



40 Days of Love Devotional

Phase 1 (Day 1 to 10, 1st – 10th June)

FIRST LOVE (Personal Revival)

Day 1 What is Love? (1st June)

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. (1 Cor 13:4-7 NLT)

The Word of God unfolds an unselfish love that cares more for others than we care for ourselves. However, popular culture uses the word 'love' to mean many different things. Take for instance the following examples:

A young girl with chocolate sweets dripping down her chin declares, "I love chocolate."

A grown man jumps up from his courtside seat and shouts, "I love this team!"

A high school student who tries to manipulate his girlfriend by saying, "I really love you and if you love me back, you will do this for me."

Expressions like these should make us wonder what exactly we are talking about when we use the word 'love'. Is all 'love' the same, or are there variations that we should be aware of?

The ancient Greeks came up with multiple words to express different types of love. This is not an exhaustive list, but four words that they used to define love were *eros*, *storge*, *phileo*, and *agape*. *Eros* is where we get the word erotic. It refers to a passionate physical attraction in which our motives are often about what we can get out of the relationship. *Storge* is familial love, the affectionate bond that develops naturally between parents and children as well as brothers and sisters. *Phileo* is the type of emotional love you have for a brother or sister. The Greek word **agape** refers to an unconditional love that gives without expecting anything in return, a love that moves us to action no matter what the cost may be to ourselves. It is this love that motivated Jesus to go to the cross so that sinful humanity could be saved. *This type of love is a choice.* Aren't you glad that God's love for you is of the



agape variety? His love for you is patient and kind. He is not frustrated or irritated. He bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. His love for you is beyond what your human mind can even comprehend. Yet it is as real and consistent as the rising and setting of the sun. Only as we come to know the depth of the love that God has for us will we be able to give that same type of love to others.

Prayer:

Father, I ask that you show me your love. I admit that my understanding of love falls far short of what you intended. As I take the next forty days to experience your love, I ask that your Holy Spirit to fill me with the reality of unconditional love. I thank you for this in advance right now. (Continue to pray as God's Spirit leads you.)

Day 2 The Source of All Real Love (2nd June)

Anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1 John 4:8)

God is love. In other words, love is a person. We often try to pursue love in many places and people, but in fact, we need only one pursuit—the pursuit of knowing and being known by God.

God alone can truly satisfy the deepest yearning of every human soul for intimacy—the relational intimacy that Adam and Eve had with God before the fall. Amazingly enough, through the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the way has now been paved for us for this to become a daily reality. There is no hindrance or lack of desire on God's end of this relationship. His love is inexhaustible, like a well without a bottom, an ocean without end, a river that never runs dry. Simply go to the source and drink deeply of Him today.

God is love. This is the foundation of knowing God and should frame every thought and emotion that we have toward Him and others. Some people have difficulties reconciling the God of love with the sufferings around us. We often hear people say, "How could a loving God allow (this to happen)?" Although we cannot fully understand many things on this side of heaven, the cross is the only proof we need of the unparalleled love of God.

God is love. If we claim to know and experience His love, then the proof will be in the love we express towards Him and others. His is a love that we cannot selfishly claim and contain. Many people are looking for evidence that God exists. Apologists like the belated Ravi Zacharias try to reach people's minds with evidential arguments and persuasions. There's



however another universal way that almost never fail to unlock people’s hearts—the message of love expressed through practical acts and attitudes.

Prayer:

Lord, I ask for forgiveness for the times I have sought to find love and satisfaction apart from you. Today, I choose to turn to you as my only source of love and intimacy. I choose to believe that as I seek you first, every other need that I have will be satisfied.

I also pray that your love would flow through me like a rushing river. I want people to recognise your love in me and receive a touch of your love through me. Let my words and actions be evidence of our relationship—not just my knowing you but my loving you.

Day 3 Stay Connected to the Source (3rd June)

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. “Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:4-5 NLT)

The vine is the source of life. The branch has no root system of its own – all its nutrients come by way of the vine. In the same way, He is our lifeline. Like a baby in the womb that receives its nutrients through the umbilical cord, and like a deep-sea diver whose survival depends on the oxygen line for life, our spiritual survival is dependent on our connection with God. Without Him, we cannot survive, let alone thrive.

Abiding in Christ means to make sure we are connected to Christ. How many of us treat our connection to God as a casual thing? If it requires self-sacrifice to take time in the Word of God, prayer and worship to remain connected to Him, how many of us hit the snooze button, thinking nothing of it? May God restore to us a sense of urgency and desperation to seek His face and His Word.

