

Unconditional Love

talk given at Christian's Women's Fellowship by Paul Blakey

[Video introduction to Street Angels](#)

Love - complex word, multitudes of meanings - love chocolate, Jean, God - how does God love us? Same way as chocolate? As a parent loves a child or husband and wife

This morning - unpack what we mean by the word love. Communicating Christian message to others we need to ask what do others understand of the message?

What is love - what do we understand by the word love?

Googled love - 'what is love' is the most popular Google search - this is a question people are asking!

Wikipedia says: Ancient Greeks identified four forms of love: kinship or familiarity (in Greek, *storge*), friendship (*philia*), sexual and/or romantic desire (*eros*), and self-emptying or divine love (*agape*).^{[4][5]} Modern authors have distinguished further varieties of romantic love.^[6] Non-Western traditions have also distinguished variants or symbioses of these states.^[7] This diversity of uses and meanings combined with the complexity of the feelings involved makes love unusually difficult to consistently define, compared to other emotional states.

Google - Love online store / in love with fashion / love activating brands - love is a marketing tool, a commodity - buy stuff and you will have love

Love calculator - Jean and I scored 69% - Dr. Love thinks that a relationship between Paul Blakey and Jean Blakey has a reasonable chance of working out, but on the other hand, it might not.

BBC gave us the science of love

The Guardian offered us love is chemistry, love has many guises, love is a passionate commitment, love drives all great stories, the digital nun tells us love is free yet binds us.

Secondly set up a stall in a Calderdale high school and asked the young people:

How would you describe love?

Cool, patient, unending
caring and cute

never gives up
very good
a feeling
brings people together
a warm feeling, amazing
trust and protecting each other
cute, faithful, loving
its a nice feeling and you should respect your partner
Scary
when you like something a lot
a wonderful thing
very good
wonderful
happy and caring
having passion in someone
friendly, trust
sick
something that lasts forever
cute and non secrative
love is love
love is a beautiful thing / a beautiful feeling
hopeful
being loyal
complicated

What is best example of true love you have ever seen?

Harry and his cat (few answers!)
friendship
mum and dad
Titanic
kiss
Pinochio
forgiveness, caring, loving
share things
Shrek
with my parents
should say The Bible but I think a Vampire book
kiss, sacrifice
films
hugging, talking and kissing
Jesus

Father Christmas
Lukas and Tamarah
on movies and TV
Grandma and Grandad married for 50 years
prince and princess
Corrie
Romeo and Juliette
being protective
someone caring for someone else
a wedding
romance
happy ending
loyalty
on Benidorm

What do songs tell us about love?

Nat King Cole - 'When I fall in love'
Whitney Houston - 'Saving all my love for you'
Al Green - 'Still in love with you'
The Beatles - 'all you need is love' / Can't Buy Me Love
Mariah Carey 'visions of love'
The Bee Gees 'how deep is your love'
Dolly Parton 'I will always love you'
Queen 'crazy little thing called love'
Ray Charles - 'can't stop loving you'
Stevie Wonder - 'I just called to say I love you'
Frankie Lymon And The Teenagers - Why Do Fools Fall in Love
Cliff Richard and The Shadows - I love you
Elvis Presley - Can't Help Falling In Love
Brian Poole and The Tremeloes - Do You Love Me
Peter and Gordon - A World Without Love
Searchers - Don't Throw Your Love Away
Righteous Brothers - You've Lost That Loving Feeling
Sandie Shaw - Long Live Love
Dusty Springfield - You Don't Have To Say You Love Me
Bobby Gentry - I'll Never Fall In Love Again
Little Jimmy Osmond - Long Haired Lover From Liverpool
Wet Wet Wet - Love Is All Around

What does the Bible say about love? Top 10! (all taken from [The Message version](#))

1 Corinthians 13 - If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate. If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, "Jump," and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing. If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love.

Love never gives up.
Love cares more for others than for self.
Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.
Love doesn't strut,
Doesn't have a swelled head,
Doesn't force itself on others,
Isn't always "me first,"
Doesn't fly off the handle,
Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,
Doesn't revel when others grovel,
Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,
Puts up with anything,
Trusts God always,
Always looks for the best,
Never looks back,
But keeps going to the end.

Love never dies.. Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.

John 3:16 - This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again.

John 13 34-35 - "Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other."

Mark 12:30-31 - love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy.' And here is the second: 'Love others as well as you love yourself.' There is no other commandment that ranks with these."

Romans 12:9 - Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.

Romans 13:10 - Don't run up debts, except for the huge debt of love you owe each other. When you love others, you complete what the law has been after all along. The law code—don't sleep

with another person's spouse, don't take someone's life, don't take what isn't yours, don't always be wanting what you don't have, and any other "don't" you can think of—finally adds up to this: Love other people as well as you do yourself. You can't go wrong when you love others. When you add up everything in the law code, the sum total is *love*.

