

# The Most Excellent Way

by Glenn Meldrum

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*Glenn Meldrum's sermon emphasizes the necessity of transforming humanistic love into selfless, agape love to fulfill God's purpose in our lives and relationships.*

**Duration:** 59:03

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 12:4-12

**Topics:** "Christian Love"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a story about a football coach who was consumed with his job and neglected his relationship with his wife. The preacher emphasizes that seeking personal glory and being consumed with worldly pursuits ultimately leads to emptiness. The sermon highlights the importance of selfless living and using our gifts for the benefit of others, rather than for our own vain glory. The preacher also discusses the deceptive nature of sacrifice, explaining that true love is not based on humanistic, man-centered love, but on selfless love that operates through the authority of Christ.

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## Transcript

For more messages by Glenn Meldrum and in his presence ministries go to [www.IHPMinistry.com](http://www.IHPMinistry.com) you are welcome to make additional copies of this CD for free distribution We're going to be looking at Corinthians 13 First Corinthians 13 is tucked in the middle of two chapters on the gifts And it's put in there for a reason probably the most charismatic Church within the early church era was the Corinthian Church And so when you look at what was going on in Corinth, they were a very charismatic Pentecostal Church, they had the signs the wonders the miracles all those things were going on But they weren't in right control They weren't under the authority of Christ is what they should have been and they were not operating in love So he puts in between these two chapters on spiritual gifts he puts the chapter on love and Ultimately the only way that our gifts whether they are spiritual whether they are natural whether they are Ministerial or whatever direction that they might be the only way our gifts will ever fulfill what God wants them to fulfill is that they operate Through love I'm gonna look at love from a practical standpoint of what it is to be and how it's to be applied in our Life, I'm gonna look at it from a marital standpoint and being single It's not a message on marriage itself, though I will deal with issues of marriage Paul tells us in Corinthians 12 the the 31st first He says but eagerly desire the greater gifts and we should just in a passing point here Church We should be desiring spiritual gifts.

We should be seeking them that God Gives gifts to us not for pride sake or ego or anything else But that he gives us gifts so that he can be glorified to us We should be seeking for the signs and wonders the miracles is what Corinthians 14 brings out of the nine spiritual gifts and so on we should be seeking them to be actively working through us and I think that we're not in a hunger place for God hungering after God if we're not actually hungering after the gifts he wants operating through us whether they are the spiritual gifts or whether ministerial gifts or or just gifts to the body of helps or whatever it might be but he wants to use this and we should be seeking those and Desiring God to impart those gifts to us He has divine use for you He wants to do something through your life more than what has happened thus far And so we should be seeking those gifts, but he says eagerly desire the greater gifts And now I will show you the most excellent way And that's what we're going to look at the most excellent way and what that most excellent way is we're gonna begin in the first verse just gonna deal with the first three verses of Corinthians 13 here and we're gonna start with the The Direction I believe that Paul is really trying to deal with here And I'm gonna have to take what he says that I believe was relevant in his day That is relevant in our day today and speak it in some contemporary terms that Paul did not use those terms though he dealt with some of the same dynamics as what we deal with, but we're gonna look at it from Americans standard and Paul was dealing with Humanistic love he was confronting the humanistic love of his day and so we have to look at the idea of humanistic love and what that is Paul in these first three verses is approaching love from the negative Not from the positive so he brings out love in the negative because before we can have love in the positive of what love is we have to see what love is not and Until we begin to understand what love is not will not tear down What love is not to see put into our life or built in our life that which love is Pagans will look at this chapter and see it one of the most lovely things that have been wrote in the world They see it as this beautiful Statement of what love is meant to be even though they don't understand what's going on and they twist it to very humanistic dimensions But we have to begin by looking at the idea of humanistic love that Paul is confronting here And what do I mean by humanism?

Let me just give a basic definition of humanism the Definition of humanism actually came from a philosopher from the 5th century BC His name was Protagoras and he went and says that humanism is where man is the center in some of all things So humanism is where man is central where it's all about me It's all about my life what we have done with love this absolutely beautiful thing that God has given us We've turned it to be a self-centered self-absorbed thing that as a result becomes a destructive and harmful And so why are we having marriages fall apart?

Because there's humanistic love It is not an agape love that is operating through his people it becomes a humanistic love that then becomes a destructive force in a marriage becomes a destructive force and in a family in a Church or community or nation as as a whole on a whole but humanistic love will always be destructive But that is what is natural. We cannot love outside of that We have to understand that this humanistic love is a natural love that every person will have We were created in the image of God and I think this is absolutely phenomenal Aspect of it being created in the image of God.

There is a couple of ways that we were creating his image We were created in his image in a natural way Not that God has has a body like we have and arms and legs and so on But we were created in his image to have his personality his character and have a finite reflection of his attributes And so his attributes would be his love his mercy his kindness is his meekness and so on those particular character attributes He will not share with us certain attributes such as being omnipotent all-powerful or all-knowing Omniscient or omnipresent he'll not share certain divine attributes that are his and his alone But he will share certain other ones such as love when Adam and Eve was formed the garden they were given a love

that was Perfect. That was not humanistic. It would have been a selfless love not a self-absorbed love But the moment sin came in this natural love that he had given us that was to be perfect now became twisted because of our sinful nature and So this natural love that every human being is given because we are a finite Reflection of God has now been perverted from sin And as we give ourselves over to sin, the more people give themselves as sin The more perverted that love becomes it doesn't mean that people don't have love or that they cannot love it just becomes a destructive humanists and humanistic natural love that is not able to fulfill or Satisfy the individual or those that they are trying to express love to this American culture the 21st century has refined a humanistic man-centered selfish concept of love and the reason why they've been able to do it so effectively is because of our media if you didn't Have the media the concept of this humanistic love and all the way that it's advanced now would not be Come the norm of the way it is in our culture But we've really advanced it through movies and TV and music and everything else I mean, what's the biggest subject of movies and TV and and music? What's the biggest subject of it all? It's love, but it's a humanistic man-centered love and as we go through this I hope that you begin to understand what I mean by this Humanistic love what Paul does is he begins to attack this love these first three verses are an attack upon it It's not a passive thing.