To “remain” or to “abide” is a continual action of being held by, attached to or kept in place near your source and means of survival. Abiding as branches in the vine means we allow Him to hold us and surround us so that we can thrive even in seasons of pestilence and pruning that make us even more fruitful. It is in abiding and being connected to the source that we can express real love even in the most difficult of circumstances.



Prayer:

Lord, I ask for your forgiveness for times when I have neglected our connection. I am sorry for counting other things as more important than our relationship. I thank you for pouring your love, the life-giving sap, into my heart through the vine. Hold me close as you examine me and prune me with discipline and discipleship that I might bear more fruit for your glory.

Day 4 The Great Exchange (4th June)

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Gal 2:20 NKJV)

Paul makes an amazing statement here. He says that his old, corrupt, sinful nature, which was the root of his sin, has been crucified together with Christ; to the point that he proclaimed, it is no longer he who lives but Christ who lives through him. Has this been your experience of the Christian life? Have you truly learned to count your sinful, selfish nature as dead, and in turn live exclusively by the power of the Holy Spirit?

Since this is clearly God's desire for every one of His children, we should meditate on and declare the truth that Paul is presenting here until it becomes a daily reality. Paul says to 'put off our old nature and put on our new nature in Christ' and to be 'clothed in Christ', we do this by speaking out aloud, declaring: "I put off my old sinful nature and I put on my new nature which is in Christ Jesus!" At first, it may seem strange speaking this out loud, but in time, you will see that this has great effect because life and death is in the power of the tongue. (We strongly encourage you to pray out loud the ARMOUR prayer located at iccbrisbane.org/prayerinfo)

Jesus made us a glorious offer! Our sinful, selfish, broken, beaten, fallen and finite lives that can bear no lasting fruit for God's kingdom can be exchanged for the perfect, infinite, overcoming, and fruit-filled life of God Himself. In Christian theology, this is often called 'The Great Exchange.'

Indeed, it is a great exchange. We give Jesus all of our life. He gives us all of His life. Not just as a someday, far-away intellectual concept, but as a living, breathing reality right here and now! All we need to do is surrender our lives to Him. We often think of surrender as a loss. This sentiment is based on our deception—either in believing that the life we have apart from Christ is somehow worth holding on to, or that the life Christ is offering us is deficient in some way and would leave us unsatisfied. In fact, nothing could be farther from the truth. When we surrender our fleshly and earthly life, we gain something more valuable and



powerful than we could ever have imagined. We receive a life of victory, lived by faith and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer:

Father, I ask for your forgiveness for the many times that I have held on to my life and not trusting you to live your life through me. Today, I fully exchange my self-led life for your glorious eternal life. Thank you for making your eternal life available to me! Holy Spirit, please strengthen me today and help me make the most of every opportunity to be a witness for you.

Day 5 To Love God is to Obey God (5th June)

“I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. ¹⁰ When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love” (Jn 15:9-10 NLT)

Jesus said to love Him is to obey Him. Many definitions of love in modern society have to do with emotion and feeling. For example, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, love is ‘strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties or affection based on admiration, benevolence or common interests.

Very few of us associate loving God as obedience and submission to Him. We can only understand this if we understand the biblical meaning of the word “love”. The Greek word “Agapeo” means to “actively do what the Lord prefers, with Him (by His power and direction)”. Therefore, to love God is to prefer Him above yourself. Having this understanding of love is critical and has major implications.

When we say, “I love God”, we are not merely saying that we have a fond emotional affection for God. We are declaring that in all circumstances, by the empowerment given to us by His Holy Spirit, we will choose His will above our own.

Jesus demonstrated this preference of His Father’s will at the Garden of Gethsemane when he chose the Father’s will above His own. “Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.” (Lk 22:42)

Therefore, to love God is to put our lives in complete submission and obedience to Him. You can obey without love (obeying begrudgingly to avoid punishment or something mandatory out of respect for authority), but you can’t live without obedience. As Spurgeon says, “love

is a practical thing; love without obedience is mere pretence. True love shows itself by seeking to please the one who is loved”. It also means that obedience is not a list; it is a pathway, like a treasure map. It is a way of life. A pathway of choosing God daily in every facet of our lives. It is a delightful journey when we are doing for and with the One we love and who loves us so unconditionally.

Similarly, if we say to another person, “I love you”, we need to be prepared to ‘prefer’ that person above ourselves. Are we prepared to demonstrate love in a way that may be inconvenient to us or in a way that costs us our time, talents and treasures?

Prayer:

Lord, today I choose to express my love for you by preferring your will and your ways above my own. Help me to understand what it means to truly love you with the whole of my life. I want to obey you because I LOVE you deeply.