Ephesians 4:2 - pour yourselves out for each other in acts of love

1 Peter 4:8 - Love makes up for practically anything. Be quick to give a meal to the hungry, a bed to the homeless—cheerfully. Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it:

1 John 4 - let us continue to love each other since love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn't know the first thing about God, because God *is* love—so you can't know him if you don't love. This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God. My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us—perfect love! ... Loving God includes loving people. You've got to love both.

Colossians 3:14 - And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.

Lots of people have lots to say about love - I think:

Love has to be demonstrated not just spoken.

Love is not a word but an action

Love is not something we say rather something we do

Louise Casey is in charge of the Government's Troubled Families programme and has been for 2 years - in a [Guardian interview](#) she said:

Tony Blair's former Asbo czar was appointed by David Cameron last year to turn around 120,000 of England's most damaged and damaging families, through a programme designed to replace the old multi-agency muddle with intensive intervention. Each family is assigned a dedicated worker, whose success isn't measured by bureaucratic box-ticking but by the actual change they make. This week Casey announced that they have already turned around 22,000 families, and are on course to transform the rest by 2015.

Louise Casey said at a conference: "All of what we do turns on something very simple: the relationship between the worker and the family, None of us changes because we are given a report or an analysis. We have to feel that we want to change and know how to change. The difference with family intervention is that they make people believe in themselves. Remember the humanity in it. Forget which agency you are from, and remember the human being."

In an interview with The Guardian paper she say of her work with troubled families - "I completely understand and believe that the thing that is missing in all of this is love" I've been pretty consistent about saying this is not just about spending loads more money, but about behaving differently and getting a different relationship."

"Because some of what people are exposed to is so hard, we create strategies and structures around them to protect the worker, which means we can no longer get to the person we are trying to work with. I think we need to bring back, actually, some emotional exposure, the ability to be human, the ability to empathise, not to be fearful of empathy. Instead we all walk around in these big protective clothes."

"We spend the afternoon visiting families being supported by the programme in Leeds, and the stories of lives drowning in ceaseless violence and abuse, mental illness, gang murders, kidnaps, care, prison, are overwhelming. Along with vast numbers of children, another surprisingly common theme is vast numbers of pets – one team member once even found a horse in a family's living room, and another describes her eyes streaming in a house literally soaked with ammonia from the urine of 10 cats and five dogs. "It looks mad, until you realise they want all those pets because they know their pets will always love them," is the explanation."

As church it is not enough to say 'God so loved the world' or 'Jesus loves you' we have to demonstrate that this is a reality for individuals and our community. I believe, and I see, that the church is in one of the best positions and is one of the most recognised organisations to be able to deliver an action of love to others.

If we are going to help tackle the deepest needs in our communities we need to consider what is most damaging and dehumanizing to those in our nation.

Groups - discuss - thoughts on what heard so far, what the Louise Casey article says, what society says about love, what is the most damaging and dehumanizing to those in our nation?

Jesus is the only teacher / philosophy / viewpoint / faith that goes to the extremes of loving your enemy and going as far as becoming a servant.

Luke 6:35 - "I tell you, love your enemies. Help and give without expecting a return. You'll

never—I promise—regret it. Live out this God-created identity the way our Father lives toward us, generously and graciously, even when we're at our worst. Our Father is kind; you be kind.

The model of love that Jesus offers the world is that of KENARCHY - synthesis of the Greek words *kenō* (to empty) and *arkhō* (to rule) - this is the love Jesus calls us to have, an “emptied out” love for the world. Jesus emptied out sovereign power in love for the world - a model of love measured by readiness to die for others, even your enemies.

Taken from **Philippians 2**

If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you *care*—then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.

Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became *human*! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.

Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings in heaven and on earth—even those long ago dead and buried—will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ, and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father.

What I'm getting at, friends, is that you should simply keep on doing what you've done from the beginning. When I was living among you, you lived in responsive obedience. Now that I'm separated from you, keep it up. Better yet, redouble your efforts. Be energetic in your life of salvation, reverent and sensitive before God. That energy is *God's* energy, an energy deep within you, God himself willing and working at what will give him the most pleasure.

Do everything readily and cheerfully—no bickering, no second-guessing allowed! Go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God. Carry the light-giving Message into the night so I'll have good cause to be proud of you on the day that Christ returns. You'll be living proof that I didn't go to all this work for nothing.

Unconditional love is a demonstration, action, doing, emptying out - God so loved the world he

GAVE!

As Church and as Christians we are the demonstration of God loving the world today. We are called to be the ones who live out Philipians 2 as a reality - to be a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society

Looking back in history 50, 60, 70 years the church was at the heart of education, social reform, welfare system, health system - the Government either took them of us or we gave them away! In reality we have spent time since not quite knowing our place in society - now the money has run out we are gaining our job back!

God's Kingdom come, God's will be done, on earth as in heaven.

