



A Good Example

Part 2 – In Love

Shay Robbins

Today, we continue our series, *A Good Example*, talking about what it looks like to be a good example in love. We've got some awesome scripture that we are going to reference today and we're going to grow together. The way I want to start our message is I want to show you a picture from my family Christmas on my mom's side. This is the Bittle family. This is Granny and Pa. Granny and Pa have 44 kids, grandkids, and great grandkids total. So, they have this huge family, and it just so happens that this Christmas was the last Christmas that we got to spend with Pa. About a week ago, Pa died. He had been wrestling with dementia for many years. It was time for him to go, but, obviously, it was an emotional season for family.

I actually want to tell you a little bit about my Pa this morning. He was as good of a grandpa as a kid could possibly have. Some of my fondest memories were growing up with Granny and Pa, they are farmers up in Illinois and they loved bluegrass music. We grew up going to bluegrass festivals with Granny and Pa. They'd pull a fifth wheel behind their truck and go to county fairs. Granny actually played the tub, the literal washtub, and Pa played the fiddle. He was self-taught and he could play anything he could whistle, and that man could whistle up a storm. So, I have the most amazing memories at these bluegrass jams. When Pa would walk up to a circle and get his fiddle out, all eyes went on him; he was the star of the show.

Growing up as a kid, those were just like memories that I lived and longed for. When I would go and visit and stay at their farmhouse, I would wake up early and do chores with Pa. We'd wake up... even as a five, six, seven-year-old, I would wake up early, go do chores with him, and then we'd come in. Granny would have a hot meal ready, and all the farmhands would sit there, and I would drink coffee with them as a little kid.

Then in the evening at Granny and Pa's, before he would go to bed, Pa would walk around the house and play his fiddle. I can see him and hear him to this day, walking around, almost as if he was just putting the whole household to bed. Then, you would think he had gone off to bed and then the next thing you know, he would be standing over the freezer in his underwear, chewing on a frozen Snickers bar. The guy was infamous for his love of snacking in the middle of the night.

Anyway, we went to the funeral and just shared amazing memories with my family. I was a pallbearer with some of my male cousins, and we were riding in this little van out to the burial site. Everybody was sharing these memories. It just struck me that Pa was a memory machine. He was just so great at creating these memories.

He grew up in a generation that didn't cry, didn't show a lot of emotion; they were tough men. But Pa would say I love you in so many unique and creative ways. He would wink at you and it would just warm your heart. He'd give you a nudge and a smile. He'd slide twenty bucks in your pocket, he'd fill you gas tank up. He was just known for that. He knew how to say I love you in a thousand different ways.

Today, we're going to talk about that. How do you show people you love them? How do you do it in a lasting way, a way that matters, a way that changes somebody's life?

In the vein of our series, *A Good Example*, in 1 Timothy 4: 12, Paul encouraged Timothy to influence those around him by setting a good example in speech, conduct, love, faith, and in purity. The golden thread of this entire series is the word *maturity*. We're going to talk about what it looks like to mature in our faith in these five specific ways. What we're going to do is each week we need to just do some self-reflection and ask ourselves, "How am I growing in this way?"

We're going to pick up our text today in 1 John. We're going to pull a bunch of different text and they are all going to come from books that the Apostle John wrote. We're going to pull from the gospel of John and then of course he wrote first, second, and third John. I think it's kind of interesting to know the character, the author, that wrote these passages. One of the things you'll see that John is known for is throughout the books that he wrote, he talks about love non-stop. It is a constant story line through his narrative. We know he was a fairly sensitive guy. He refers to himself in the gospel of John as the disciple whom Jesus loves, so he really took this humble position and referred to himself in the third person, as somebody who God loved. So, there is this sensitive loving side, but we also know that John was given a nick name. He and his brother, James, were nicknamed the Sons of Thunder by Jesus himself. So, there was also this strong fiery passion inside to him.

Another interesting thing to note is that during the crucifixion, we know, to best of our knowledge, the majority of the disciples had scattered. There were a number of women that came and attended his crucifixion, but the only disciple that we know of who was there as an eye witness to the crucifixion was John. John was there, standing next to Jesus' mother. So, really a great authority and a great text to go to as we jump into this.

