you believe in Jesus, but what I want to know is "DO YOU LOVE HIM?" Satan believe Jesus, but he surely hates Jesus. Love and loving Him is the mark of a true Christian. Without love, all I believe is insufficient.

Fourth summary statement: "**Without love, all that I give is INSignificant.**" You can give the wrong reasons. Look at verse 3: *If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.* You see, some people give out of prestige. They want

to be recognized. Some give out of power needs. They want to control the church or people with their money. Some give out of pressure. I proclaim to you this morning, if you feel pressured to give don't do it because the Bible says we're to give cheerfully. Pressure giving doesn't come from the heart. Some people give out of guilt. Then they become resentful because they gave. God doesn't honor that kind of giving. You can't buy love, you can't buy marriage, you can't buy your kids, and you certainly can't buy your way into heaven. "Without love, all that I give is insignificant."

2 Corinthians 9:6 Sowing Generously ⁶Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

The fifth statement: "**Without love all that I accomplish is INadequate.**" Verse 3 again says, *If surrender my body to the flames, or if I be buried alive for preaching the gospel but didn't love others it would be of no value. We can rack up an impressive list of accomplishments and receive many awards. We can put them on display in our office but if we don't love, it is wasted energy. It is wasted because relationships are more important than accomplishments in God's eyes. Galatians 5:6 summarizes what 1 Corinthians is saying: *The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.* Therefore, let me paraphrase what God says, "I can have the elegance of an orator, the knowledge of a genius, the faith of a miracle worker, the generosity of a rich person, and the dedication of a martyr, but if I don't have love it doesn't count." Life without love equals ZERO!*

How then should we make love our life's ultimate value so that all that I say is effective, all that I know is complete, all that I believe is sufficient and all that I give insignificant, and all that I accomplish is adequate?

Real love Speaks with Actions and in Truth (1 John 3:18)

Notice, beginning verse 4, every word defining LOVE is an action. Patient, kind, ...EVERY ONE of them is an action! The word love is probably the most used and abused word in the spoken English language. We say we love but let that person do something that we don't like and we immediately withdraw that love. We say we love someone simply because we want them to meet our needs. If you meet my needs I'll love you but once you stop meeting my needs, forget it! They talk about love a lot but they never put it in action. It sounds good to say it but it's not real love. Love is not just something you feel or say. It's something you do. Love is a lot more than talk. Love always reveals itself in action.

Real love Serves. (Galatians 5:13)

Real love always shows itself in service. Now, that's the exact opposite of what society says. We live in a self-service society where the general idea is "get it yourself.". But the fact is we're far more interested in being served than in serving. Listen, perhaps to your surprise, God didn't put you on this earth just so everybody could serve you. He didn't put you here so the whole world could cater to your whims and desires. What God did do was to put you on this earth so that you could serve for your benefit, but for the benefits of other people. That's what love is all about. Jesus said that he came to serve, not to be served! He was concerned about serving others.

And as you serve others, you are naturally served. You don't need to come thinking what TIBC has for me? But rather, what's my part in TIBC? And as you become a part to serve others, you

automatically become a part of being served! Let us look at this by a simple illustration – we are a body of believers. And a body has many members, each functioning differently. That is why He's given you talents and abilities and gifts. True leadership, whether it's in family in the community, in the church, in our nation, is always servant leadership. We love God by serving others. In serving others, our real love reflects the true value of our life.

Real love Sustains. (I Corinthians 13:7-8)

Sustains means hangs on. It never quits. It's committed. It's never withdrawn just because the person doesn't do what you think he/she should. Verses 7 and 8 say, *It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*

Love is a commitment. There is no such thing as real love without commitment because love sustains. You can have all kinds of excuses about giving based on commitment or pledges but the bottom line is that most of will make long term commitments for our own selfish purpose and pleasure, such as our car or house, but we won't make commitments for anybody else and certainly not for God! We have not difficulty making commitments that are to our advantage, but not when it comes to fulfilling commitment to God. You see, my commitments reveal what I really love.

Real love Sacrifices. Ephesians 5:2

What is a sacrifice? A sacrifice means to give the best I have for a greater purpose or for another person. You cannot love without sacrifice. In another words, you can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.

This is what Christ did for you. *Ephesians 5:2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.* He sacrificed His life for you. He gave himself out of love. Every time you make a loving sacrifice you've grown to be more like Jesus.