Paul is not having some nice sweet little statement about love. He is literally attacking some Philosophical things that underpin what love in the natural is and trying to point us to the most excellent way because we'll never come to the most excellent way till we see how low our Natural love is and if we don't do anything about the natural love that we have to see through the power of God it Transformed to become this selfless love as we're going to look at in this message If we don't seek God for that to change it will not change It will stay what it is natural and when it's natural it will have its destructive elements It will be selfish. It will be taking it will be abusive It will have all kinds of twisted dimensions on because that's all that sin can do to this thing that we call love Natural humanistic love is always selfish.

We have to understand that it is always selfish now when you look at a little child It's not selfish in an evil way Necessarily can be but you you know a child has a love and they want to be loved and then you can see selfish dimensions of it and then as they mature it gets more selfish as it gets more abusive and in Various ways and it can become manipulative and taking and and so on and then as we get older it gets even more refined and it Gets more corrupt as it goes on because that's all it can be you put a child in an abusive situation Their love or expression of love becomes very abusive as a result as they mature it gets more abusive And so you see that in marriages you see an abusive type of natural love because love apart from the transforming work of God Is going to be selfish We have to understand that we can't go any further with what Paul refers to here until we understand that natural Love is always selfish Even when we look at the pinnacle of what natural love might be in some expressions of it such as the love of a mother There is still that which is selfish within it and apart from Christ transforming work It will never become like a gap a love that is selfless Only by his grace can his love change us. And so this humanistic love is self-centered It means that life and love is all about me that it's all about me. It's about my personal fulfillment Let's look at it from a marital standpoint You have two people that are unconverted or maybe they're converted and they have never understood what it is to see their character Radically transformed and so what they do is they approach this marital situation from a selfish standpoint and in essence They both approach it saying I'm lonely.

I'm needing meet my need and so here's husband screaming at wife meet my needs Satisfy me and here's the wife say meet my needs satisfy me and in their pursuit of selfishness to try and have their own needs meant they're unable to meet the needs of each other and they're so Self-absorbed in their selfish

pursuit that they do nothing but harm each other in their supposed pursuit of love Isn't that what so much marriage is it isn't that what it's going on in the world and even within the church? Because unless I am transformed by the power of God, I cannot do anything else other than love in a selfish manner It is only through his transforming grace that I can begin to love in a selfless manner And so everything as far as this natural love is self-centered but everything in this natural love is self gratifying So it means that everything is for me is to satisfy me. So I want my needs met I seek somebody to love because I have this desire for love I have this need for love that is a God-given part of that being created in his image. I need to be loved and In my pursuit of this desire to be loved it becomes a total self gratifying thing not for the benefit of the other But for my own benefit you look at the whole concept of what love is today boy meets girl man meets woman that night They're in bed with each other.

It's not about love It has nothing to do it has to do with that guy Wants something from that woman wants to take from that woman that woman has need within her So she's doing what she's doing to try and satisfy a need within her It has nothing to do with the other person because love has no part of it at all It is a humanistic selfish self-absorbed concept of love But that is what our media has made is the pinnacle of it movie after movie after movie after movie after movie Our industry is filled with it. It's a concept of love that is all self-absorbed and it's a humanistic thing That's all about my wants my ambitions satisfy me But we tried to make it a noble thing, but it's not noble. It's very ugly it's a very ugly thing because it's destructive and So this humanistic natural love is self-centered is self gratifying, but it's also full of selfish ambition Everything is done for me It's done for me because it's about me and if it's all about me It's going to be done for me.

My acts of love are going to be for my benefit now I'm going to be using a term as we get on in this message and I'm going to be incorporating that this interested love God wants to bring us to a place of this Interested love this interested love is love that has no Agenda to it other than the agenda of just a love that it is not love for the benefit of myself But it is love for the benefit of others that it's not for my personal gratification Not for my personal benefit in any way shape or form But for the sheer desire of longing to love another or give an expression of love to another Now as if you begin to think of what this kind of love is, this is an agape love This is the love of the choice not the love of emotion that says I have a need meet my need Satisfy me. It is the desire to meet the need of another whether they ever Acknowledge it or respond back. This is an expression of what God's love has been to us a Disinterested love but it's what he calls us to that is unobtainable in the natural It is not obtainable through anything we can do of ourself It is through the grace of God that he began to change us and transform us that this kind of love can be revealed through It's a disinterested love Imagine what that would do in a marriage if a husband began to do acts of kindness to his wife to get nothing from her Nothing that would be selfish or for his own benefit just for the sheer aspect of showering upon her some affection for her But whether she acknowledged it or knew it or understood or not that it was acts of kindness for her But what if the wife did this? What would happen in the marriage if husband and wife sought not to satisfy their own needs? But to satisfy the needs of their spouse what would happen to that marriage? It could be absolutely explosive.