Day 6 Love Awaken Faith (6th June)

“We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.” (1 Jn 4:16)

“Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so...”. These words in the famous children’s song contain such profound truth.

Trust is a big word—it means to feel safe, to be bold, confident and secure. We all trust something or someone, but sometimes the object of our trust betrays us whether that be the government, a person, a group of people or a company (i.e. Apple). Here it says, we put our trust in His love.

When we come to know and believe God loves us, our trust in Him grows. He is not only the powerful God—the creator of the universe, the all-knowing, all-seeing, all-powerful and ever-present God, but He is love and most of all, He loves us. Knowing that our Father God loves us and has our best interest at heart, that He will never leave us or forsake us, that He intends all things (that He permits in our lives) to work together for our good, should evoke such faith and confidence in us.

Nick Vujicic, founding president and CEO of the non-profit organisation *Life Without Limbs*, was born without arms and legs. In one of his interviews, he recounts how he spent eight years asking God, “Why? Why was I born this way? I don’t understand how You can say You

love me when You allow me to stay in this pain?” One day, the Lord spoke to him from John 9:13, when Jesus and his disciples met a man blind from birth, “his disciples asked him: ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.’”. Nick described how he felt after reading those words: “I had goose bumps all over...and I had faith because I understood something. You see, all I wanted to know was that God knew what He was doing with me”. He finally reconciled the fact that God loves him in spite of his disabilities and that God has a purpose for his life.

Prayer:

Father God, I ask that you bring me to a place of faith in which I know that you love me with your whole heart. May the love you have for me awaken a deep faith in my heart that cannot be shaken no matter what is going on around me.

Day 7 We Can Trust God’s Love Wholeheartedly (7th June)

Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take” (Prov 3:5-6).

The Bible says that when we trust the Lord wholeheartedly, when we are ready to discard our limited human understanding in regards to the people and circumstances that surround us, and when we entrust ourselves completely into the hands of God, He will make our paths straight.

The path mentioned here is the course of our lives. The word was used to describe the road taken by a traveller—the road over which caravans and troops travelled. There is a highway mapped out for our lives. The Hebrew word for “straight” is “*yashar*” and refers to making our path smooth, right, directed, pleasing and agreeable. Who would not want a smooth, agreeable course of life directed by the all-powerful, all-knowing and loving God?

Trusting God should be easy. However, many of us know our trust can be shaken and tested when we are going through a tough time—in the midst of illness, financial crisis, crumbling relationship or struggling with a prodigal child. The answer is in the rest of this verse, where it says, “don’t lean on your own understanding”. To lean is to rest upon something for partial support. It means that you use your intellect and planning, but you do not lean on them for your total support; instead, you lean on the Lord.



One of the best definitions of faith and trust comes from Philip Yancey who said, “Faith means believing in advance what will only make sense in reverse.” We want to know why things happen in a certain way and why things couldn’t have happened some other way. Sometimes, we will only have the answers years later. For example, Joseph in the Bible— he came to understand that the pain and the problems he went through was a pathway to his destiny. Some questions may never be answered on this side of heaven. Ps Danny Guglielmucci, who has gone through the pain and grief of losing his son and being diagnosed with blood cancer, said, “when I don’t have clarity, I trust in God’s sovereignty.”

Prayer:

Lord, you are the only one that I can trust at all times. Help me to never doubt your love for me – you always have my best interests at heart. I know you will guide my steps and make my paths straight. I love you and I trust you.

Day 8 Called to Forgive (8th June)

“Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us...If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matt 6, 12, 14-15)

Pain hurts. It is especially hurtful when the pain is caused by people closest to us; or when you feel that those you look up to, or even those who are leaders in the church, have failed you; or when tragedies hit, and you have no one to turn to.

There is a simple and yet profound prescription in the Word of God. It is completely counterintuitive to our natural mind, yet it is the only solution that works. That is “forgiveness”. To forgive is not to excuse or minimise the wrong committed. To forgive is to let go, to cancel the debt, and to entrust justice entirely to the judge of all the earth.

Forgiveness is a choice. Many people nurse, curse and rehearse the hurts and the offense they suffer rather than releasing them. Yet holding onto unforgiveness and offences can be toxic, it is often likened to drinking poison and expecting the person who offended us to die.

Forgiveness is a sacrifice. Christian Clinical Psychologist, Dr Robi Sonderegger, says that many people find it hard to forgive because they often feel they have been dealt injustice, and they want to seek revenge and justice. He suggests treating forgiveness as a sacrifice and when we are prepared to sacrifice our rights to seek revenge, we will experience His peace.

