

Love: The Wisest Way to Live

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[0 : 00] I need help to love, and I want to convince you to pursue love, to love, to love, to love, love, to love, to love, to love, to love, to love, to love, to love, to love, to love, to love your Christian brother or sister, to love the person that you, the people you work with, those who work for you and those you work for.

First Corinthians 14, one says, pursue love. First Corinthians 13 is all about the wonderful things that love does and love is.

And then immediately following that, Paul says, now pursue that love. It's not enough to know everything that love is and love does and how great it is.

It's not enough to know that. Paul says, now you have to pursue it. My son Cademan and I love to watch real life car chases sometimes on YouTube.

The police cars dodging in and out of traffic, accelerating, them calling in, back up, the helicopters flying overhead, interceptors winding through traffic and they're flooring it.

[1 : 26] That's how you pursue love. Not just the feeling of love, but the action of love, the heart of love, the way God loves us and does us good in Jesus Christ.

He does it with zeal, with intention, with purpose. Ephesians 5, one then says, imitate God. Imitate God and how he loves as dearly loved children and live a life of love.

Just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. So pursuing love with that kind of zeal, with that kind of intention, with that kind of action, that's what I need help with.

That's what you need help with. It can be costly. It can be painful. And so why would I do that? Well, I need motivation. Last time we looked at this topic, I said that the happiest way to live is to love. Love is the happiest way to live. Love is costly, but the investment is worth it. The dividends that love pays is in joy and in happiness.

[2 : 43] And so it's an investment worth making. Now, that was last time. Today, tonight, I want you to see that love is not only the happiest way to live, it is the wisest way to live.

Love is the wisest way to live. And so that's what we're going to look at tonight. But before we get into it, let's pray and ask for God's blessing and his help on the word as it's preached.

So pray with me. Lord, you know, the people who are sitting at home right now watching this, and you know the struggles that they face to love, to love the people that they're with.

You know the difficulties facing them. We all have these kind of hardships and difficulties. And sometimes love is easy.

But a lot of times it can be very costly and require and demand a lot of us. And so we need help. We need encouragement. We need motivation.

[3 : 55] And so Holy Spirit, come and motivate us with your truth. Motivate us with your word. Teach us to imitate God, to imitate Jesus Christ with his kind of zealous love.

And so help me as I preach now. Help us to see that love is the wisest way to live. And so that as we put this into our heart and into our minds, that you would bring it back.

And that we would love your word. That we would obey it. Please help us to be like the people James talks about, who look intently into the perfect law that gives freedom.

And as they do it, they are blessed. So bless us in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, do you like to do smart things?

I really love doing smart things. I love to do smart things with my money. I love to do smart things. I love to find smart ways to do my job or to do work.

[5 : 05] I love it when I find a shortcut. I love it when I know, when I found just the right thing to say or the right way to say something.

That is so good. I love when I'm able to cut through all the nonsense and get to the heart of a matter. That's wisdom.

And wisdom is sweet. The Proverbs talks about how sweet wisdom is. It's sweeter than honey from the comb. And in a couple of weeks, Lord willing, we're going to begin a new series on the book of Proverbs.

And the promises that the book of Proverbs holds out for those who attain, who get wisdom. Those promises are amazing.

They're immense. They're delightful. They're helpful. All of wisdom's ways are pleasant. Wisdom is pleasant. When it comes into your soul.

[6 : 09] The book of Proverbs says, her ways are pleasant and all her paths are peace. She's a tree of life to those who lay hold of her. So living in wisdom is like going to Florida in January when you've been cooped up in Indiana for the last winter months.

It's pleasant. It's refreshing. It's in the air. It's in the breeze. It's in the sunshine. It's pleasant. And that's what wisdom is. When it comes into the soul and when you have it, it protects you.

It gives you long life and wealth and honor. Wisdom makes your path smooth so you can run and not stumble. It protects you from criminals and adulteresses.

Wisdom gives you a good name in the sight of God. And man, and so Proverbs says, wisdom is supreme. Therefore, get wisdom. But what I want you to see tonight is this intimate connection between love and wisdom.