What would happen? It could revolutionize a marriage that is mundane It could bring tremendous healing to a marriage that's falling apart because this is a love that brings healing and health and Transformation to our lives and to our relationships to churches and ultimately as is expressed beyond the church to a perishing world C.s. Lewis made this interesting little point He says there is but one good That is God everything else is good when it looks to him and bad when it turns from him and The higher and mightier it is in the natural order the more demonic it will be if it rebels It is not out of bad mice or bad fleas you make

demons but out of bad archangels It's not out of like he said fleas and mice that you make demons It's out of archangels and angels that fall and the higher the more noble the thing is the when it turns away from God The more twisted and cruel it becomes what is one of the highest things we think of in our culture And that is the concept of love and as it turns from God The more demonic and destructive it becomes When it turns to him the more life and healing it becomes very powerful idea with what he's saying here That's why when you have a humanistic love it always brings death Because it's always natural. It always flows out of the sinful nature It's always filled with selfish ambition and selfish desire and and and all that which is destructive It does not have the ability to give life because life is not in a humanistic Natural love because it's a perversion of what the real thing is The only way that love can give life is it must be lifed in essence from God life must come through God through us to bring about a Disinterested love that is for the well-being and benefit of others and as we love others rightly We will find the greatest fulfillment in loving others rightly you love your spouse in a disinterested way guaranteed You'll experience love back in ways. You never thought because what will happen is you become so beautifully attractive to that spouse that they will Want to shower affection back upon you But if we become people that just seek to be loved and in our neediness We say meet my need meet my need we will actually become Repulsive to the one that we're seeking to get the love from and do the very opposite of what we need to do We're not winning them.

We're actually driving them away Humanistic love is always the work of the flesh You can look at the works of the flesh in Galatians 5 19 through 21 various expressions of the works of the flesh but if you look at all of those expressions the work of the flesh, they are Manifestations of self-love and selfish types of love operating through them. There is no expression of a God-centered Selfless love disinterested love it is all a selfish self absorption that flows to the people to produce the works of the flesh And the only way I can cease work producing the works of the flesh is I must allow the transforming work of God in my life To produce in me that which I cannot produce of myself. I Cannot produce it of myself if I could produce of myself and Jesus would not have death would have died on the cross in vain It would have all been a waste But because I couldn't produce it myself he died on the cross to rescue me and also to give the power of his grace to transform This humanistic love is also idolatrous because it makes man the center of it Do we understand this natural love since it's all about me It's all about my benefit and I all look at me and and since I become the center of it I'm not looking at God.

I'm not looking at who he is. Let me put it like this. We can make our pursuit of God humanistic Man-centered I'm seeking God for what I get out of him and we'll look at that in this message as it goes on a little bit But that is a major part of it that we have this natural Inclination to meet my need meet my need to God and so our pursuit of him is all selfish Jacob is an interesting individual of this you look at the prayers of Jacob in the book of Genesis and you find his prayers to Be self-absorbed selfish prayers again and again.

He says I'll serve you if you'd bless me. I'll serve you if you bless me I'll serve you if it bless me and then you come to his final prayer Something had happened in the process of it and you finally find a selfless prayer That is no longer about him But is adoration to God Now that was a long journey for Jacob a very long journey It doesn't have to be as long for us if we want to pursue that if we want the transformation of our character It can be quicker if we will but pursue that but we have to pursue it. We have to desire Natural love is always limited.

It can only go so far We have to understand when we see the breakdown of marriages It is humanistic love that's operating because man can only go so far we go so far in the relationship We come to the end of our

strength the end of our willingness and so marriage after marriage falls apart And I'm not just talking about in the world I'm talking about in the church the divorce rate in the church is higher than what is in the world an atheist is less prone To get a divorce than a born-again Christian is It's absolutely disturbing Some of the things I've seen across this country is just heartbreaking one particular church a man and woman in the church he was a deacon on the board and You know, I thought everything was fine I preach at the church and then a little bit later I hear from the pastor that they separated she goes to another church That's larger it within a month. She's on the worship team. She will not repent of the sin There was no fornication in it.

She just says I don't want to be married to that man anymore and The pastor of that other church did nothing except there allowed it to embrace the whole divorce and everything else Even though it was rebellion from one end to another no church discipline Nothing just brushed under the carpet and you know what? It became something that was absolutely grievous to God and I believe not only sin to that woman sin to that pastor and sin to that church That's a disturbing thought but it's all the byproduct of a humanistic love that makes it all about me I have the right to be happy. I have the right to be satisfied I have the right to have my needs met. It's all about me God if you don't satisfy my needs then I'm gonna go some other place or another church or another place or I'll just Stop going to church because it's all about me.

And if I'm not satisfied then this is over Hear what I'm saying? And that really defining so much of what Christianity is today But God has something more for us Let's turn to verse 1 now He says if I speak in the tongues of men and of angels But have not love I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal Now there's three particular points that Paul is going to deal with in these three verses each verse deals with a different issue Paul is not taking all the aspects of humanism in he is dealing with three primary points of it But not all of them now he begins here with saying that though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels Well, the idea of tongues of men would be the eloquence if I could speak in the most eloquent of way be the best preacher or the best speaker the world has ever known if I could take these natural words and Weave them together in such a way that it could move people to laughter and the tears and move them Emotionally and if I could do that, but don't have love. I'm nothing And so if I had the ability to speak with the wisdom and the greatest wisdom and eloquence of men But taken father if I had the ability to speak with the wisdom of angels Imagine the language of angels We don't even know what that language is the interesting story is of Manoah and his wife They had the son Samson and an angel came to Manoah Went and told her that she was gonna have a child She was barren and then Manoah says well I want to know how to raise this son that's supposed to be a Nazarite and the angel came back and told him how to raise a child and Manoah went and says says what is your name? And he says why do you ask me my name? It is Indescribable to you He says there's no word to describe my name because my name is from another world from another language that this world cannot even comprehend imagine the language of angels Imagine the wisdom of angels they speak of God and they speak of God in ways that are just so astounding that we would just be awestruck on our faces weeping as we're overwhelmed with the magnificence of this God and Even if I could describe God in the wonder of who he is with angelic words with angelic passion with angelic wisdom If I don't have love I Miss it all I Miss everything That's a disturbing thought what he's trying to bring out here is that love is more than words What do we have today boy meets girl no time at all he's saying baby, I love you Just lied through his teeth what he said what he really should say is baby. I'm infatuated with you Love is a choice like we looked at this morning.

