**‘When Love Really Matters’**

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Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 1 John 4:8

We live in a world where love is used casually without much heart or thought. We must take time to understand love in its purest form comes from God.

We must teach our children how to love. Romans 12:9 says, ‘Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.’

We see young people - pre-teen, teens - who lack the understanding of what love is and what loves looks like.

Many are not taught love at home. Living in dysfunctional environments. Struggling to figure out how to exist in ease and comfort because there is no ease and comfort at home. They take this lack with them to school and work, where their actions and behaviors reflect it.

There is great value in love. Proverbs 3:3-4 says, ‘Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck,write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.’

We see young adults - products of dysfunctional home - trying to find the love they didn’t get at home in all the wrong places. Many get engaged in illegal activities to impress their friends and make a name for themselves. Many struggled while in school so higher learning because it’s out of reach in their limited view. Many refuse to work fast food and other minimal paying jobs and cannot seem to find good paying jobs even though there are many internships. Some just struggle without assistance or guidance. They fail to love themselves enough to work through the hard times not knowing there are brighter days ahead. Love could help them reach for the stars. They didn’t learn the value of love.

We worship with a church family. Some of which endured and still endure the feeling of loneliness, lacking the abundant living promised in God’s word. Many didn’t find the love they desired. Even they failed to realize, true love comes from God.

We just celebrated Mother’s Day in May, and now we celebrate Father’s Day. But where are the real mothers and fathers today? Many of them suffer the same dysfunctional lives they find their children suffer. They just didn’t know better. They didn’t know better, so they couldn’t teach their children better.

When did we (society as a whole) decide that we could raise, teach, train up our children without God? Why did we decide to leave God out of our homes and our everyday living?

As a child from a large family, I watched my parents not even knowing I was being raised, taught, trained, how to live a Christ centered life. A life filled with love. I actually thought every home was like mine until I became an adult. I thought I lived a ‘normal’ life. I soon realized the normal was my family’s normal. Not every homes’ normal. Imagine that. Naive, but grown. I laughed when I realized it.

We went to Sunday School and Worship on Sundays. Baptist Training Union Sunday afternoons once a month. On Sundays after dinner, we played outside (couldn’t be inside) until the sun went down. Mondays through Fridays, my Mother rose early to cook. Dad would eat and go to work on the farm. We would eat and go to school. After school, we came home, changed clothes and went to work on the farm. Homework was done after farm work and before bedtime. On Saturdays, we cleaned the house, top to bottom, with no television to watch the wrestling matches, Tarzan, or anything else until chores where complete. And sometimes on a Friday or Saturday, we would have a yard party. Friends, family, food, fun, music, and dancing outside. And this was the routine every week. We had time for one another.

Life was so grand. This was when love really mattered.

We knew we were loved. We felt loved. But the word love wasn’t said often. We were taught God’s love. It was shown. Love is a verb. Love requires action.

As Christians, we have failed to show love. The action behind our love is missing. We must get the attention of the lost and lonely, grab and hold on to their attention by showing them love. By teaching them God’s love. By teaching them how to love. By showing them God's love.

My prayer is for God to open our hearts to one another. Take time to love each other. Show love toward one another with deeds of kindness. Words of encouragement. Acts of humility. Stop asking ‘What Would Jesus Do?’ And just do as Jesus did.

Let us not be hypocrites - talk only. No deeds, no action. Show love when love really matters. Love is an action word. And always remember 1 John 4:1, ‘We love because He (God) first loved us’.