YOU CAN GIVE WITHOUT LOVING, BUT YOU CANNOT LOVE WITHOUT GIVING. We love this church and so we give. Some of you maybe concerned how can we survive with mere 75% of total income? With 25% commitment, May and I have challenged ourselves to give far more towards our **spiritual home** than to our **physical home** for the first time, Prior to this day, our number one outflow cash has been on our mortgage. Not any more. Thank God for this opportunity! I trust that the Lord will bless more abundantly as we obey His vision to build. One of the reasons I'm excited about this stewardship campaign an dour Arise and Shine offering on May 4th is because it's going to be the greatest spiritual test that many of us have ever faced.

Another great benefit of this is that children are getting to see their parents sacrifice for the Lord. This will have a lasting impression. My daughter said 'it will take a lot and a lot and a lot of money to build a church.' Surely. I bet that she knew that she couldn't build the church if she and other children were the only ones providing for the building.

But isn't that the same way we are to God? To God, we are His children, like Lynette, like Steven, like Cara, we cannot provide for it. God will have to! And He will if we love Him with real love that sacrifices.

Real love Shares. Psalms 40:10

Real love shares the good news. You see, the greatest thing you could do for someone, the way to really love someone, is to tell them about Jesus because you're giving them eternal life.

Psalms 40:10 says *I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and salvation. I do not conceal your love and your truth from the great assembly.* If you care, you will share! Some may ask 'why are you building a building?' Why are you asking people to give sacrificially? There is only one answer I can give and that is because love leaves no choice. We don't have any choice if we truly love the Lord and desire to follow His leadership and minister to this community. We must care about the things God cares about and that's people need the Lord. This building will help us reach those people. And that is why He wants us to build. How do we reach out with love?

Remember what I shared with you about what time is for? To live, to love, to learn, to leave a legacy. Without love, I am nothing. Aim in life – happiness, pleasure, love and be loved.

– Illustration I:

"Thank you so much for your most prompt reply. I know how busy you must be being a pastor, an employee, a husband and father, yet you still find time to write and encourage your flock. To me, you are truly living and exhibiting TIBC's tagline that "the love of Christ compels us". Thank you for your prayers and pastoral love. I am most appreciative of this chance to be pastored by you over e-mail. It is wonderful that with Christ as our foundation, we can continue to be spurred on to grow even via the electronic medium.

– Illustration II:

Another lady, a total stranger in another country, a Christian living in a desperately devastating situation. Shared the story of Job, and his suffering isn't any greater than hers.

A Vision of the Great Commission – sharing Christ's love to the end of the world

I have a web link to http://antwpr.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/image/0011/earthlights_dmsp_big.jpg , which shows a Panoramic Photo - The World at Night. It is an absolutely awesome picture of the Earth taken from the Boeing built Space Station last November on a perfect night with no obscuring atmospheric conditions. It is really a sight to behold! The image is a panoramic view of the world from the new space station. It is a night photo with the lights clearly indicating the populated areas. You can scroll East-West and North-South; Note that Canada's population is almost exclusively along the US border. Moving east to Europe, there is a high population concentration along the Mediterranean Coast. It's easy to spot London, Paris, Stockholm and Vienna. Check out the development of Israel compared to the rest of the Arab countries. Note the Nile River and the rest of the "Dark Continent". After the Nile, the lights don't come on again until Johannesburg. Look at the Australian Outback and the Trans-Siberian Rail Route. Moving east, the most striking observation is the difference between North and South Korea. Note the density of Japan. And China! The whole coastlines along the south and east are so bright! Remember, every four people living on earth, one of them is Chinese. That tells you that there is a lot of work to do. They are within reach if you are willing to OUT reach! So, this tell us whom should we love – all of the people in the world!

Every one of them, Jesus died for. And every one of them need the Lord and as long as there is one person who doesn't know Christ We will keep serving, sharing, and sacrificing, and supporting and loving in actions so that people might come to know Him.

In closing, I want to invite you to join me in a love movement in that days ahead. It's called the CHURCH. We need to go out and build bridges of love and tear down walls so that Christ can walk across that bridge to them. May prayer is that we would be a church that has the reputation of really loving people. (Co-incidence – IN and S makes INS (Immigration and Naturalization Services) – in this case, real love is what qualifies your citizenship to heaven, migrating not by naturalization but by faith.)