Forgiveness is not easy, but it is possible. It is possible when we remember how God forgave us. He did not deal with us as we deserve. He removed our sins from us, as far as the east is



from the west, and remembered them no more. If God can forgive me, then who am I to hold a grudge, because the measure we use on others, will be the measure used to judge us.

It is possible – through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit who gave Stephen the grace to forgive his murderers while stones were crushing his body, lives inside us too. It is not about being strong but about being humble enough to receive the grace of God.

Prayer:

Father, I ask for your forgiveness for the ways that I have wrongfully responded to those who have sinned against me. Today, I choose as an act of my will to forgive _____ (name of your offender) for the way he/she has sinned against me: _____ (be as specific as you can here). By the power of the Holy Spirit, I cancel _____ (offender's name) debt once and for all, and I choose to ask you to bless _____ (offender's name) by moulding him/her into your image. By your grace, I choose to no longer speak about the offence against me but instead to speak blessings over _____ (offender's name). I trust you to protect and defend me. I believe you to heal my heart of this offence now so that I may love well.

Day 9 Love Prefers Others Above Ourselves (9th June)

“Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had” (Phil. 2:3-5)

These verses in Philippians challenge us to consider others as better than ourselves or prefer others above ourselves.

There are two attitudes we need to prefer others above ourselves. First, we need to have humility. In another translation, it says, “do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others more significant than yourselves”. It has been said, humility is not thinking less of ourselves, but thinking of ourselves less.

Secondly, we need to care about the interests of others. We naturally prefer ourselves above others. We can become so pre-occupied with our own concerns that we don't even take the time to be aware of the needs of others. Think of the last time you set aside your



plans or preferences to do what someone else wanted to do, or even to do something the way they wanted it done.

There is a story of a man who visited heaven and hell. First, he was taken to hell. He was amazed to find people seated around a banquet table piled high with all sort of delicious food. Yet everyone looked miserable and skinny as they each had a three-foot long chopstick and were unable to put the food into their mouths. Then he was taken to heaven, again everyone there was also seated around a banquet table, yet everyone was happy and well-nourished. Similarly, each person had a three-foot long chopstick but instead of trying to feed themselves, they used the chopsticks to feed one another. This parable is a good reminder that when we look after each other's needs, our needs will also be met.

Think of some ways to put others before yourself this week – it could be as simple as allowing someone to go ahead of you at the checkout counters at the supermarket, or paying for someone's coffee or a meal, or something that requires greater commitment e.g. offering consistent help to a struggling household and community.

Prayer:

Father, I recognise that preferring others above myself does not come naturally to me. I ask you to help me to humble myself, to be conscious of others' needs, to be selfless and to proactively consider how I can meet others' needs.

Day 10 Real Love (10th June)

Jesus looked at them intently and said, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible." Matt. 19:26

A man looked out of the window one morning and decided that he was going to fly. He had seen the birds do it. Why not him? Having mustered up his courage, he walked to a nearby hill and climbed to the top. Looking out over the surrounding countryside, he proceeded to run with all his might and then jump as high and as far as he could while simultaneously flapping his arms. His flight lasted all of two seconds. What lasted longer was the extended tumble down half the hill, complete with bruises and scrapes up his back and down both arms.



Have you ever attempted with the best of your abilities to unconditionally love those around you? How did it go for you? There have been many times when we try and commit to really love those around us by mustering all our strength and resolve, only to fail by the middle of the morning.

God's kind of love is not humanly possible. How many of us, if we honestly examine our thoughts, speech and actions, are loving our spouses and family members the way God intends us to? How about our roommates, employers, classmates, or neighbours? Are you living a lifestyle of consistent, persistent self-sacrificial love that turns the other cheek, goes the extra mile, and never asks for anything in return?

We can know that God desires us to live in a certain way. We can give it lip service and even dabble in it, but when we purposefully seek to live out our lives as the Word of God instructs us to, that is when we realise that God's ways are not our ways. The truth is, He is not expecting us to muster up the necessary love to change the world. He is really calling us to come to Him so that His Spirit can live out what we never could.

Let us discard the fake for His reality. Let us be real and acknowledge where we really are in this whole loving-like-God thing. The sooner we humble ourselves and confess how woefully lacking in God-like love we are, the sooner God will show us His path of grace that can lead us to embrace His unfathomable love for us. Then from that place of His embrace, we can trust God to love the world through us.

Prayer:

Father, I thank you that you are not expecting me to love others in my own strength. I acknowledge that your type of love is humanly impossible. Teach me how to trust you to love others through me.