

## **Spiritual Discipline for Spiritual Growth: *Loving the Unlovable***

Rush hour traffic. Long grocery lines. Professional sporting events. Youth sporting events. Some marriages. Social media. Your heart. At times, All of these have the same thing in common..a lack of love. This word is probably the most commonly thrown around word. “Oh, I LOVE that movie” or “I LOVE the smell of coffee in the morning”. You see, we overuse the word “love” in our vocabulary. That’s not a bad thing but how many times do we “love” the smell of coffee over “loving” the person that cuts us off in traffic? Or “loving” the person who doesn’t look, smell or live like us?

The word “love” is mentioned 714 times in the Bible. So it’s fair to say that love is an important word. Especially when it comes to loving those around us or, dare I say, even loving ourselves. So how is love a spiritual discipline for spiritual growth? In order to grow spiritually, you must have a relationship with God. *I*

***John 4:8- "The one who doesn't love has yet to know God, for God is love."*** If

we don’t love other people, we can’t know and love God. This passage is telling us that it’s impossible to love God if we don’t love other people.

### **1. Loving Others is a Choice**

**Galatians 5:13-** "Beloved ones, God has called us to live a life of freedom. But don't view this wonderful freedom as an excuse to set up a base of operations in the natural realm. Constantly love each other and be committed to serve one another." God has given us the freedom to choose to love. If we love God like we say we do it's important for us to love other people.

**1 John 4:20-21** "Anyone can say, "I love God," yet have hatred toward another believer. This makes him a phony, because if you don't love a brother or sister, whom you can see, how can you truly love God, whom you can't see? For he has given us this command: whoever loves God must also demonstrate love to others."

(Younger years)

## **2. Love is not Just Words but a Demonstration**

(Woman at the well in John 4) (Woman who committed adultery in John 8)

**1 John 3:15,16-** Everyone who keeps hating a fellow believer is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him. This is how we have discovered love's reality: Jesus sacrificed his life for us. Because of this great love, we should be willing to lay down our lives for one another.

**John 3:16-** 16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (NIV)

**1 Corinthians 13:1-8** If I were to speak with eloquence in earth's many languages, and in the heavenly tongues of angels, yet I didn't express myself with love, my words

would be reduced to the hollow sound of nothing more than a clanging cymbal. And if I were to have the gift of prophecy with a profound understanding of God's hidden secrets, and if I possessed unending supernatural knowledge, and if I had the greatest gift of faith that could move mountains, but have never learned to love, then I am nothing. And if I were to be so generous as to give away everything I owned to feed the poor, and to offer my body to be burned as a martyr, without the pure motive of love, I would gain nothing of value. Love is large and incredibly patient. Love is gentle and consistently kind to all. It refuses to be jealous when blessing comes to someone else. Love does not brag about one's achievements nor inflate its own importance. Love does not traffic in shame and disrespect, nor selfishly seek its own honor. Love is not easily irritated or quick to take offense. Love joyfully celebrates honesty and finds no delight in what is wrong. Love is a safe place of shelter, for it never stops believing the best for others. Love never takes failure as defeat, for it never gives up. Love never stops loving. It extends beyond the gift of prophecy, which eventually fades away. It is more enduring than tongues, which will one day fall silent. Love remains long after words of knowledge are forgotten.

If you were to substitute your name in place of the word love in this passage, could you do it without lying? Are you patient? Are you kind? Do you honor others? Do you honor yourself? Do you rejoice with the truth? When other people have wronged you, do you hold that over their head? Sometimes, it is enough to tell someone you love them. Other times, people need to see that

you love them. When we don't feel loved, we feel like something is wrong with us. We feel like we aren't worthy to receive love.

(Will Smith dad episode)

**William 'Will' Smith** : Daddy-O! What's up?

**Lou Smith** : Will. Man, I'm glad you're here. Some business came up I gotta handle. So we're gonna have to put our trip on hold. You understand.

**William 'Will' Smith** : *[pause]* Yeah, that's cool.

**Lou Smith** : Just for a couple of weeks.

**William 'Will' Smith** : I understand.

**Lou Smith** : Maybe a little longer.

**William 'Will' Smith** : Yeah, whatever. Whatever.

**Lou Smith** : Look, I'll call you next week and we'll iron out the details. Okay?

**William 'Will' Smith** : Yeah, yeah.

**Lou Smith** : It was great seeing you, son.

**William 'Will' Smith** : You too... Lou.

**Philip Banks** : *[after Lou cancels his trip with Will and leaves]*  
I'm sorry, Will.

Psh. You know, actually this works out better for me.

Why should I be mad? At least he said goodbye this time. I just wish I hadn't wasted my money buying this stupid present. Hey, you know what, you ain't here to do nothing, you know? Ain't like I'm still five years old, you know? Ain't like I'm going to be sitting up every night, asking my mom "When's

Daddy coming home?" you know? Who needs him? Hey, he wasn't there to teach me how to shoot my first basket, but I learned, didn't I? And I got pretty darn good at it, too, didn't I, Uncle Phil? Got through my first date without him. I learned how to drive, I learned how to shave, I learned how to fight without him. I had fourteen great birthdays without him. He never even sent me a dang card. Forget him! I ain't need him then and I don't need him now. No, you know what, Uncle Phil? I'm gonna get through college without him, I'm gonna get me a great job without him, I'm gonna marry me a beautiful honey, I'm gonna have me a whole bunch of kids, and be a better father than he ever was. And I sure as heck don't need him for that, because there ain't a dang thing he could ever teach me about how to love my kids. *(beat)* How come he don't want me, man?

(Close)