Here's where we're going to start. We are going to establish kind of a base line for love. We're going to do this in 1 John 3: 1-2 – ***See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! We're talking about our adoption into God's family. And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Dear friends, now we are children of God...*** So, this is super foundational to being able to show God's love. First you have to understand that the gospel unlocks an understanding of love that is only attained through the adoption into God's family. In other words, there is a higher power or a higher source of love that we have access to, but the only way we can have access to it is to come under the authority of it, and to be adopted into God's family.

You guys know that in the English language, the word *love* is thrown around. It's used in all kinds of different ways. There are all kinds of love and each one has a different quality. I love the Super Bowl; I'm a huge fan. But I also love my wife. Is that the same kind of love? It better not be. I love my mom and I love chicken wings. Any body with me on that one. I love my son, but I also love dip.

Do we have any dip fans out there? Get you pencils ready. I'm going to give you a little dip recipe on Super Bowl Sunday. I made this two weeks ago at the championship. It's buffalo chicken dip. I took some chicken breasts and smoked them at 350 for 25 minutes. Then I shredded them and put them in a crockpot, put a block of cream cheese, a cup of sour cream, a fist full more of shredded cheese, and then I dumped a whole bottle of red-hot sauce, and I boiled that thing up in the crockpot. It was all mixed up and I was like, *this is phenomenal*, but wait, there's more. Then I took the crockpot out and I put more shredded cheese on the top and put it in the broiler until the top was crispy and brown. I nailed it! You can eat it with tortilla chips, of if you're cutting out the carbs, you could use some pork rinds.

Now I am passionate about dip. My son runs over, and I say, "Son, I love you too, but go play in the woods; I'm talking to people about dip right now. I joke. I don't love dip the same way I love my son. I'm not going to lay my life down for my dip, nor am I going to pay for my dip's college. There are all kinds of qualities of love.

I want to talk to you about the quality of God's love. Check this out. The quality of God's love is pristine, proper, powerful, and perpetual. You see what I did there? It's called alliteration to help you remember. I'm really on it here. Let me talk about each one of these words.

Pristine – It is pure, unblemished. You and I, our love can be blemished. We can be impatient, we can be in a hurry, we can be angry, we can be upset, and it taints our love. But with God, he is holy, he is perfect, and his love is untainted, pristine.

Proper – When I talk with teenagers about what the proper place for love is, we always talk about a fire ring out in the middle of the woods. Inside that fire ring, you build a blazing fire and it's beautiful and it's warming and it's comforting. It's an amazing, awesome power when it's in its proper place. But when that fire gets outside the ring and it catches fire out in the woods, you can have all kinds of destruction from fire itself. With God, we know that his love comes in the proper context. Love in our world has gotten way outside the fire ring, and it's creating all kinds of destruction. Despite what people tell you, it's causing destruction in people's lives. We know that God's love is both pristine and proper.

Powerful – According to Romans 8, there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God. For those of you who have been adopted into God's family, there is not a single sin, no wretched act, nothing that you could do that can separate you from his love.

Perpetual – Everlasting. It doesn't slow down, it doesn't lose momentum. It's inevitable. It keeps on going.

So that's the quality of love that we're talking about. So, before we could ever show this quality of love, we have to first receive God's love. The question is how do you receive it? I think about that receiver out on the field who is calling for the ball. If the ball gets thrown to them and they drop it, there is no value, there's no score, there's not yardage, there's no advancement. But when we call for the ball, we have to receive it. So, before you can ever give God's love, that pristine quality of love, you've got to receive it first. So, how do we go about that?

I want to break it down in two ways. You guys have heard of these Christianese phrases of mercy and grace, right? These two words are powerful and a lot of times, they are lumped together. The reality is they actually have two very unique and specific meanings.

Mercy is not receiving something we do deserve. In other words, when one of my kids acts out or is disrespectful to their mother, my response, as the father, is there is a punishment that fits the crime. And they deserve that punishment, and so it is with us. For the wages of sin is death; there's a cost of the sin in our life. What God's mercy does is "Yes, you do deserve to be punished; there is a consequence for your actions, but I'm going to take that consequence upon myself." That's what Jesus did on the cross. That's his mercy. So, he removes this wrath of a holy God, and he takes it upon himself on the cross. You and I get to receive mercy.

