

## 2\_ THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE (Storge: Family First)

This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> lesson in our series dealing with the subject of “love.” We focused our attention last week on the romantic love that a man and woman share. Some thought I should have saved that lesson for today since it is Valentine’s Day. But, today we’re going to consider the love God intended for us to experience within the family. Let’s begin by reading once again from 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13...

<sup>4</sup> “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast,  
it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered,  
it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.  
<sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. <sup>8</sup> Love never fails...”

As we stressed last week, this is love that can be understood in any language. Certainly it needs to be clearly communicated in the context of the family\_ and I’m calling this lesson “**Family First**”. But what exactly is “a family”? For generations, the nucleus of the family was recognized to be a husband and wife joined by our Lord in marriage. A **traditional family** was then thought of as a mother and father and their biological children. Why? Such was the case in the beginning. Yet, after the fall, due to death or desertion, many women were left as widows or otherwise single mothers and many more children as orphans. And though often overlooked, more than one father had to raise his children alone for similar reasons.

We have those families among us where either the father or mother is absent and/or children may be adopted. We also have blended families, where the father or mother is married now to someone other than the children’s biological parent. Though this can be extremely difficult\_ and sometimes even tragic, I commend those who are willing to open their arms to include into their family those who have no family of their own. One of the greatest examples of the Love of God is when a man or woman lovingly adopts children and raises them as their own. More about that later...

Of course these days, there have been many attempts to abandon the traditional idea of a family altogether, suggesting 2 dads or 2 moms is just as viable as God’s design\_ if not better. Though I would zealously dispute that\_ as would 100’s of credible researchers\_ our purpose today is not to debate the organic makeup of a family, so much as to consider the love that God placed in the hearts of members of the family\_ and His desire for that love to not only be honored, but to be nourished.

**The love a mother** has for her child is often held up as the best example of unselfish love. I was blessed to have such a mother, but not every woman who becomes pregnant has feelings for the child within her. In fact **Titus 2:4** tells us young women may need to be taught how to love their children. This can be for a lot of reasons. Maybe a woman has been convinced that what grows within her is merely some cancer that she has the right to purge from her body. Or she may see the child only as a welfare benefit or as a thing to be tolerated rather than someone to be loved. Or perhaps she never had a mother herself to model how to love and to care for a child. In each case, what she needs is someone to mentor her in this regard.

Another sad note is that recent stats suggest that over 40% of all births today are outside of a marriage covenant. Though we must be careful not to demean those mothers who have made mistakes and are doing their best now, it should be apparent to us and to them that this is not the way it is supposed to be. So many women who are experiencing the heartache and the loneliness of being a single parent need our help, not our criticism.

And certainly as **important as a father is** to the family, not every man who impregnates a woman is “a father” in the sense that God intended. The number of “deadbeat dads” who shirk responsibility to provide and care for their biological children remains on the rise in every culture. I was shocked at the postings on the website **deadbeatsillinois.com** There you can find picture after picture of men who have defaulted on child support. Many have never invested a dime, let alone a moment of their time in caring for their offspring. Again, the man who is truly repentant and wants desperately to make amends and to be there for his children should be supported and encouraged....but isn't it obvious to us all, this is not what God intended?

You see, in a similar fashion as when the relationship between a man and woman is reduced to merely a physical act, the concept of family has often been lost in the biology of precreation. And when love is absent from the equation, you are left with physical function, without real relationships. I know of no one who would say this is what God desires.

**So what does He desire?** For dads and moms to marry or stay together just for the sake of the kids? For parents to support their children purely out of obligation? For kids to obey their parents just because the Bible says they have to? For siblings to “*get along*” even though they hate each other? Of course not. Now, those are certainly not considerations to be ignored, for duty and obligation are too often belittled these days\_ and there is such a thing as doing the right thing because it is the right thing. Yet, God intended for so much more than that. He wants parents to love each other and to love their kids and grandkids, for children to love their parents; and for brothers and sisters to love one another. His desire is for them all is to live and love together as family. Interestingly enough, this concept was so universally accepted that the Bible takes it for granted. Let's consider a few passages together.

Parents, **Proverbs 13:24** says: **“Those who love their children care enough to discipline them.”** (NLT) Loving discipline involves more than correction. It always includes instruction. And **Isaiah 38:19** declares **<sup>19</sup> The living praise You as I am doing today\_ and (loving) parents tell their children about Your faithfulness.** (NIV / MOV) If we truly love our kids, we'll provide more than food and shelter. We'll see that they are nourished with God's truth as well as taught to rely on His grace.

Siblings: **Hosea 2:1** says: **“Say of your brothers, ‘My people,’ and of your sisters, ‘My loved ones.’”** **1st John 4:20** **“If a person does not love his own brother (or sister)...how can he claim to love God...?”**(NIV / MOV)

Family: **Colossians 3:18-21** says: **<sup>18</sup> A wife must (lovingly) put her husband first. This is her duty as a follower of the Lord. <sup>19</sup> A husband must love his wife and not abuse her. <sup>20</sup> Children must always (lovingly) obey their parents. This pleases the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Parents, don't be too hard on your children. (Use loving care) or they might give up.** (CEV / MOV)

You've heard that blood is thicker than water, but if love for one another isn't coursing through our veins, even it is not thick enough to hold us together. But if love is the foundation of every relationship in the family, it will be strong enough to survive the worst of storms. And more importantly, it will serve as a living example of the love that God has for His children and desires for His children to have for one another.

Listen to **Ephesians 1:3-11**...**<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight.**

In love <sup>5</sup>He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will— <sup>6</sup>to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves. <sup>7</sup>In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace <sup>8</sup>that He lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, <sup>9</sup>He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup>to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. <sup>11</sup>In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, <sup>12</sup>in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory.

God the Father, lovingly adopted us as His children. He personally chose us to be His kids. Earlier I mentioned that this is special kind of love; to take someone like us\_ knowing all our imperfections and failures\_ and choose to love us as His own. Yet, Paul insists in the next chapter (**Ephesians 2:20**) that we who put our faith in Jesus are now part of the Family of God.

The Apostle John puts it this way in **1<sup>st</sup> John 3:1**: **“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”**

**THE FAMILY OF GOD (Galatians 3:26-27)**

**<sup>26</sup>For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup>And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes.**