

# LOVE\_WORKS

# DAY 1 - LOVE WORKS

## 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-3

“Paul, Silas and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you. We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

## 1 JOHN 3:18

Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

## DEVOTIONAL

Would it surprise you to know that when you account for inflation, the top three highest grossing movies of all time are Gone with the Wind, Avatar and Titanic? Three very different stories released at three very different points in time, but these films have one key element in common: they are all love stories. Each of these stories centre around the human desire to love and be loved by someone. No matter our age or stage, financial circumstances and family history, we all want someone to love and be loved back, warts and all. We want to be loved by our parents; by our siblings; by our spouse; by our children; by our work colleagues; by our friends and neighbours. We all want to be loved, and if you've ever heard the phrase “actions speak louder than words”, you know that no love story is complete without a dramatic act to save the one you love. Why? Because love works – it takes action. In Thessalonians, it is this fact that the Apostle Paul is writing about in his letter to the Thessalonians. He is thanking God that, not only had they received His love, but they were demonstrating the love of God to others; their love had prompted labour. In other words, love works; love prompts labour, action, and activity. Love works! Over the next few days, we are going to look at what kind of works love can prompt. Are you ready?

## PRAYER

Dear God, as I take time this week to learn about how love works and prompts action, I pray that you would show me real life examples of how I can put love into action and love others. Thank you for being with me and giving me opportunities to love others every day.

## DAY 2 - LOVE PROMPTS KINDNESS

### 2 SAMUEL 9:1-12

David asked, "Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?" Now there was a servant of Saul's household named Ziba. They summoned him to appear before David, and the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" "At your service," he replied. The king asked, "Is there no one still alive from the house of Saul to whom I can show God's kindness?" Ziba answered the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is lame in both feet." "Where is he?" the king asked. Ziba answered, "He is at the house of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar." So King David had him brought from Lo Debar, from the house of Makir son of Ammiel. When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honour. David said, "Mephibosheth!" "At your service," he replied. "Don't be afraid," David said to him, "for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table." Mephibosheth bowed down and said, "What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?" Then the king summoned Ziba, Saul's steward, and said to him, "I have given your master's grandson everything that belonged to Saul and his family. You and your sons and your servants are to farm the land for him and bring in the crops, so that your master's grandson may be provided for. And Mephibosheth, grandson of your master, will always eat at my table." (Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.) Then Ziba said to the king, "Your servant will do whatever my lord the king commands his servant to do." So Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons. Mephibosheth had a young son named Mika, and all the members of Ziba's household were servants of Mephibosheth.

### 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4a

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

### EPHESIANS 4:32

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

## **DEVOTIONAL**

Kindness is a concept we all learn, very quickly, as children and what we come to understand is that being kind means being friendly and considerate. In the book of Samuel, we read the story of a great friendship shared between David and Jonathan. After the death of Jonathan, King David searches and finds Jonathan's only living son and requests that he should always eat at his table like one of King David's sons. Why did he do this? Because his love for Jonathan prompted him to show kindness to Jonathan's son. What this shows us is that love prompts kindness. In his writing to the church, Paul encourages them that love is not just patient, but love is kind; that one of the ways we know love is operating genuinely in our lives is through the kindness others sense and experience when interacting with us. It means being considerate of the views, the desires and thoughts of others. As well as putting others before ourselves.

The challenge to us today is to live a life marked by friendliness and consideration so that the people we interact with have no doubt that we and God value and love them because of our kindness towards them. Will you accept this challenge?

## **PRAYER**

Lord, today I choose to accept the challenge of living a life marked by kindness. I know that my love for you and others will prompt acts of kindness and I choose to listen to those prompts and act on them. I ask you to help me have a listening heart so that I do not miss opportunities to show kindness to others.

## DAY 3 - LOVE PROMPTS FORGIVENESS

### LUKE 15:19-27

I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ So he got up and went to his father. “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate. “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

### 1 PETER 4:8

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

### DEVOTIONAL

Did you get into trouble for drawing on the walls when you were young? How about for leaving scuff marks or doing handstands up against the wall? All of these actions would have left a mark that either needed to be painted and covered over or washed away to make the house look new again. Love is a lot like that paint in the way that it covers our mistakes or sins and makes us new again, and the way love does this is through forgiveness.

