

**Sermon Notes of
Elder Laura Urista's Sermon on August 6, 2017
"Love Is ..."**

[In today's sermon, "Love Is ...", Elder Laura Urista shows that the love of God cannot be produced by human effort, but rather it is the result of Jesus Christ living His life in us and guiding us with His very nature of Godly love.]

Notes

Introduction:

- The sermon title, "Love is..." is a reflection of a cartoon strip that started in the 1970's – which had the same title.
- It was based on a newly-wed couple trying to describe what love was all about.
- First cartoon that was on screen – "Love is taking one day at a time."
- Second cartoon: "Love is where we want to be."

- Yes, we, as humans, have a deep desire to fill the God-shaped hole in our hearts.
- We want to know what "Love Is."
- Recently Pastor Craig went over our mission and vision statements, and our new "motto" or positioning statement. "Love God, Love Others, without fear, shame guilt or doubt."

- Apart from Christ's life in us, the love that we humans are capable of producing, giving or demonstrating is limited at best.
- But...God's love is completely without boundaries.
- No human can love God and others enough to measure up to God's standard. But--that's not the end of the story!
- We have access to God's agape love as we remain in the vine – remain in Jesus.

God's love:

- So let's focus today on what God's "Love Is" as described in verses 4-8 of 1 Corinthians 13.

1 Corinthians 13:4, Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast. It is not proud. 5) It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6) Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7) It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8) Love never fails.

- This is 15 characteristics and descriptions of what God's love looks like in practice.
- These are strong words describing how deep and limitless God's love truly is.

- While this list shows how inadequate our human resources of love are – how shallow our love is – it also very dramatically paints a portrait of how deep God’s love is.

Characteristics of God’s love:

1) **God’s love is patient.**

- The Greek word for “patience” speaks of being slow to anger – of enduring personal insults and attacks without retaliating.
- It speaks of bearing with the imperfections and flaws of others.
- God’s love doesn’t have a short fuse. Patience can come with physical age – but not always.
- Patience always comes with spiritual maturity – as one matures in Christ, as one grows in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2) **God’s love is kind.**

- Kindness is about looking for ways to be helpful, to serve without seeking repayment or reconciliation.
- It has to do with gentleness as a fruit of God’s love, as opposed to our natural human reaction of rage and anger.
- Laura’s grandmother often said, “It’s better to be kind than right.”
- Kindness goes much farther in reaching out to others and building bridges and connecting with others instead of building walls, alienating others and causing divisions.

3) **God’s love is not envious**

- God’s love does not envy others – God’s love is not greedy or selfish.
- God’s love does not seek to control or dominate others.
- God’s love is content when others get the attention or rewards.
- God’s love desires that others do well and sincerely rejoices when someone receives a blessing, whether WE think that person deserves it or not.

4) **God’s love does not boast**

- The Greek word for “brag” calls to mind the English term “wind-bag.”
- God’s love is not big mouthed or pigheaded – rather God’s love is big hearted.
- Bragging is trying to make others envious of us – bragging is all about pride, trying to show others how great you are.
- But God’s love is humble, as exemplified and revealed in Jesus, the humble carpenter from Nazareth.

5) **God’s love is not proud**

- The word *proud* here is more like arrogance – and refers to a lust for power.
- Arrogant people push themselves forward to the front of the line, demanding that their accomplishments be known, appreciated and recognized.
- Arrogance does not respect others, but rather, looks down its nose at everyone else.
- Arrogance disdains others.

6) **God's love is not rude.**

- God's love doesn't do all the talking – God's love listens.
- God's love is gracious, it is non-offensive, tactful and courteous.
- Some people will justify their rudeness and say, "I'm just telling it the way it is."
- But God's love doesn't say or do hurtful or harmful things.
- Rather, God's love builds up other people.

7) **God's love is not self-seeking**

- God's love does not demand its rights.
- God's love does not demand that justice be done so that others get what's coming to them to vindicate us.
- God's love is not intent on seeking its own glory.
- Rather, God's love is directed to others.
- God's love is not possessive; it is not dominating.

8) **God's love is not easily angered**

- God's love is not easily offended—it doesn't have a short fuse.
- It reminds Laura of her little 15 month old grand-baby, Heather.
- She understands "no-no" in a limited way. But she doesn't understand why it's a no-no.
- For example, she doesn't understand the dangerous consequences of sticking something in the electrical socket.
- We, as God's human children, don't always understand the dangerous consequences of our mistakes and willful sins.
- But, God isn't going to zap us when we do something wrong.
- Rather, he is sorrowful when we suffer the consequences of wrong decisions.

9) **God's love keeps no record of wrongs**

- Keeping records describes accounting – having to do with numbers and calculation.
- It is a bookkeeping term in the Greek.
- God's love doesn't keep a tally of wrongs.
- God's love doesn't demand payment for each and every wrong.
- God's love doesn't keep score of our sins.

10) **God's love does not delight in evil but rather rejoices with the truth.**

- The Moffat translation of this characteristic says "*love is never glad when others go wrong.*"
- That is, love never gloats at the misfortune of others.
- God's love is joyful when good things are accomplished, no matter what they are or who does them.

