

Love Unlocked

The Transforming Church

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

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

Transcript

AUGUST 2ND, 2026 (1st Service)

YEAR OF EL-EZER

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Topic: LOVE UNLOCKED

"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. 2 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. 3 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. 4 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. 5 Love does not traffic in shame and disrespect, nor selfishly seek its own honor. Love is not easily irritated or quick to take offense. 6 Love joyfully celebrates honesty and finds no delight in what is wrong. 7 Love is a safe place of shelter, for it never stops believing the best for others. Love never takes failure as defeat, for it never gives up. 8 Love never stops loving. It extends beyond the gift of prophecy, which eventually fades away. It is more enduring than tongues, which will one day fall silent. Love remains long after words of knowledge are forgotten."

The love of God is one of the greatest realities a believer can experience. Consider Jacob and Esau; Scripture says, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated" (Romans 9:13). Yet when you examine their lives, no major offence stands out in Esau's life. Jacob, on the other hand, obtained his brother's birthright through cunning and deceived his father to secure the blessing. Yet it was through Jacob that God chose to establish a nation.

That is the power of God's love. When His love rests upon a person, His favour accomplishes what human merit never could. It reaches beyond weaknesses, failures, and shortcomings, transforming lives in ways ability and effort alone cannot.

Those who know they are loved do not constantly need to make demands; they simply enjoy the relationship. Love covers what would ordinarily provoke a reaction. It does not

ignore wrong; rather, it chooses not to respond according to the wrong. Love sees weakness yet responds with grace. Love also moves beyond obligation. It inspires people to do what they were never asked to do because they genuinely desire the good of the one they love.

That is how God relates to His children. He does not merely declare His love; He continually demonstrates it, going beyond expectation to reveal its depth. The love of God is like an inexhaustible ocean. Nothing can diminish it, exhaust it, or overwhelm it. It is greater than every failure, stronger than every weakness, and deeper than every need. God's desire is not merely to tell you that He loves you, but to make His love unmistakably evident in your life.

Understanding True Love

In our anchor Scripture, 1 Corinthians 13:1-8, the Apostle Paul gives us the biblical blueprint of genuine love, revealing not only what love does but what love truly is. This passage makes one truth unmistakably clear: love is not measured by gifts, knowledge, faith, position, or sacrifice. A person may possess extraordinary gifts, accomplish remarkable things, and still miss the very essence of the Christian life. Without love, every achievement loses its true value. Even generosity and sacrifice are not, by themselves, proof of love. God looks beyond outward actions to the motive behind them. The question is not merely what was done, but whether it was done out of love. The passage also reveals the true measure of the Christian life. Spiritual maturity is not defined by titles, influence, accomplishments, or even spiritual gifts, but by the character of love. Genuine love does not delight in wrongdoing. It cannot celebrate sin, compromise, corruption, or anything that opposes God's standard. Whether in relationships, leadership, business, or public life, love always chooses righteousness over personal gain. Love is also a place of safety. Those who experience genuine love should feel secure, accepted, and protected. It believes the best, refuses to give up, and remains steadfast even in difficult seasons.

The passage concludes with one of its most profound declarations: "Love never stops loving." If love never stops loving, then why do people stop loving?

The problem is not that believers lack love. The love of God has already been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Every child of God carries His nature, and God is love. The issue is not the absence of love, but whether that love is allowed to flow. Imagine a city without water while a dam stands full. Or an overhead tank filled to capacity while every tap in the house runs dry. The problem is not the supply but the obstruction. The water is there; the flow has been shut off.

The same is true of love. It is not the absence of love that is destroying marriages, families, relationships, and churches. Christ, the very embodiment of love, lives in every believer. If God is love and He dwells within us, then every believer carries an inexhaustible fountain of love. The question, therefore, is not whether love exists within us, but whether we allow it to flow. Too often, love becomes locked behind disappointment, hurt, offence, and unmet expectations. That is why a home once filled with warmth can suddenly become cold. Conversations that once flowed freely are reduced to one-word answers. The love has not disappeared; it has simply been locked away. Offence has shut the valve.

Love Unlocked

The love God has deposited within every believer was never meant to remain hidden. It must flow freely, not only toward those who are easy to love, but also toward those who

are different and difficult. Loving those who think like us comes naturally and easily.

However, the true test of Christian love is our willingness to love those who think differently, behave differently, and sometimes make loving them difficult.