God makes a choice to love us He made a choice of it He calls us to a love that is an agape love that makes the choice to love him But you understand that this agape love is not just a choice that we make to love God It is a type of love that should be operating to us to one another That agape love should be in the fellowship of the Saints and at home that I choose That I choose to love my wife when she's not lovable and that she chooses to love me when I'm not lovable That she doesn't love me just because I'm a nice guy when I'm a nice guy and not love me when I'm not Because that's not love True love is making that choice as I choose to love whether you are kind or lovable to me or not I choose to put my affection upon you and so here's this idea of love that is more than words imagine if we had everything down pat if we could be doctrinally correct and you know This can happen a whole lot that people can be doctrinally correct and hardest can be They can have all the doctrine that man they can argue they can cause church splits because man They got the they got the knowledge that this is wrong natural, but there's no love in their words. There's no love in their action There's no love what they do and as a result even the doctrine the correct doctrine They have becomes death because there's no love in it because it is humanistic. It's natural It's for selfish ambition and selfish purpose and not for the benefit of others It is something then that becomes death in it because that's all the natural love is able to do even if it is doctrinally correct The natural love is destructive That's a serious issue Love is far more than feelings You don't fall in love and you don't fall out of love What it comes down to be is you make the choice to love and you make the choice not to love What happens in the real situation of this world with the breakdown of marriages is that a man or woman Choose to stop loving each other They may not understand what they're doing But hurt after hurt and pain after pain starts making them make choices saying I'm backing off from him I'm backing away from him.

I'm tired of being hurt I'm tired of giving in and starts backing off making conscious choices to stop loving If they understood what they were doing it might scare the socks out of them But they don't understand they are making a choice step-by-step saying I will not forgive I will not you walk in this love anymore. I'm gonna stop it. I have the right to be happy But that has nothing to do with love Humanistic love is always relativistic Relativistic what is relativism moral relativism is where let me put it like this You have humanism and moral relativism has become the religion of America become the religion of the American government has become the Doctrine and foundation of all public schools from kindergarten all the way through graduate school It defines our media.

It is the religion of America. We have forsaken the Lord God we've forsaken them and now our nation pursues a humanistic man-centered God and Morals then become relativistic as a result and what that means you hear it constantly in various ways Throughout our culture is that whatever is good for you is good for you. Whatever is good for me is good for me There was this interview that this one man was doing and he asked this woman is adultery wrong She paused and thought for a moment.

She says no Not if they both agree in and You know, it just threw me. I'm just going whoa What craziness? Well, what ten years ago? Nobody would have said that even with how far we had fallen ten years ago But now our culture is so far fallen that now somebody will say well adultery is not wrong You know if they both agree on it and they're not fulfilled in their marriage And so I guess adultery would be okay because if morals are relative and worry and humanism is our religion Then if it's all about me, and I think that it's right, then it must be right therefore I could cheat on my husband or cheat on my on my wife as a result of that or I could be unfaithful to the body of Christ and begin to go and and just live a crazy life whatever would be I could be unfaithful to God and Go back into the world and everything would be okay Because morals become relative because I can live a life then that is contrary But that type of relativism is never an

expression of authentic love. It is raw selfishness Where man is a center and some of everything where it's all about them put that in the marriage And you have nothing but death and destruction you have nothing but pain and sorrow put upon spouses upon children upon grandchildren You have nothing But the breakdown of testimony among the community Going back to that story of that husband and wife the deacon that she left him and and she got a divorce He didn't want he tried everything he could to reconcile there were two small rural communities Can you imagine what that did in that community? Can you imagine how Christ was slandered through the whole thing? absolutely slandered Because natural humanistic love defined that relationship and let me put it at least that woman I believe both of them takes two to tango, but she's the one who instituted it and it became nothing but a slander to Christ Tragic sad love was designed by God to be an investment of our entire being He will not let you give half of yourself to him or even 90% of yourself to him You must give the entirety of yourself to him I want you to understand a principle that I'm going to present here.

Is that if you want to love others? Rightly, there's only one way to love others Rightly is that you must love him supreme if you do not love him supremely You will never learn how to love others rightly because the only way that I can love others, right? I have to love him rightly the more I fall in love with him The more his love will define my life and pour through me to love others Every time I see myself not loving my wife like I should I've got to go to my knees and says dear God It's because I'm not loving you like I should change me Oh Lord Teach me how to love you more that I might be able to express that love of yours to my wife and to other people Every time I see myself living out humanistic man-centered love I have to go to God and plead with him for forgiveness and say God change me teach me how to love you more that I Might express your love more because obviously I don't have it working in my life the way that it should so this natural Love is still operating in me. And so it's an investment of our entire being that means loving God is an investment of your tire and be but then loving your spouse is the next thing and You want to love your spouse, right? Love him, you know love him as you should then love your spouse the way that you should and that's the only way you'll be Able to do it. It tells us through the teachings of Paul that husbands you are to give yourself to your wife Love yourself as Christ loved the church.

Do you understand men that the health of the home is up to you? It's up to you it is on your shoulders to be the man that loves like Christ in the home and Sets the love the standard of love in that home If you are loving selfishly the home will have a selfish love in it If you become a man that begins to love Selflessly, then you will set a standard in that home and you'll even teach your spouse and children and so on how to love Selflessly if you don't have the benefit of a godly husband to be able to do it Then why is you have to do it and you're called to do it one way or the other? But yet God puts the highest call upon the man to give yourself away Like he gave himself up for us This selfless this interested love is the giving of ourselves away for the well-being of others not for what we get out of it I remember this story of a football coach a professional football coach That he was just so consumed with football Making big money as a professional coach. He was a Christian But so consumed with it when he he'd be away during football season and then in training He'd be gone all the time and when he was home He's watching football games constantly consumed with it and not having time with his wife or anything else He's so consumed with it and his wife Started backing away from more and more and more and finally one day. She says I can't take it anymore Says I don't believe in divorce.