That's a powerful and amazing thing, but I think a lot of time, we, as Christians, can stop there and be thankful like *I'm happy with my fire insurance. I'm glad I'm not going to hell.* But many times, we hold onto the guilt and shame of our sin from the past. *Yeah, but you don't know what I've done. What I've done is too shameful. I'm just going to put my head down and be a nice guy or be a good gal and just hang onto God's mercy,* but there's more to it.

The other half of God's love that he wants to lavish upon you is his grace. **Grace is receiving something don't deserve.** Romans 6: 23 breaks it down this way. ***For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*** In other words, the love that God wants to give you, not only does he want to take on the punishment that you deserve and show you mercy, but he also wants to give you the gift of eternal life and with that comes a whole bunch of awesome things. When you're adopted in the family of God, you also become an heir and an heir has an inheritance.

Here are some of the pieces of the puzzle when it comes to God's grace. When you become a part of God's family, he gives you the gift of the Holy Spirit that indwells you, it seals you, guaranteeing your inheritance in heaven. Secondly, it empowers you, gives you power to overcome the sin that has been wrecking your life. It gives you strength and victory.

He also gives you gifts through the Holy Spirit, very specific, unique gifts that God has given just you so that you can turn around and build up the rest of the body of Christ with your specific gift. Not only that, but he also gives you the ability to have joy in all circumstances. No matter how bad things are, no matter how rough things get, you can still have joy because you know that your hope is in heaven. When this broken eggshell of an earth... when I depart from it, I'll be going into perfection, where all of my pain, my sin, my mourning, my sadness, my tears are all removed and done away with. On top of all that, he gives you the capacity to love in a new way. That's God's grace. So, for you to receive God's love before you can ever show it, you've got to accept everything that comes with this package of being son or his daughter.

1 John 4: 19 puts it this way. ***We love because he first loved us.*** Many times, I would say for sure weekly, maybe daily, I will recall myself at my very worst, like the lowest and darkest moments of my life. I don't do... we should not do this in such a way where the guilt and the shame gets heaped back on us and we live under some condemnation, but instead, the recollection of that darkness should remind

us how thankful we are for how much we've been saved from. Thank you, God, for delivering me. What that does is when you encounter people who are hard to love, who really cook your grits, who are driving you crazy. You go back to that place, and you remember, *I've been forgiven of so much. That gives me the ability to turn and love even the hardest of people.*

That's our foundation for loving like Jesus. The next thing we've got to do is ask ourselves, "What does it actually look like? How do I practically love like Jesus?" In order to dive into that, to find out the next steps we take, we're going to go to 1 John 2: 4-6. Here's what John writes, ***4 Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person.*** I always write EOF when I run into statements like this in my Bible. There happens to be nine in 1 John. EOF stands for Evidence of Faith. This determines if this is real, genuine faith? Here we see that it's insincere. It's not true; it's actually a lie. It doesn't matter what you call yourself or what family you say you're in, what do your actions illustrate? The truth is not in them. ***5 But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them.*** So, we have a picture of sincere faith. ***This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.*** So here we go. If you want to love like Jesus, we've got to walk in his footsteps.

We've got to follow his example. The best example that I can think of for us this morning to dig into is from John 13. This is that amazing setting where the disciples are gathered together in the upper room. This is the night before Jesus is betrayed and crucified. He has all of his disciples gathered together in this very intimate setting. The text goes on this way. ***It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.***

2 The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

Think about this. This was a really common practice during this time period. People were walking through the arid desert, it was hot, and they were wearing sandals and tunics. As they walked through the hot, arid climate, sweat is just pouring down their body, it's running down their feet, the dust is kicking up from the roadway, it's caking to their feet, there is manure all over from animals. When you come into someone's home as a guest, it was customary to wash their feet, they are filthy. The job was typically given to a servant in the household. This was the paid help. They would get down on their knees and take on this very humiliating task of washing someone's filthy feet – sweat, mud, and feces.

And here's Jesus who just days before had written into Jerusalem on the colt foal of a donkey and the people were waving palm branches and what were they saying? "Hosanna, hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." The people were recognizing him rightly as the chosen one, the Messiah, the one that the entire nation had been waiting for. Here he is. And now, on this evening, he takes off his tunic, wraps a towel around his waist, and humbles himself before his disciples and washes

their feet, doing the job of a servant. How powerful of a picture did he paint? A searing memory he placed in their minds of what love is supposed to look like.