The Nature of Genuine Love

One of the greatest reasons many people struggle to love is that they do not truly understand what love is. It has been reduced to emotion, attraction, or pleasant feelings, but Scripture presents something far deeper. Genuine love is not merely something we feel; it is something we choose, cultivate, and consistently demonstrate. Love always chooses goodness over selfishness. It extends grace where it is undeserved and responds with kindness where others expect revenge. Instead of returning evil for evil, love overcomes evil with good because goodness accomplishes what retaliation never can.

Love also makes another person's well-being your responsibility. It moves beyond words into practical care. Love is not measured by eloquent expressions, but by tangible demonstrations. God did not merely tell the world He loved it; He proved it. In the same way, our actions give credibility to our profession of love.

This truth is especially important in marriage. Your spouse's well-being must become your concern. Rather than asking, "What am I getting from this marriage?" the greater question is, "What is my responsibility?" Strong marriages are built by people who are more committed to their duties than to their feelings. As a husband, your responsibility is to provide love, security, and protection regardless of changing circumstances. As a wife, God created you to be a suitable helper. The help your husband needed yesterday may not be the help he needs today. Genuine love grows with people, continually asking, "How can I serve this person better in this season?"

The same principle extends beyond marriage. Everyone who comes into your life should become better because of your influence. Your presence should strengthen faith, lift burdens, restore hope, and draw people closer to God. Genuine love leaves people better than it found them.

Love always seek another person's highest good above personal comfort. It gives where selfishness takes, heals where hatred wounds, builds where anger destroys, and restores where offence divides. In essence, genuine love is not merely a feeling, it is a deliberate way of life.

The Characteristics of Genuine Love

1. Love is a decision. Genuine love is a choice you make before you feel like loving. Feelings may introduce love, but they were never designed to sustain it. Lasting love is built on conviction, not emotion. The world has confused love with passion and uncontrolled feelings. That is why many destructive acts are committed in the name of love. Genuine love is different. It is governed by principle, not impulse. It chooses what is right even when emotions pull in the opposite direction.
2. Love is discipline. It is practiced daily through patience, kindness, grace, and selflessness. Genuine love does not allow another person's behaviour to determine its own. It responds from character, not circumstance.
3. Love is dedication. It remains steadfast through changing seasons. Whether in abundance or adversity, celebration or hardship, genuine love refuses to withdraw. Its commitment is not seasonal but enduring.
4. Love is a demonstration. Love cannot remain hidden. If it cannot be seen, experienced,

or felt, it has not yet been fully expressed. God did not merely declare His love for the world; He showed it by giving us His only son, Jesus, to die for the sins of mankind. In the same way, genuine love is revealed through consistent acts of care, sacrifice, and commitment.

Loving Difficult People

Showing love to people who are easy to love requires little effort. The true test of Christian love comes when we encounter people who are different and difficult. It is easy to love those who think like us, agree with us, and treat us well. But genuine love reaches beyond similarity and convenience. It embraces people of different personalities, backgrounds, temperaments, opinions, values, and experiences, even when their behaviour makes loving them a challenge. It is in loving such people that the reality of Christ's love is most clearly revealed.

To love difficult people well, we must first understand them. While there are many kinds of difficult people, four characteristics are especially common:

Difficult to understand: Their personality, behaviour, and perspective often leave you wondering why they think or respond the way they do.

Difficult to communicate with: Even sincere conversations can quickly become arguments, and the more you try to explain yourself, the greater the misunderstanding.

Difficult to help: They resist counsel, reject assistance, and sometimes frustrate genuine efforts.

Difficult to satisfy: No matter how much is done, they often focus on what remains undone.

One important lesson in life is that people do not always reveal how difficult they are until they come into close relationship with you. What do you do then? You do not walk away; you walk in wisdom. Living with difficult people requires patience, forbearance, and wisdom. More importantly, God often uses difficult relationships to develop the fruit of the Spirit in us. Longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, patience, and kindness are rarely formed in comfortable relationships. Rather than seeing difficult people only as problems, learn to see them as opportunities for growth and spiritual maturity.

Difficult people will always be part of life. They are found in the office, in the family, in the neighbourhood, and even in the church. Leaving is not the answer, because wherever you go, you will still encounter people who challenge you. The goal is not to escape difficult people, but to learn how to flourish without losing your love. After all, love responds differently. It chooses gratitude over criticism, appreciation over fault-finding, and refuses to magnify what is lacking while ignoring what has been given. Never underestimate the people you find difficult. Some of them are destiny links. They may be your keys, your gates, your lifters, or your providers. They may be difficult, but they are still valuable. Learn to relate with them wisely, and let nothing stop the love of God from flowing through you.