The parable of the prodigal son is one we hear often and one that teaches many lessons. One is that out of love, the father is prompted to forgive his wayward son and welcome him home with open arms. What we see in this is that love prompts forgiveness. Sometimes it’s the love we have for another person – like our parents, spouse or kids – and sometimes it’s the love we have for Jesus that prompts us to forgive others despite their behaviour, the level of betrayal, or the way they have treated or mistreated us. It is important to note that forgiveness does not mean that what they did was right or acceptable, it does not mean that we should excuse the behaviour, it does not mean that the pain is gone, or that we share the blame for what has happened. Forgiveness is a decision to let go of the behaviour and betrayal of the past so that it does not affect our own future, because refusing to forgive hurts ourselves more than it hurts the other person.

We just need to remember that the reason we can and are able to forgive others is because while we were still sinners, Christ died for us and forgave us of our sin.

## **PRAYER**

Lord, thank you for forgiving me. I know I don't deserve to be forgiven and yet you forgive me no matter what I do. Today, I ask that you help me to learn to love and forgive others. Even though it hurts, even though they may not deserve it, I will choose to forgive them. Give me the strength and will to do so.

## **DAY 4 - LOVE PROMPTS GENEROSITY**

### **JOHN 3:16**

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

### **I JOHN 3:17 (NLT)**

But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?"

### **ISAIAH 32:8 (NLT)**

But generous people plan to do what is generous, and they stand firm in their generosity.

### **DEVOTIONAL**

The foremost example of generosity in the Bible is God's generosity towards us. It is so clear in scripture that the reason that God gave us His Son, Jesus, was because of God's love for humanity. It was love that motivated God to give. It was love that prompted His generosity. The dictionary defines generosity as "largeness of heart or a readiness to give something". Even in its definition, there is a picture that generosity flows from the heart or from love, because love prompts generosity. In 1 John 3:17, we are taught that our love for God and others should prompt us to be generous. It should prompt us to be generous with our time, with our talents and it should prompt us to be generous with our treasures.

However, many times, we are not as generous as we often want to be because we have not planned to be generous. Failure to plan is to plan to fail, and if we fail to plan for generosity, we will struggle to recognise opportunities to be generous and act on them. If our love for God and others is going to prompt generosity, then we have to plan to be generous. We may have to add a line for generosity into our budgets and start scheduling time in our calendar to share with others; we may have to be generous with our talents and treasures, because generous people plan to do what is generous. How can you plan to be generous today?

### **PRAYER**

God, I pray that you would give me creative plans and strategies to be generous towards others in my life. I ask that you would give me opportunities and chances to do as you did and show love through generosity.

## **DAY 5 - LOVE IS A VERB**

### **1 JOHN 3:18**

Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

### **1 CORINTHIANS 13:13 (NLT)**

Three things will last forever - faith, hope, and love - and the greatest of these is love.

### **DEVOTIONAL**

In the early 90s there was a famous Christian band called DC Talk and one of their biggest songs was a song called "Love is a Verb". As you know, a verb is a doing word, an action word. What DC Talk were doing in this song was driving home the principle that love works. Over this last week, we have learnt that love isn't just words or a feeling; it isn't just an emotion or an experience; that it is not complacent or silent. Love actually works and is an action we need to choose to take every single day. Paul said it this way, "Three things will last forever - faith, hope, and love - and the greatest of these is love". Love can be described as a decision our head makes that engages our heart and prompts our hands. In other words, love works! Today when you go throughout your day, look for an opportunity to put love into action. Whether that's through choosing kindness by smiling at a stranger or neighbour, choosing to forgive someone who hurt you, or even choosing generosity by buying someone a coffee. Choose to make love a verb in your life.

### **PRAYER**

God, thank you for giving me this week to learn about love and how it works. Now that I realise love is a verb, I ask that you would give me opportunities in my life to truly apply love and make it an action every day of my life.

### **FINAL PRAYER**

Today, I decree that I am loved by God; I decree that I will choose to love others; I decree that I will listen when love prompts me to be kind; I decree that I will listen when love prompts me to forgive; I decree that I will listen when love prompts me to be generous; I decree that I will love those around me actively and intentionally every day. I decree and declare all this, in Jesus' name. Amen.