There's a connection that living in love turns out to be the wisest way to live. Love and wisdom are not opposites.

[7 : 30] They're not contradictory to each other, contrary to each other. The devil wants to drive a wedge between real, biblical, sacrificial, Christ-like love and wisdom.

But God puts those things together. The Bible puts those things together. They're two sides of the same coin. You can't have one without the other. Everything that wisdom promises in the book of Proverbs, love delivers.

Love is the summary of the law. That's found in a number of places in the Bible. The whole law can be wrapped up and summed up in this one command, love your neighbor as yourself.

Love is the summary of the law. But what I think you're going to see tonight is not that only love is the summary of the law, but love is a summary of wisdom, of living the wise life.

But I need to prove that to you. I need to convince you. I need to convince myself of just that truth, and that's what I want to do.

[8 : 42] I need to convince you, and I want to convince you. And so, again, just as I, when I preached on love is the happiest way to live, I'm bringing arguments, proofs.

And I have four arguments, four lines of reasoning to prove that love is the wisest way to live. Love is the summary of what the book of Proverbs is about in so many ways.

And so, four lines of reason, four lines of argument. And the first is just building off of and transitioning and using what we learned last time. If love is the happiest way to live, then love is also the wisest way to live.

If love is the happiest way, then it makes sense that love is the wisest way to live. I hope that makes sense to you. It makes sense to me. Who in their right mind wants to be miserable?

That's not wisdom to pursue misery, to live a life that makes you miserable. And so, who in their right mind wants to be lonely and miserable? Angry and upset and impatient and complaining all the time.

[9 : 55] It's not wise to live a life that makes you miserable. And a great part of the book of Proverbs is trying to convince you of the misery that comes from folly.

And so, if love is the happiest way to live, it's also the wisest way to live. So, love saves you from all of those joy-sucking sins of envy and greed and pride and anger.

Love encourages all the joy-producing and joy. It's like fertilizer on joy of all those virtues of patience and kindness.

Love brings us and gives us the experience of deep, joyful, meaningful, lasting relationships. Love is the way that we walk in the joy-producing, freedom-producing commands of God.

And so, love is getting us ready for heaven. Love is living like Jesus did, who for the joy set before him endured the cross. Love is the wisest way to live.

[11 : 34] Live. It's the smartest way to live. Now, Satan is going to say, in our own hearts, in our selfishness, in our short-sightedness, in our unbelief, we're going to say to ourselves, Satan is going to say to us, that love, to live in love is really foolish.

And we need to protect ourselves, and we need to live in love. And so, who wants to live in a life of love? That's misery.

That's stupid. That's painful. Why would you love and suffer so much? That's stupid. But the Bible sets us straight in how we need to be set straight, how I need to be set straight.

Because I like to take those shortcuts. I like to take the easy way out. I like to live for myself instead of live for love.

But the Bible gives us these glasses to help us to see the world, relationships, ourselves, our family, clearly.

[12 : 42] And the Bible, obviously, and clearly, again and again, puts love and joy and wisdom together.

They're a package deal. They're a braid of three strands. You can't tell where one begins and the other ends. When one shows up, the others show up along with it.

And so, to have one is to have the whole thing. And so, wherever love is, there's joy and there's wisdom. Just a simple proverb, I think, proves it.

It captures it. It pictures it. It puts it all into a nice little package. It says, better a meal of vegetables with love than a house of feasting with fighting, with arguing.

So, what do you have there? You have love. You have joy. You have wisdom. They go together.

So, if love is the happiest way to live, then it's also the wisest way to live.

[13 : 50] It would just make sense that we should live and pursue love. Because our joy is on the other end of that love. So, if love is the happiest way to live, then it's also the wisest way to live.

That's my first argument. Now, my second argument is this. And this is really the second canon, the second building block. This is the thing I want to bring to you next.

Is why is love the wisest way to live? And it really comes down to this. I want you to consider the character of God.

And so, consider his character, what he's like. And consider the character of the devil. So, here are these two case studies about the best way to live.

The two case studies of how to conduct your life. And when we look at them, and we think about their character.