The passage continues in Verses 14 and 15. This is Jesus speaking. ***14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.***

I think about my Pa and the way that he lived his life. I told you earlier that he was a memory machine. Well, Jesus, on a whole other level, carved out this memory in these men's lives. What's interesting is that according to Luke 22, just before he did this, they were bickering about who would be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

I just kind of combed through this over and over again and I pulled out some observations. This is not a complete list; these are just a handful that stuck out to me that I want to share with you as we seek to follow Jesus' example.

- He was intentional. The timing of this is incredible. Judas was actually still sitting in the room. And potentially minutes later, maybe within the hour, he had gone off to betray Jesus. But Jesus timed it such that Judas would be sitting there and that he could serve to wash the feet of the one who betrayed him. Now, is that a good example today? Think about it as we cruise the innerwebs and get on Facebook and people are saying things that are lighting us up or upsetting us. How would Jesus love them, according to this example?

- Another thing is he considers others as better than himself. The fact that one of his last acts would be such a humbling act. He was going to be humbled, right? Within a matter of hours, his clothes would be stripped, he would be beaten, punched, kicked, spit on, a crown of thorns beaten into his skull, his body lacerated before the crowds, rejected by men. They released Barabbas, a thief, instead of him. The list goes on and on. He was hung up on a cross naked for the vultures. And yet, under his own power, he chose to humble himself.

- He holds a high view of his friends, high value. That's the honor that we talk about in this church all the time. By him getting on his knees, he elevated his friends and said this is how I feel about you.

- Servant hearted leadership. I think about this... When Jesus came, he flipped everything on its head. The people of the time, many of them missed that Jesus was the Messiah because they were looking for a political savior, just like many of us. We miss the actual messiah because we're looking for a political savior. They missed it.

Years ago, my mom and I went to visit a friend who was having a hard time. My mom went up into her office. She got down on her knees and began taking her shoes and socks off. She rubbed this woman's feet while asking her how she is doing. I have never forgotten that picture in my head.

- Jesus was enduring, patient, gracious. Think about the knuckleheads that are surrounding him and what fools they were for all this time. He was so patient with them. I think about my wife and how she

displays this in our house. We step on her toes all the day long and yet she is a relentless, gracious servant in our home.

- This ultimate display of love was second only to the cross. This not some theological fact, this is my opinion. I think this was the ultimate display of love, second only to the cross. It's so powerful of an example.

So, how do we apply this? Very practically, we love through words and deeds... Love is an action here, people. For the men out there who have a hard time saying I love you, I know that's a thing. Yes, you show it. We know that you love. You need to use your words. Daddies, you need to grab that 13-year-old boy and tell him you are proud of him and why you're proud of him. Mommies, you need to grab your daughters and tell her that she is beautiful inside and out, and where her value truly comes from. They need to hear it with your words.

And equally so, John Piper said that for Christians, "Showing love is like breathing." Our love is rooted in our new birth, and we ought to love like birds fly, like hyenas laugh, and like fish swim. That is who we are and what we do. Frankly, without love, we don't have Christianity. You just have another version of moralism. It is the love of Christ that sets this apart, that sets our faith apart from every other false religion that is empty and has no answers for this world

I'm going to close this way. John closes his gospel by this really amazing statement In John 21. He says, **24 This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. 25 Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.**

I look forward to the day where I am long gone from this earth, and I'll be able to hear all the stories of what he did. But my question for our church family today is off the heels of this:

Who are your witnesses? Who is it that's watching your life ploy out and what would they write in your book? What would your book be filled with? What would be the story lines of your life?

The challenge I would issue to all of us is that regardless of what the story lines would be in the past, with each chapter moving forward, that the main story line would be love. That he or she displayed the love of Jesus every day of their life and it changed my life as a result. That is my hope and desire for all of us.

Father, we thank you for today. It's a fun day. Thank you for an opportunity for families to rally together and enjoy each other and to love each other. Thank you for Valentine's Day just being a reminder to care for marriage and for one another deeply and thoughtfully.

We just ask you, God, that you would help us grow up in your love and that we would both receive and give your love and that it would be a great example to those around us.

It's in Jesus' name we pray... Amen.