11) **God's love always protects**

- Please note the word "always."

- The King James Version says “*love bears all things.*”
- The Greek word for “*bear*” has to do with a roof – in other words a covering.
- God’s love has you and me covered.
- God’s love doesn’t gossip and broadcast the shortcomings of others.
- God’s love doesn’t run others down with sarcasm or put-downs.
- God’s love is not motivated by a desire to expose sins, but rather to protect and cover and forgive.

12) God’s love *always* trusts

- Please note the word “always.”
- God’s love assumes the best – God’s love does not immediately jump to conclusions, blaming others.
- We are not talking about being gullible – but about God’s love not being suspicious or assuming the worst.

13) God’s love *always* hopes

- Please note the word “always.”
- God’s love is not pessimistic – its love doesn’t expect others to fail, but expects their success.
- This is not to say that God’s love ignores reality, for God can see and knows all.
- But rather god’s love is such that he chooses to look for the best, rather than continually trying to expose shortcomings or failures.

14) God’s love *always* perseveres.

- Please note the word “always.”
- The word “persevere” is a military term in the Greek having to do with hanging in there by withstanding and fending off the attacks of an enemy.
- God’s love is there with us for the long haul – God’s love is not just a fair-weather friend.

15) God’s *love* never fails.

- Please note the word “never.”
- Another way of stating the fact that God’s love never fails is to say that God’s love never dies.
- God’s love is eternally alive. God’s love is endless.
- Nothing can overwhelm or terminate God’s love.
- As the book of Psalms says, “God’s love endures forever” and “his mercy never fails.”
- The bottom line is – we can’t use the word “never” to describe our thoughts and actions but God can and does.

One of Laura’s favorite scriptures about God’s love:

Ephesians 3:17, And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18) may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high

and deep is the love of Christ 19) and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

HOW WIDE IS GOD'S LOVE?

- It's hard for us to imagine, but God loves everyone.
- Humans love certain people but not others. Not God – God loves everyone equally.
- God's love want's "all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth."

HOW LONG IS GOD'S LOVE?

- God's love stretches from eternity past to eternity future.
- God IS love. His love will never run out.
- There is plenty of God's love for everyone.

HOW HIGH IS GOD'S LOVE?

- God's love is high enough to lift you and me up out of the gutter or any dark place into heavenly places, where by his grace we are seated with Christ Jesus – see Ephesians 2:6.

HOW DEEP IS GOD'S LOVE?

- God's Love is too deep to fail – always deep enough to take care of any emergency, any need, any storm or any challenge.
- God's love is deep enough to reach anyone, no matter how dark a place they may be in.

Galatians 5:22-23 looks a lot like these 15 characteristics of God's love:

Galatians 5:22, But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23) gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

- Have you ever heard of an orange tree producing apples because it tried really hard?
- Or a grape vine producing bananas because it pretended to be something other than it was?
- Likewise, the fruit of the Holy Spirit cannot be produced by human effort, no matter how hard we really, really try.
- BUT, we do have access to God's perfect agape love as we "remain in the vine" and allow Christ to live in us and produce His fruit of the Holy Spirit – God's perfect agape love.
- So how do we remain in the Vine?
- It's simple, but it's not always easy.

Three spiritual disciplines:

- Here are three of the top "Spiritual Disciplines."

- If you're like Laura that word “discipline” doesn't sound like a good thing, but it just means a course of studying or learning.
 - A “disciple” (from discipline) is a student.
 - These disciplines allow you to have a special time with God.
- 1) **Prayer:** Ask Christ daily to live in you, ask him to share his very nature of love with you, ask him to help you allow his love to flow out through you to God and to others. Prayer doesn't have to be formal or fancy, but it does need to be consistent.
 - 2) **Study:** Spend some quality time reading the Bible each day – especially concentrate on the gospels. Even though you’ve read the gospels before, every time you read them again you gain more spiritual insight. Get to know Jesus better by seeing how he interacted with others and focus the things that were important to him.
 - 3) **Meditation (thinking):** Listen to the Holy Spirit as He guides you into a deeper relationship. Spend some quiet time focused on the words you read and what they mean in your life.

Communion:

- Now as we prepare to take the communion, take a moment to think of this table of the Lord as a giant kitchen table where we join together with Christ and all our loved ones.
 - This is the Table of the Lord – he invites us here, to join him, to eat with him and to eat of him.
 - He is our Bread of life and the body to which, by God’s grace, we are joined. He is the blood of our new covenant with God.
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- So now, take the piece of bread you have before you in your hand, and let us receive this element, which for us serves as a symbol of the body of our Lord.
 - This piece of bread symbolizes for us the body of our Lord, God in the flesh, given for us.
 - Let's receive now, the body of our Lord.
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- And now, in a similar way, take now the wine or juice –this fruit of the vine which serves as a symbol of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - This is, for us, the new covenant in his blood.
 - Let us now drink in and receive the life of Jesus.

Closing Prayer