[14 : 55] The character of God, what he's like. And the character of Satan, what he is like. What do we find? Well, we find that in God, perfect love and perfect wisdom go together.

And in Satan, in the devil, what we find is hatred and folly go together. So, love and wisdom go together on one hand.

And hatred and folly, selfishness and self-centeredness and pride and arrogance and folly go together. And so, let's start with Satan.

And now, we need to say at the very beginning, we need to say this, that he has his own version of wisdom. He is wise, cunning, clever in his own way.

In the short term, as far as getting shortcuts and getting what you want maybe immediately. He is clever. Craftiness, cleverness, is not at all incompatible with ultimate and really monumental stupidity.

[16 : 10] So, you can think of Stalin or Hitler. They had craftiness, cunningness, and stupidity.

They had both of those qualities in abundance. You can think of Bernie Madoff. The guy that ran the largest Ponzi scheme ever. Built millions and millions and millions of dollars out of people.

He was incredibly crafty. Cunning. He got away with it for a long, long time. But at the same time, he's in jail now and he's monumentally stupid.

Or just think of the college admission scandal that's going on. Lori Loughlin, Aunt Becky there. Very cunning.

Getting your daughters into these premier universities. Now, going to jail. Cunningness and stupidity, they can go together.

[17 : 14] That's what we find in Satan. So, Satan has his own brand of wisdom. James talks about it. It's from the pit. It comes up from hell. But make no mistake.

In the long run, ultimately, Satan and all those who follow him are these ultimate failures. Ruins.

What they were designed for as creatures are complete. They don't live up to it at all. They're disappointments. And I say that respectfully.

And I say that respectfully about Satan himself. For even the archangel Michael didn't dare bring a slanderous accusation against him.

Michael, the archangel, knew to be careful around Satan. And so, how much more do I need to be careful?

[18:17] Job fell into his hands and Satan ruined him and brought him right near to the end of himself. And so, we need to be careful. But we also need to be clear that Satan is not ultimately wise.

He doesn't understand. He does not comprehend the deepest and appreciate the deepest realities. He was closest to God.

He knew God's power and divine nature and glory better than anyone. And yet, he rebelled against him.

And hatred entered his heart. A desire to destroy what was real and what was beautiful entered into his heart. And he wanted to bring what was glorious and good and wonderful and true and ultimate. He wanted to bring that down. And he wanted to take the highest place. And so, with this hatred and jealousy and envy toward God, came utter folly.

[19:27] Revelation, the book of Revelation says he's filled with fury because he knows that his time is short. And even children, and I know my children have asked, and I'm sure yours have too, if he knows he's going to be destroyed, if he knows he's going to be defeated, then why does he keep fighting?

If he knows that his time is short, why? If he knows it's hopeless to continue, why continue?

Because hatred and folly go together.

Selfishness and sin makes him ultimately stupid. C.S. Lewis wrote this.

What we see in Satan is this horrible coexistence of a subtle and incessant intellectual activity with an incapacity, with an inability to understand anything.

Here's the tragedy. This doom, he's brought upon himself. In order to avoid seeing one thing. What Lewis is talking about there is, in order to avoid seeing God, and acknowledging God in his glory, in his rightful place.

[20:59] In order to avoid seeing that one thing, he has almost voluntarily incapacitated himself from seeing at all.

He says, evil, be thou my good. Which includes nonsense. Be thou my wisdom.

And his prayer is granted. God gives him what he wants. So hatred and folly, they go together.

But now consider God's character. Again, remember I'm trying to convince you that love is the wisest way to live. And so we've looked at Satan's character. And now let's look at God's character. What goes together in God? Well, when you look at the creation, when you look at the world, when you look at yourself, and all that God has done, the whole earth is full of God's wisdom.

[22:06] And the whole earth is full of God's love. Creation is filled up with wisdom. And at the same time, creation is filled up with God's love.

Everywhere you look, you see both. And so his love is perfectly wise. And his wisdom is perfectly loving. And everything that he does, he brings these two things together.