I will stay your wife. I'll wash your laundry I'll cook your meals says but I am checking out emotionally from this marriage and he thought it'll be gone It'll be done but weeks and months went and he saw what he had done He started opening up his eyes and he's got some counsel of what to do and basically the

council was says love her back winner back and So he started pursuing her with selfless love And he won her back and had a marriage better than anybody had before Because he came to understand something that his love was all selfish self-absorbed It was all about him and the moment he started becoming the man of the house and giving himself away He could win his wife's affection Now should she have shut down no, she shouldn't that was wrong on her part We sometimes can respond to the pain in very wrong ways But that's why we still need the cross and we still need to learn what is to run to the foot of the cross Love was designed by God to be an investment of our entire being Verses 7 8 tells us that love always perseveres love never fails So this God love this interested love never fails. It's always based upon his character So it's able to sustain the pain the hard times the difficulty when I look at accounts of persecution It's sometimes overwhelming you read these accounts of people that love their persecutors and that says overwhelm him say God Could I even come close to it? I mean do I have that ability? Well in the situations if you rest on the grace of God you fall in love with him and you and you make the choice Yes, the grace is available to anybody but it's so astounding this love that is so infuriating to the persecutors Because they're loving they're not hating they're not responding with anger and rage they're loving them They're trying to win them the Christ the whole thing and it infuriates them even more as a result of it What an astounding thing that God is able to do develop a love in us That is the selfless disinterested love that even in the face of persecution and pain that we are able to love beyond it It is limited when it's natural love.

It is limitless When it's based upon the character of Christ and what he does in us and transforming us Because by his grace we're able to fulfill that Humanistic love fails because it can only go as far as human strength when Christ's love becomes our love It too will never fail when his love is what's operating in us when I begin to love like him Then it will have the in ability to endure the difficult time whether in marriage or in the church or in the home or workplace Or whatever it will have the ability to do it because it will not be based upon its own strength It will be based upon an omnipotent God that will empower us to live that out Delivering us from our humanistic natural love Ephesians 5 verses 1 and 2 Tells us be imitators of God Therefore 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. I love that phrase and it comes out again and again about Christ giving himself up for us And then he tells us like I said with men that you are to give yourselves up like Christ did for the church to your wives It's a wonderful thing and it's the idea of the selfless disinterested love of a love of giving ourselves away for the benefit of others Now you want to see about winning the loss one of the greatest things about winning the law is when we start giving ourselves Away for them for their well-being when they see that what we're doing is not to put a notch on our belt But is genuine love for them that we speak to them for their well-being not for us not out of some religious duty But because the love of Christ is burning in us and we tell them because we are so full of this love and we must Share it with others. It becomes powerful.

It becomes life-changing as a result of it He tells us that if we love with a humanistic love He says I am only a resounding gong and clanging cymbal. It means if I have this humanistic love I'm just making a bunch of noise. That's all there's nothing subs of substance in it It's only when it is selfless disinterested love when it is God's love operating through us Will there be that which has substance and so acts of love speak louder than words But words have great power when the acts of love are there So, you know what that means husbands? It's a wonderful thing to tell your wife you love them But make sure you're acting in love that you are demonstrating you love them by your actions And when your actions are saying you love them Then your words will have some powerful meaning and why it's the same thing with your husband and the same thing to children And it's the same thing to write and say to other people and it but ultimately

it needs first to be the expression of our lives And then the words have tremendous force Let's look at the second one now It says if I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge If I have a faith that can move mountains But have not loved I am nothing.

I am nothing the first one He says I'm only a resounding gong and clanging cymbal this time. He says I'm nothing He brings out the idea of gifts knowledge and revelation and faith What do we do in the Pentecostal charismatic Church? And it's just not in that it can be in Baptist churches and so on But I think it's really quite strong in the Pentecostal charismatic Church And what we do is we exalt those people that at least have seemingly charismatic gifts They may only have charismatic personality. And so we exalt them because they have the personality.

But what do we do? We think that is spiritual What we have really done is we've taken some of the proudest most arrogant Individuals and put them on Christian television and made them our superstars some of the most arrogant individuals that preach some of the most arrogant Messages that are so contrary to the Word of God and then people pouring millions and millions of dollars so these men can go out and buy Multiple homes that are multi-million dollar home in various parts of the world have all these exotic sports cars And we keep pouring in money because we have this love of idols And so we have these American idols that we follow and that we raise up within the church Rather than understanding that gifts and knowledge and revelations do not mean that a person loves you Do not mean that a person cares how many elderly women and elderly men send their money to TBN and all these other places and when?

They're sick. Nobody will ever come see them from there They'll never really pray for them if they send in a prairie course They send with all the other thousands in a big old pile and that name will never be known Instead of understanding what love really is We take the gifts and we say this is what love it But it's not it tells us right here if you got all those gifts and you do not have love truly operating It is absolutely no benefit to you or benefit to any other person The only way our gifts have true power is that they are operating in Christ's love So gifts knowledge revelations and faith do not prove that a person is right with God I could give you accounts and I hate to give those accounts But I give you accounts of men that were not right with God, but yet some of the gifts We're still operating in him for a time It breaks my heart that it happens and part of it.

