

Love Unlocked: Loving Different and Difficult People

The Transforming Church

Love Unlocked: Loving Different and Difficult People

Rev Sam Oye

August 16, 2026

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 (TPT)

Preached by Rev. Dr. Sam Oye. Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 (TPT)

Transcript

AUGUST 16, 2026 (1st Service)

YEAR OF EL-EZER

Minister: Rev. Dr. Sam Oye

Text: 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 (TPT)

Topic: LOVE UNLOCKED: LOVING DIFFERENT AND DIFFICULT PEOPLE

"If I were to speak with eloquence in earth's many languages, and in the heavenly tongues of angels, yet I didn't express myself with love, my words would be reduced to the hollow sound of nothing more than a clanging cymbal. And if I were to have the gift of prophecy with a profound understanding of God's hidden secrets, and if I possessed unending supernatural knowledge, and if I had the greatest gift of faith that could move mountains, but have never learned to love, then I am nothing. And if I were to be so generous as to give away everything I owned to feed the poor, and to offer my body to be burned as a martyr, without the pure motive of love, I would gain nothing of value. Love is large and incredibly patient. Love is gentle and consistently kind to all. It refuses to be jealous when blessing comes to someone else. Love does not brag about one's achievements nor inflate its own importance. Love does not traffic in shame and disrespect, nor selfishly seek its own honor. Love is not easily irritated or quick to take offense. Love joyfully celebrates honesty and finds no delight in what is wrong."

Gift reveals what God can do through you; Love reveals what God has done in you. Verse two of the passage was highlighted directly: a person may possess prophetic insight, deep understanding of God's hidden secrets, unending supernatural knowledge, and even faith strong enough to move mountains, but without love, that person amounts to nothing.

Spiritual gifts, spiritual knowledge, and spiritual power, without the existence of love, is an evidence of spiritual immaturity. A believer can be a powerful intercessor and still be extremely difficult to live with. A person can prophesy with precision yet communicate terribly with the people closest to them, because a gift is something God can work through anyone, while love reflects what God has actually done inside a person.

This shows up in ordinary life in painful ways: individuals who are exceptionally generous toward the work of God but withhold forgiveness from the people who have wronged them; people gifted at discerning spiritual times and seasons but unable to discern their own flaws; men and women who can spend hours in prayer yet give their spouse only minutes of real conversation; believers who can boldly cast out demons in public but cannot control their own tongue in private, especially in anger; and those who can teach deep doctrine while rarely offering a kind word to the people nearest to them. High-level anointing and authority, without love, is nothing more than religious noise.

Love Is Tested by How We Respond

A personal example was shared from a recent, exhausting stretch of ministry travel: through four demanding days, it was not a theological insight but a spouse's simple, consistent check-ins that stood out as the clearest expression of love. That kind of steady kindness should never be taken for granted, because neglect can quietly damage even the strongest relationship, the way an uncared-for plant eventually withers.

Love, then, can be described in terms of deliberate choices rather than feelings. Love is choosing patience over reaction; pausing before firing back a message, before giving someone the cold shoulder, before declaring a relationship over in a moment of tension. Love is showing kindness without keeping scores, remaining consistent even when it is not returned. Love refuses envy and comparison, recognising that another person's success does not come at anyone else's expense. Love does not insist on always being right, since winning an argument while losing a relationship is no real victory. And love protects and stays, even when pressure or conflict makes it look wise to walk away.

Love Refuses Comparison

A chance encounter with another minister at the airport revealed they had both recently preached in the same city, a reminder that no one's assignment is diminished by someone else's, because there is always room, and there are always people still waiting to be reached by a specific voice.

A related account described two ministers comparing the size of their audiences; one having spoken to several thousand people, the other to a smaller gathering of a few hundred. The point was made plainly: numbers alone do not measure spiritual impact. A room of a few hundred well-placed, influential people can carry as much kingdom weight as a stadium of thousands, because what matters is not how many were present but what happens in the lives reached. Comparison, whether in ministry or in marriage, breeds resentment where there should be celebration.

The same trip brought an example of quiet, unasked-for kindness: strangers who had been blessed by the ministry over the years went out of their way to help without seeking recognition. Faithful consistent impact even when it goes unseen, outlasts any competition for attention.

Understanding Difficult People: The Example of Cain

Turning to a biblical case study, this brings us to Genesis 4:1-16, the account of Cain and Abel. When God accepted Abel's offering but not Cain's, Cain's anger was directed not at God, who alone had the right to accept or reject an offering, but at his own brother, whose only fault was that his offering had been accepted. God gave Cain the opportunity to make things right, but instead of correcting his own offering, Cain remained fixated on his brother's acceptance, and that unresolved resentment ultimately led him to kill Abel.

People who carry this same pattern are described as "resentful competitors". Individuals whose sense of identity is rooted in comparison rather than in their own unique calling. Such people are highly competitive, easily threatened by someone else's success, and constantly keeping scores, even within marriage. A spouse's promotion, a new qualification, or a simple compliment directed at someone else can trigger jealousy rather than celebration. They struggle to celebrate the people closest to them, and their saddest moments are often other people's most joyful ones.

The root of this resentment is usually a deep, unhealed wound of rejection. Cain was not rejected by God, only his offering was. Yet, he took it as personal rejection. In the

same way, many difficult people are not truly reacting to who someone else is; they are reacting out of an old wound that predates the relationship entirely. Most people around a wounded person are not the cause of that wound, and just as often, they will not be its cure.

This is illustrated through the image of an injured animal: a dog caught in a trap will often bite the very hand trying to free it, not because it fails to recognise its owner, but because pain distorts its ability to tell a rescuer from a threat. Wounded people can behave the same way. The words spoken out of that pain are often the most damaging thing about them, even when the person speaking does not consciously see the other person as an enemy. Promotion, recognition, correction, and even sincere compliments can trigger defensiveness in a wounded person, because their sense of worth is tied entirely to being accepted, and any perceived slight reopens the wound.

How to Love Difficult People

Scripture offers no permission to end a relationship simply because someone is difficult to love. Instead, practical counsel is offered for those living daily with someone who struggles this way: avoid comparative statements altogether; do not pursue personal achievements in direct competition with theirs; support and celebrate what they are doing first, before pursuing your own; refuse rivalry, encourage gratitude, and consistently affirm their strengths and uniqueness without feeding a sense of entitlement. In practice, this means becoming their steady encourager, not because they have earned it, but because love is a decision rather than a reaction to how one has been treated.

Difficult people are not far away. They are neighbours, colleagues, family members, and spouses. The calling of the believer remains to love them, and the key to doing so is understanding what drives their behaviour, without assuming personal responsibility for wounds one did not cause.