Perfect love and perfect wisdom. So when it comes time to bring salvation, we look at the cross.

And Paul says in Romans 5, 8, that's a demonstration of God's love.

But then in 1 Corinthians 1, he says that's a demonstration. That's God's wisdom. So was God being loving or was he being wise at the cross?

Well, no, he was both at the same time. So God is love, 1 John 4, 8. But he is the only wise God.

[23:10] And so as we look at God's character, it's perfect. Perfect in every part. His whole life, his whole being, his perfect love and perfect wisdom together.

And so when we say we want to grow in godliness, that is what we are saying we want to grow into. We want to grow to be like him.

We want that love and that wisdom together. And so do you want to be wise like God? Do you want the wisdom that comes from above? James says that's what we are to pray for.

If we lack that wisdom, we should pray for it. And so I trust that that is something that you want and long for. You want to be wise like God. Well, then what kind of love does God send from above, from heaven?

James 3, 17. But the wisdom that comes from heaven, that is God's wisdom, it is, first of all, pure. Then peace-loving and considerate and submissive and full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

[24 : 19] Now, I didn't read 1 Corinthians 13 just now, this evening. But isn't that the same kind of stuff that is in 1 Corinthians 13?

About loving peace and being considerate and merciful and impartial and sincere, loving the truth. That's the kind of stuff that 1 Corinthians 13 is full of.

Godly wisdom is loving wisdom. It's nothing else but love with discernment, love with your mind turned on.

And so that's the second argument. I want you to consider God's wisdom, God's love, God's character, and the alternative, Satan's character. And with Satan, folly and selfishness go together. His selfishness makes him foolish. And God's love makes him wise. Now, here's the third argument, third proof. This is why love is the wisest way to live.

[25 : 31] Because, and this is the argument, look at what place love has in the book of Proverbs. Look at the place that love has in the book of Proverbs.

Proverbs 3. And here's where you're going to need to take your Bibles and turn to Proverbs chapter 3. Proverbs chapter 3. Proverbs 3 is probably the most well-known chapter or the most well-known chapter in the book of Proverbs.

Proverbs 3. It has the most well-known verse in the whole book of Proverbs. Proverbs 3.5. Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

And lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight. That's one of those foundation stones of the book of Proverbs.

That's one of the foundation blocks of the whole book. And it's sort of right next to the cornerstone, which is the fear of the Lord is the beginning of understanding.

[26 : 42] The fear of the Lord is understanding. So that's probably the cornerstone. Proverbs 3.5 is right next to it. But chapter 3, Proverbs 3, and I hope you're there by now, is full of these foundation stones.

These blocks that sort of underlie all the ideas, all the thinking of the book of Proverbs. And so it talks about what do you do with your wealth?

What do you do with your activity and your work and your economic activity? Well, honor the Lord your God with your wealth. Honor the Lord with your wealth. What do you do with difficulties and hardship?

Well, you look at them as discipline. You see, building blocks, foundation stones, essential things for understanding what wisdom is and how wisdom behaves.

Now, what I want you to see right alongside those building blocks is love.

[28 : 04] So, Proverbs 3, verse 3. Let love and faithfulness never leave you. Bind them around your neck.

Write them on the tablet of your heart. And then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. So, right there, even before trusting the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding, is this one.

Let love and faithfulness never leave you. Don't quit loving people. Love is the word chesed there. It's covenant love, faithful love, sworn goodwill. It's the closest thing, the Old Testament equivalent to agape love, which is 1 Corinthians 13.

It's this goodwill. And faithfulness there is this dependability, this reliability, this I am going to do good. I am going to persevere in doing you good.

[29 : 11] It's this trustworthiness. And he says, now you tie those things around your neck. Write love on your heart. That's wisdom.

That's wisdom. Just as much as trusting in the Lord with all of your heart and leaning not on your own understanding is love on your heart. And he says, if you do that, verse 2, you'll have prosperity. Verse 4, it'll bring you a good name and you'll grow in favor with God and man. Grow in favor with God and man.

Does that remind you of anything in the New Testament? Does that remind you of anything in the New Testament? Doesn't Luke say something like that when he was talking about Jesus?