I don't understand it I won't tell you I got the answer to what it is God's mercy still flowing through them I'm calling them to repentance them refusing it and eventually God brings it to an end But all these things gifts knowledge revelations and faith do not prove that a person loves God Somebody can be doing all these things and not have any love for God at all It doesn't mean that a person has a godly character because somebody prophesies Doesn't mean that they're right with God or they have a godly character We have made the gifts to be the sign of spirituality where it's not a sign of spirituality What is the gauge of spirituality of an individual the fruit of the Spirit Galatians 5?

That is what defines the spirituality of an individual the character that they have and whether or not they are operating in The love of God into the home and into the church and into the workplace or wherever it is That's what defines a person gifts are given for the purpose to bring life It may bring reproof It may even hurt sometimes but it's always for the purpose of bringing life and only when it's operating through love Will it be life and so I want to say this in a serious way Why do you operate in the giftings you do where they're natural or spiritual? Why do you do it and it's right for us to sound way that out.

Why do you do it? Are you doing it for love's sake? Are you doing it to be as somebody a lot of people that have given words of prophecy do it because of pride? Because they want to be as somebody and it has nothing to do with the well-being of others has to do with their own personal self-glory He's calling us to something that is to be a selfless love that is for the benefit of others that God would use the gifts He's imparted to you whether natural or spiritual With the right motive operating through you for the well-being of others and you know when that happens your giftings can be popped God can do some radical stuff through you when he can get hold of these gifts and they're operating through the love of God When they're being poured forth for the well-being of others Gifts knowledge and revelations and faith do not prove that an individual has come under the Lordship of Christ is Submitting to Christ's Lordship. They may be in total rebellion against them The proof of our right standing with God is a character that's expressed through the fruit of the Spirit is love for Christ It is the selfless love for Christ it is this loving Christ supremely that is an expression that he is able to pour his power through and That's where love is really going to be able to operate He says that if I walk in this natural love, he says I do not have anything He says I am nothing He literally puts it that I am nothing and the reason why he puts that thing says I'm nothing if you have all the gifts And knowledge and so on he says you don't walk in love You are nothing the reason for that is so much of the operating of our gifts is for self-glory Look at me. Look at who I am.

I'm special. I have a gift you don't look at what I can do I can preach you don't I can sing you don't I can prophesy you don't or I can do it better than you and look At this and look at that look over look at the places I've gone and been taught and look at this and you know all the boastings we can have one over another which only become for Our own vain glory for the puffing of us up not for the glory of God And so he says with all the things that you seek you seek to be as somebody through your gifts and actually in the end You become nothing The only way our gifts become of tremendous value is when it's through selfless life When it is operating for the benefit of others That God might be glorified to us Now let's look at the last one in the third verse It says if I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love I gain nothing This is deceptiveness of sacrifice You know deceptive sacrifice can be a very deceiving thing because we can think that sacrifice means love I Sacrifice for you. So therefore I must be loving and that's not true Sacrifice may have nothing to do with love we can sacrifice for many reasons We can sacrifice for own selfish reasons for selfish ambition for our insecurities all kinds of different reasons We can sacrifice so sacrifice does not mean love when you see somebody sacrificing something.

We have to look beyond that We have to see what is really going on Are they sacrificing to be seen that's what the Pharisees did they go out to the poor and they do it in front of everybody And say look at what I'm doing. It had nothing to do with God. It had to do with their own self-righteousness So sacrifice is not proof of love Amy Carmichael, she was a wonderful woman of God She says you can give without loving but you cannot love without giving and so we can give without love being involved in it Natural love is always stained with selfishness Every one of us in this room.

There is no exception beginning with this preacher. Our natural love is selfish and If you do not have a radical transformation of your character It will remain selfish and if you don't continue to allow Christ to transform your character It will continue to be selfish The only way it can cease to be selfish is you have to have the Spirit of God's sanctifying work in your life changing you And if you don't seek it, it's not going to happen That's why marriages can be miserable things that have been like they have been for year after year after year after year Because the selfish nature has been there and they don't take care of it They don't believe in divorce, which is good But they don't do something of what they should is to make it a love relationship of what it's supposed to be And so he calls us to something that is deeper to this disinterest in

love But selfish love is always stained with selfishness. So what we often sacrifice to God to get rewards, don't we? I Mean, that's the whole prosperity message, isn't it? The whole prosperity message is raw humanism That's all it is all the prosperity preachers All they're giving you is raw humanism give to God so you can get back you give five bucks.

You'll get the tenfold return They're appealing to Humanistic desires inside of us and saying give for selfish reason and God will not reward selfish Motivations with it. He calls us to be selfless in our tithing and so know what that it means You have been so good to me God. It's a joy for me to give to you this 10% this little bit You've given me health you give me life you give me even more than that you give me salvation I Joyfully offer this to you because you've been so good It's not saying I'm trying to earn something back.

Will you reward me for it? Because the moment I make it selfish all Reward is lost It is in the selflessness Whether it's offerings whether it's ties whether it's giving in benevolence to the poor whatever it is to be that which is selfless reasons Not for selfish reasons. And so how often do we give to God to try and get back from how often do we sacrifice? For the praise of others you come to church and you do something here It's a criteria that you get a pat on the back from the pastor because if you don't get a pat on the back Then you won't be back and you have a hissy fit That means that sacrifice was not sacrifice that you were doing it for the praise of others. You were wanting wages You were working for wages the wages in this situation was the pat on the back It's selfish now, I don't want to paint this all bad we are in needy people It is nice to get the pat on the back And so we need to be affirming one another and that is a right thing We just have to get to the core what our motives are and when we see our motives God I did this for really selfish reasons.

