

West Valley Church  
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## Live Love!

The kids have been working on their songs since the week after Easter, which means they've also been learning since then about How to Live Love, how to love others and prove it by what we do and say. The kids were asked earlier, what are some ways you can show love? When Mom gives mac and cheese. I know I've shown love through food too. And kids if you didn't know, today we are having a BBQ right after service for you and your parents. We have the inflatable obstacle course in the gym and want to celebrate the kids on their musical and the end of the school year, plus give parents a chance to connect. It doesn't take much for us to think about all the ways we love others, and all the ways we have been shown love. We know we are supposed to love others because Jesus Himself told us to.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." John 13:34

Jesus loves me, so I should love others. Ways to show love is easy when we are thinking about the people in our lives easy to love. How can you love the person you don't agree with? Love the annoying person in your life? Or the person who hurts your feelings? Love the person you just don't like? We need God's help to Live Love. Because it's bigger than just how we treat those we care most about. That's what we will get into today as we build off the kid's message to us to live love.

### PRAY

The book of James is written by James the brother of Jesus and is filled with what to do. How to live a life following Jesus. How to live a life of love. So much focus is on how to live, that Martin Luther thought the book of James was too focused on works, and not enough on faith and grace like the letters from Paul were. Some people think Paul and James in their writings contradict each other but actually they complement each other very nicely. The works that James talks about come out of our faith and God's grace in our lives that Paul tended to focus on. So, if you've heard about God's love, but are wondering how to live love, the book of James is a great place to find some answers. A word of caution: you will be challenged if you open the book of James. If you are honest with yourself, you'll be challenged. One of them right away in the first chapter:

"Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."  
James 1:22

How many times do we hear something said but don't do what we were supposed to? Kids? Guess what, you aren't the only ones. We adults do it to. Kid's, you can show your parents you love them by listening to them. Parents, you show your children (and spouses) you love them by stopping and listening to them when they want to tell you something. Know how we can show God we love Him? By listening to Him and doing what he says. In this

verse James is probably paraphrasing Jesus' teachings recorded in Matthew chapters 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount.

If you've heard Pastor Mike mention the word "therefore", you know that anytime you read a "therefore" you need to read what's before it to see what the therefore is there for. Before and after a "therefore" are connected. In this case, Matthew 7:24 begins with "therefore" because it comes at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. It's part of Jesus' sermon conclusion and challenge to those listening. Like Jesus is saying, you just heard my sermon, now go do something about it. Live, what I've just taught you.

So let's read the conclusion to his sermon:

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." Matthew 7:24-27

Building on sand is not smart; neither is hearing Jesus words' and not listening to them. Building a house with a good foundation on rock, or concrete, is wise and so is listening to Jesus and doing what he says. If you don't understand the metaphor of building a house on sand and rock, that is ok, the main thing is putting Jesus' words into practice is wise, and not doing it is foolish. In order to understand better how to Live Love, let's back up some more into the Sermon on the Mount so we can see what else Jesus said about loving others.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Matthew 5:43-48 (NASB)

Live Love doesn't just apply to those we like or have lots in common with. But also loving our enemies and praying for them. You might not have enemies, I do. Everyone knows Batman has enemies. I'm not saying I'm Batman. Seen him and me together? If I have enemies. They aren't good ones. If someone is trying to harm me or kill me, I don't know about it. We need to look closer at what Jesus says about loving enemies if we are going to really live love. If we love God, love our friends and family, and love our enemies like Jesus says we should, then we should also be able to love everyone else in between.

If you are unsure how to love your enemies, or anyone else, begin by praying for them. If you know what it's like to be prayed for, then you know what it's like to be shown love. If you haven't been prayed for before, let me encourage you to use the connect card to ask for prayer. It's not too late to turn one in; you can give it to someone at "starting point" after service. Our pastors and prayer team will pray for you and whatever details you write down. Praying for you is one way our church shows you that you are loved...by God and by

your church. When it comes to loving our enemies, or others in our lives that are hard to love, prayer can connect us with them.

It can be hard to pray for someone you don't like, which makes prayer for someone all the more, a loving thing to do. In part, because it is difficult to dislike someone when we commit to genuinely praying for them as a child of God. Which is different than praying for an annoying relative to stop being annoying. That is a selfish prayer. Instead, we pray for God to bless them, and help us to love them the way God loves them as one of His children.

In verse 48, there's that "therefore" again. And a phrase that causes a lot of stress to those following Jesus and those who decide they don't want to follow Jesus. "Be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect." Some see or hear that and think there is no way, so why even try. How can I be perfect when I can't go an hour without sticking my foot in my mouth? Especially when the pastor just read a verse from James about listening to God's Word and doing it. But Jesus isn't saying be perfect like Himself, the one who is free of sin and making mistakes.

The word for perfect in the original language is also translated as "mature" or "complete". Which can still be difficult for us, to be mature like God, or complete like Him. But remember, verse 48 begins with a "therefore", so we know that verse 48 is connected to the ones right before it, the 5 verses right before it actually.

Verse 48 reads as a summary of Matthew 5:43-47. It seems that Jesus' definition of perfection is completely wrapped up in love, and we could look at this verse as a command to love as God loves: completely and fully. Being perfect in this sense, is when we with God's grace and His help, learn to forgive others the way God forgives us, and love others the way God loves us.

For God so loved "the world", and that includes all of you, but it also includes all your enemies, all the people you don't like. Loving our enemies, or others difficult to love does not mean they get whatever they want, or we do for them whatever they ask. Even the ones who are easy to love don't always get what they want. For example: Kids, any of you get to eat candy for breakfast? Your family loves you, but you don't always get whatever you want whenever you want it. Right parents?

Rebuking, setting boundaries, and even enforcing consequences can all be acts of love, done in love. We love our children, but we still set limits on their behavior, teach them right from wrong, disapprove when they hurt others, and teach them good manners, thoughtfulness, consideration and to treat others nicely. We take the time to rebuke and teach them precisely because we DO love them.

If you are in an abusive situation, and you want to love them, you can do the same thing. We can expect proper behavior from them, disapprove of causing pain for others, have boundaries, and refuse to be subjected to abuse or evil, and still love them. The reason we try so hard to work things out is because we love them and don't want to give up. But loving someone does not mean staying in a toxic situation. Sometimes you love someone but you still have to walk away. Loving our enemies doesn't have to mean being around them. You can love someone from a distance if that's what it takes to be safe and healthy.

God calls us to love others and to do it like He does, perfectly, completely. With how we live and treat others. Live Love means loving everyone, through our words, and actions. Which also includes social media. So, before you hit send, submit, share, post, like, or tweet, or whatever else, ask yourself, is this loving? Does this reflect to others that I am as a follower of Jesus?

If you've been sitting there and you're thinking about someone you don't think you are able to love, then you have something to pray for. Start today, by praying that God would help you love them. Help you to see them as one of his children, one of us in the world that He sent His Son to die for. Loving others is something that God helps us with, ask Him for help. Love one another as Jesus has loves us. Love our enemies. ***Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves, do what it says.*** Therefore, Live Love.

PRAY