Yeah, he does. Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. How did Jesus grow in wisdom and in favor with God and man?

[30 : 21] What about Jesus made all the townspeople of Nazareth say, well, there goes that boy Jesus. He is something else. And when he played with the other children and when he helped his dad in the shop and he took care of the folks who were coming in and came into the shop.

When he was at the synagogue learning, everyone was saying more and more, there's something about him. They grew in their respect for Jesus.

People liked him. They trusted him. And they thought he was remarkably wise for a young man. How did that happen?

Well, I think Proverbs 3, 3 tells us and gives us the key to what was going on in Jesus' life.

He had tied love and faithfulness. Love and faithfulness around his neck. He meditated and he thought about loving.

[31 : 29] His wisdom was his love. His wisdom was his faithfulness in the community. And so if you're a young person watching tonight and you want a good reputation, a growing reputation, and you want to be wise.

Well, how does that happen? Act in love. Love.

It's hard for older siblings to serve their younger siblings.

But if in love you do that, you will gain a good reputation. He who humbles himself will be exalted.

He who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.

You do that and you'll be wise and you'll win favor with God and man. People will say, wow, aren't they mature? Aren't they mature for their age? Aren't they wise for their age?

[33 : 05] Because you're acting in love. Or you go to Proverbs 31. The wise woman. Isn't she, she's wise, but isn't she loving?

I think it's Proverbs 14. The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands, the foolish one tears hers down.

Now, isn't that love and selfishness put right side by side? I've seen women tearing down their homes, ruining their families by their actions and their attitudes and their words and the way they carry themselves.

But I've never seen them doing it in love. And I've seen women building their homes and building things into their children and building their houses.

But I've never seen them doing it in selfishness. You don't see women hatefully building their homes. That's just, that's not a thing. No, the woman, the child, the man living wisely ties love and faithfulness around their neck.

[34 : 10] Love goes with them and is on their heart all of the time and all of their actions. Love is in everything they do. So, love, wisdom, they go together.

Now, fourth, here's the fourth argument. Why is love the wisest way to live? And this is what I want you to see next is all the virtues, all the graces, all the things that wisdom commends and encourages and recommends and says this is wise.

All of those things love does. So, every virtue, patience, kindness, self-control, all of that, love actually does.

So, let's just, let's just go through 1 Corinthians 13 in our mind and that definition of this is what love is. This is what love does. Love is patient.

That's where it begins. Paul begins, love is patient. Does Proverbs say anything about patience?

Well, a man's understanding, a man's wisdom gives him patience.

[35 : 21] Love is kind. Proverbs 11, 17, a kind man benefits himself. Love does not envy.

Proverbs 14, 30, a heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones. Love does not boast. Let another man's mouth praise you, not your own mouth.

Love is not proud. Proverbs 29, 23, a man's pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honor. Love is not rude.

It's not inconsiderate of others. Proverbs 27, 14, if a man loudly blesses his neighbor early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse. I think you can say that that's being rude.

That's being inconsiderate of time and place and when to be loud. You don't do it in the morning.

That's rude. Love is not rude. Love is not self-seeking.

[36 : 25] Proverbs 18, 1, an unfriendly man pursues selfish ends. He defies all sound judgment. Love is not self-seeking. And an unfriendly man who just cares about himself defies all sound judgment.

Love keeps no record of wrongs. Proverbs 10, 12, hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs. I could go on, but do you see the point?

Do you see it? Everything in 1 Corinthians 13 is found in the book of Proverbs.

To pursue love is not a fool's errand. It's the heart of wisdom. It's what wisdom does and is.

So to love sacrificially, to love with this agape love is the highest wisdom. To love others is this perfect realization, this perfect coming into reality of wisdom.

[37 : 47] And so if you want to understand and you want to live the book of Proverbs, then love and love and pursue love. Then love like God loves.

Love like Jesus loves. And we're going to see when we get into the book of Proverbs, Lord willing, that Jesus Christ is the perfect, he's the perfect, he's the wisdom of God.