Would you forgive me? And would you change me so that I would learn how to do this for selfless reasons that I would do this Whether anybody ever saw me that I would come in the middle of the night if I need to and clean the church Even if nobody ever knew I did it that you might be pleased with my sacrifice That's for you and you alone Not for anybody else that there'd be no puffing up and say look at me I sacrifice in the middle of the night I come but that is removed from all the selfish ambition That it might just be an expression of selfless love God. You're so good to me. I do this to you Now, you know, it'd be wonderful if you got up Monday morning And the first thing is you slid out of your knees out of bed on your knees And you said Jesus I give this day to you I offer to you as a as an expression of praise unto you Lord I don't necessarily like my job, but Lord, I want to do it all unto you as an expression of love Would you help me to make this an act of love for you? It might change how we work It might change Monday mornings It could really do some transforming in our lives if we turned everything we did as an expression of love for him Not for the praise of others.

How often do we sacrifice for feelings of self-worth? How often do we sacrifice that that's where I feel good about me. I feel good about myself. I'm giving I don't feel good about myself.

I'm not well, the problem is there's still selfishness It's all tainted with it because it's still about my need. It's not about the benefit of others. It's still about me I'm still the center of it Natural love is always stained with selfishness and part of the work of grace is to transform us that this love would become a selfless love and so this natural love always has limitations always Can only go so far Now he tells us that If I offer my body up and live all this sacrifice But do not have love.

He says I gain nothing think of that. I gain nothing Why does he gain nothing because he says all the sacrifice we do we did get something from we give to God to get money back We give to others so we get

praise back. We give to others so we can get advancement He says all that in the end you gain nothing what you sought to gain has been totally lost because you didn't gain anything of substance Imagine if you gained the Bill Gates fortune and lost your own soul What we think we gain in the natural we may get the praise of man The Pharisees gave money and they did it before others and they praised him as a result of it But all that they got was of no value to them because when they stood before God they found themselves in spiritual poverty They had nothing they gained nothing because what defined their life was humanism.

I Want to close with some final thoughts on selfless love disinterested love Because this is where he's calling us. This is the standard He's calling us to not to humanistic love that is barely off the ground that is so natural that anybody can do it He's calling us to something that is impossible for us to do that can be done through the grace of God alone And so to do it like I brought out is to love selflessly. We must be transformed by the power of God We cannot do it by ourselves.

It is what God does through us anybody. That's not a Christian cannot love selflessly There may be fleeting expressions of it because they're made in the image of God and just moments of it But 99% of their love is going to be humanistic natural because that's all they can be because that's all that they are and they Can't cease being what they are naturally The only way we can cease being that is through the transforming work of God So that means as an individual every time I see myself operating in selfish love I've got to go to him and say God forgive me change me I've got to begin to recognize it that I might cry out to him when that selfish love is Operating in me that I might see it change that I might cry out say God this thing's been in me so long I didn't realize how selfish I was God. Would you forgive me for my selfishness? Would you forgive me for how selfish I've been to my husband or to my wife or to my children God? I don't know how to be otherwise But I'm asking for grace that you could change me because I know there's power with you to make me other than I am And so there's power and repentance tremendous power But to love other selflessly we have to look at the only selfless one that there's ever been and you know There's only been one selfless one and that was Jesus The only one who walked this planet selflessly Was Jesus and if I want to see what selfless love is, I can't look at people I may see some good examples in some Christians, but I'm gonna still see the flaws But if you look at the face of Jesus, I will see absolute beautiful perfect love that is health to a home health to children health to a church health to a community and even health to a nation and If that becomes the goal says Jesus help me to love like you.

I Love like you so little would you help me to love like you a little bit more teach me how to do that? Because he is the only one that has modeled it in this world And he's the only one that can give us the power to do it one teacher the law Jesus made the statement about he says that he was not far from the kingdom of God and the teacher said to Jesus He says to love God with all of your heart with all of your understanding with all of your strength and to love your neighbors yourself is more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices He was bringing out the reality that the only way that we can love others is we have to love God supremely like we've looked at and when we love him supremely we will begin to love others So what I have to do like I brought out when I don't love my wife, right? What do I have to do? I have to look at Myself in my relationship with God because what I am between me and God is all I can be with others the more I am Transformed by him the more it will be revealed in others. God wants us to present Verifiable proof of our love for him the greatest demonstration of verifiable proof to Christ of My love for him supremely loving him is my love for others my selfless love for others The more I walk in selfless love towards others the more I have the verifiable proof of loving him supremely The more I give myself away for the well-being of others the more I can say Lord I'm getting to that place to love you

supremely because that is the greatest expression Here's a issue I want to touch on just for a couple of minutes before I come to a conclusion And this is a hard one, especially the older we get Do you know what happens as we get older we start building walls? Because we've been hurt every one of us in this room have been hurt except for maybe those little babies The older we get guess what we've got a larger history of birth, it's just what happened we live in a fallen world We're all flawed people now We shouldn't be as flawed as what we are some of the flaws we have is because we not dealt with them and So we're gonna hurt each other It's just reality you're gonna hurt each other So either you make the conscious choice that says I will love you even when you hurt me You know, it's gonna happen. You're gonna hurt each other.

You'll run away say well, I'm gonna go some other place They'll love me better. No, they won't there's still people there And so what do people do eventually say? Well, I'm not gonna go to church anymore because I've been hurt What happens is we will hurt each other. It's just I'm not trying to make it depressing.

I'm saying this is reality Either we're gonna choose to love each other or we're gonna have to check out of it and go live in the woods somewhere where Nobody's around and hug bears I guess and they're not gonna love you very well unless you're on their dinner menu What I'm getting to is the place of vulnerability what happens is when we build the walls we stop being vulnerable and When we build walls we cannot love selflessly Because then we love with contingencies. I'll only let you get this close because last time somebody got that close. They hurt me So I'm not gonna let you get close again because I got hurt and I'm tired of being hurt Well, you want to know I'm very glad Jesus didn't come to that point and say look I'm tired of being hurt since I came on this planet the moment I was born Eric tried to kill me I've been running ever since from people that were out to abuse me and take my life this three and a half years I've been on the on the ministry road.