He himself is the perfect fulfillment of the book of Proverbs. He's the one greater than Solomon.

And he was a wise teacher, but he was more than just a wise teacher. He was the wisest of them all. And he himself is the wisdom of God.

If we define wisdom as God's plan for life, God's wise and good plan for life, then Jesus is the perfect realization of that.

[38 : 50] He is the wisdom of God. He is God's plan for life. And so he is the way, the truth and the life. And the whole gospel is this revelation of Jesus' love, God's love for sinners.

But it's also this perfect manifestation, this perfect realization of wisdom. In the gospel, God has found a way to be both just, righteous, perfectly righteous, and also the one who can justify the wicked.

How does he do that? Oh, it takes wisdom. In the gospel, God has found a way for all of his attributes, even the ones that are apparently opposite of each other, to be perfectly expressed.

So his wrath is perfectly expressed in the gospel. And his love and his mercy, his grace are perfectly expressed.

So in love, through what Jesus did, he manifested perfect wisdom and perfect love. Now, in love and in wisdom, he sought his own.

[40 : 10] In love and wisdom, he sought you. Pursuing you, loving you, cornering you, convicting you, getting you to the place where you had to give up your wisdom, your own wisdom.

Now, he sought you one way, and he sought me another way. He is a clever hunter. And so he trapped me one way, and you another.

But finally, he had us right where he wanted us. He had cornered us. He had convicted us. He had convinced us. He had us right where he wanted us.

Right where we needed to be. And you quit leaning on your own understanding. You saw, you saw for the first time what a fool you had been.

And I saw what a fool I had been. But that's when in love, he said, now trust me. And so the wisest thing that we could do, that any human can do, the wisest thing that any human can do, is to lay down their hatred for Jesus and to love him.

[41 : 44] The wisest thing you can do is to love Jesus, who loves sinners, to embrace him with all of your heart.

He is your life. He is God's plan for life. He is a tree of life to whoever embraces him. And so then to be wise is to give him your heart.

So be wise and give him your heart, all the love of your heart. Now, we're all fools. We're all fools by birth. We're all Christ haters. We hate and we're fools because we hate the one who loves us.

We hate the one who, the only one who can do us good. We hate God's salvation. Isn't that folly to resist the one who can do us such good, the one who means to do us good?

Isn't that folly? But that's how we come. And we only come to our senses when we begin to love Jesus, when we embrace him.

[42 : 55] The prodigal son, when he came to his senses, ran back to his father. And in Luke 15, where that parable is, the father is Jesus. Jesus represents the father.

And the very first smart thing that prodigal son does is fall into the arms of Jesus. Loving him. Loving his words.

Loving his house. Loving his discipline. Loving his teaching. Loving him and serving him. That's wisdom. That's wisdom. Loving his people.

That's wisdom. And that's the best way to live. And so, I hope I've helped you.

I hope I've convinced you. I hope the spirit of God takes these things and works them into your heart and into your mind. And so, let's pursue love. Pursue love.

[43 : 53] Loving God. Loving our neighbor as ourself. Because it is, really and truly, the smartest thing we can do. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we have been fools to run away from your love. To run away from your wisdom. To run away from salvation and life itself. That is such utter folly.

Thank you for rescuing so many of us. And I pray for whoever is watching this video. Who is still resisting Jesus. Who is still resisting the tree of life.

Who is leaning on their own understanding. And they found that they're smart enough. And they can figure this out. And they can handle this. I pray that you would bring them to their senses.

For our young people. Who think that. Who aren't ready to give up their own wisdom and their own selfishness.

[44 : 54] Satan has taken them captive. Oh, please free them. And I pray for my brothers and sisters. Help us to pursue love.

And help us to resist the temptation. That would say love is foolish. It would be foolish to sacrifice. It would be foolish to keep going. Show us that.

It is the very heart of wisdom. To keep on loving. To love like Jesus loved. Please help us to do that. Help us to bring honor to our king. By the way we carry ourselves.

In the world and in our family. The way that we love. So that through us and in us. That the world could see. Something of Jesus in us. Pray this in his name.

Amen. Amen.