You've hated me. You pursued me. You hunted me You attacked me and now you want me to die.

So I'm tired of it I'm glad he didn't come to an end, right? He persisted his love was a selfless love for our benefit He didn't get the benefit from all the pain and suffering he gave for us. It was that we got the benefit from it He paid the price for our salvation from his disinterested love. We benefit he became vulnerable and So the opposite of vulnerability is this self-protection we protect ourselves we build the walls says I'm gonna live a safe life I don't want to be hurt How many times do people stop? ministering to others whether it's in the church or outside church because they've been hurt and so they stopped doing it how many people have Been hurt in the past and they check out of ministry There may be some of you here that you were once active in the church and you've been hurt and as a result of being Hurt you've checked out of it now and you're sitting on the sidelines not wanting to do anything because you says well I was once hurt This is a very important issue because the only way we're gonna love is we have to make ourselves vulnerable If we're not gonna make ourselves vulnerable to others We will not love and if we will not love will not know what love is Because the only way I'm gonna know what love is is I have to make myself lovable Which means I must make myself vulnerable for me to know the love of God I've got to make myself vulnerable to him the more vulnerable I become to him the more I open up He's gonna know the secret place of my life.

Anyway, it's just I open them up freely to him and say look at here Look at the ugliness we do something about it And he won't reject me for it If I cry for his help and transformation as I make myself vulnerable to him He'll begin to change me and as I make myself vulnerable to him I will learn how to rightly make

myself vulnerable to others because apart from that I won't give myself away I've got to give myself away to love if I will not give myself away. I cannot love You hear that? We won't reach a perishing world. If we stay in the church, we've got to give ourselves away We've got to give ourselves away and that's what selfless love will call us to you Jesus told us in the Gospel of John in the 12th chapter and 25th verse So the man who loves his life will lose it while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal Life he was saying if you seek to preserve your life, you're gonna lose it But if you want to gain life you have to give it away That is a principle of Christ throughout the Gospels the aspect of dying to live of giving yourself away that you might have life It is absolutely necessary We cannot love like Christ without his transforming power and we'll never begin to love selflessly Until we see how selfishly we have loved and I want to say this rightly we can beat ourselves up, right? We beat ourselves up before heaven has it done any good and You know beating ourselves up.

It has nothing to do with repentance It has to do with guilt, but let me clarify this for a moment guilt is a gift from God It began in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned guilt came guilt is a gift There's some new teaching out there to try and say guilt is bad That's a lie from the pit of hell It removes conviction because that's what conviction is conviction brings guilt it reveals the reality of our sin That is a very good thing It is a gift of God tells us Romans 2 for that It is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance leading us to repentance is the aspect of God revealing our guilt but guilt not dealt with Becomes this abusive thing if I don't deal with the gift of God of his conviction in my life I'll start taking it and clubbing myself with it. And now it becomes self-abusive The beating of ourselves up is not one of two things The first thing is either my not repenting or it's not my receiving forgiveness Or let's say not receiving accepting forgiveness God can forgive me when I repent is sometimes I don't forgive myself and that's not God's fault. That's my fault And So here we are given this phenomenal gift of repentance But that means I have to be honest with myself when I'm not loving one reason why we don't want to deal with ourselves Because we don't want to deal with the guilt But if you look in the mirror and you say God I've been a selfish pig today.

Would you forgive me? Would you change me? Well, you want to know what there's some tremendous power in that because you can begin to see it and the next time you do The same thing you'll see it again. You'll say God I did again. Forgive me.

Don't beat yourself up It does no good repent and cry out for his transforming power because you know, what's gonna happen the third fourth fifth time You'll start catching yourself and you'll find yourself doing it less and less until eventually you have conquered that It is how we deal with it If we ignore that thing will stay in our life and be a nightmare or thorn in our flesh of our marriage But if we deal with it, there's victory there'll be victory at the end of it If we will really deal with it Repentance is a beautiful gift and with that gift of repentance then comes the crucified life that I have to crucify these very Things that stop me from loving what are the things that stop you from loving? He's calling you to nail it to a cross He's calling you to deal with those things What has caused you to live a life that that puts all the barriers around that you'll not make yourself vulnerable He calls you to deal with those things to crucify it He calls you to nail those to the cross because through dying to them He offers you life his life through it And so he gives you this wonderful gift of repentance and of the crucified life that you might find victory over because that is the path to love you will not love apart from using those two tools of Repentance and the crucified life if you don't apply those those to your life You will never mature in love your love will stay a humanistic self-absorbed type of life because the only way we can overcome it is through the transforming power of God that will come through repentance and Crucifying those things that are contrary to it the benefit of it.

The benefit of it is as I walk that walk I start learning how to love and as I learn how to love I will find the greatest fulfillment in my life through loving selflessly The more I love him selflessly the more I make myself a lovable person that I can Experience his love in a greater way and you know the more I have found in my years of marriage With this woman the more I strive to love her selflessly the more I find her trying to love me selflessly and It becomes such a reciprocal thing that we have a wonderful marriage is there no flaws in it, that's not true I've got a lot of garbage I still dealing with in my life and I will to my dying day that I got to continue to crucify that old nature that Wants to keep rearing its ugly head, but I'm not the man I was I'm not the man. I was when I was first saved that she married Been a radical change that he's done and I have every intention on not being the man I am right now a year from now I have every intention for him to do a greater and deeper work me because I refuse to stay where I'm at I refuse to accept the things that are in my life that he's putting his finger on to say son you need to change us Because he is out for my well-being

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