God's kingdom is place of love, ultimate love, underserved, unconditional, poured out love - God isn't going to do anything else to make the Kingdom a reality on earth - he gave his son Jesus, who became a servant to others - time of washing feet he was at his strongest as a leader and as God - who lived a radical life, died a radical death, went to hell, offered forgiveness of sin - for all people for all time, came back to life, gave his Holy Spirit - according to Ephesians 1 'the same Spirit, the same power that raised Christ from the dead is in you'

My understanding is that it is down to us - with the Holy Spirit's help and guidance yes - but God's Kingdom on earth - unconditional love on earth, is to made reality by the church!

What Jesus did was so amazing, fantastic, so extraordinary, so loving and forgiving it is the ultimate act of undeserved love - period, without end, for all time, for all humanity.

This is the unconditional love people need to see demonstrated!

Touched upon washing feet - ultimate demonstration of love, kingdom, leadership and power

The Sanktuary Street Angels in Telford tell the story of one of the volunteers on his knees cleaning up the foot of a girl who had stood in glass. As he was removing the glass and wiping away the blood he had a vision of Jesus at the side of him who said, "when I told you to wash feet I meant it!" As he finished the girl said, "God bless you" to which he replied "I think he just as!"

In Halifax we once had a Polish man in the cafe who had moved from Poland and lived homeless for 3 weeks - I was in the kitchen and suddenly realised the cafe had emptied as this man had taken his shoes and socks off - probably, by the smell, for the first time since leaving Poland! The cafe filled with the aroma - what this man wanted more than anything was to soak his feet in soapy water.

Street Angels were around in Nazereth Jesus would be on the team cleaning up feet and offering flip-flops!

Love that is action, love that demonstrates God's Kingdom as reality for every area of someone's life.

Its fantastic that the church is getting its place in our society back again! Number one agency of change, transformation, hope, redemption and life.

Almost every area of need, the areas that dehumanize people, the church is the lead organisation delivering real lasting change:

Debt - [Christians Against Poverty](#) - help 20,000 people a year out of debt!, community money advice, credit unions

Human Trafficking - [CALLA](#), [A21](#), [ALove](#), [Hope for Justice](#) - church is at forefront of seeking change and helping those trafficked

Drugs - agencies like [Teen Challenge](#) and many localised drug support and overcoming courses

Hunger - [foodbanks](#), Halifax give out 150 food parcels a week, offer prayer and support to get people away from dependency, recently baptised and confirmed a dozen people

Marriage - [Marriage course](#) - becoming recognised as the course to go on if you are struggling in marriage and also as marriage preparation

Alcohol - support for those addicted, [alcoholics anonymous](#), [Wash My Pink Jumper](#), [Street Angels Alcohol and Safety Education pack](#)

Troubled communities at night - [Street Angels](#) - [CNI Network](#) / [Street Pastors](#) - 300 communities, crime reduced, anti-social behaviour reduced - towns changed from binge to better

[Caring for ex-offenders](#) and [prison reform](#) - helping ex-offenders to get away from old habits and friends

Providing lunch for children on free school lunches over school holidays - [Makelunch](#)

Running [Job clubs](#) - helping people get back into employment

Visiting the [lonely elderly](#) - such an area of need as people live longer - church is at heart of this

Providing extra [nursing support](#) - especially with those and in areas NHS struggles to fund

Supporting young people struggling at school - HYP, young people training and jobs

Night shelters, homeless hostels, homes for homeless

Schools work around faith, ethical and moral issues - [CICS Calderdale](#)

Talking to Young people about sex and relationships - [Romance Academy](#)

Running youth provision - [ROC cafes](#), youth clubs, [Youth Angels](#) - crime reduced in areas where ROC Cafes run!

[ROC](#) - debt centres, advice centres, elderly day-care, community forums, restorative justice (partnership church, police...)

'The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church.'
Ephesians 1

It is exciting that the church once again has its rightful place in society!

Demonstrating God's kingdom as a reality - seeking justice for injustice, offering underserved love

Gods kingdom come...

Hugely challenged by **Amos 5** (from The Message)

"I can't stand your religious meetings.

I'm fed up with your conferences and conventions.

I want nothing to do with your religion projects,

your pretentious slogans and goals.

I'm sick of your fund-raising schemes,

your public relations and image making.

I've had all I can take of your noisy ego-music.

When was the last time you sang to *me*?

Do you know what I want?

I want justice—oceans of it.

I want fairness—rivers of it.

That's what I want. That's *all* I want.

Matthew 25 - what you do for others is what matters - if there truly is a movement of God it will come down from the worship into real action on social issues - Fairtrade is a great example of this, pioneered by Christians and now an accepted part of society.

I count it a privilege to be part of this movement of change - hallmarks of SA is that crime is reduced and communities at night are changed from binge to better. It is wrong that communities become no go areas for people and people live by fear - God inspired the vision of Street Angels to be an answer to that!

Lot to take in - be encouraged - underserved love is a reality, emptied out lives for others is happening day in and day out - not the big stuff - everyday little things that count in the lives of others - all Jesus did was wash someones feet - yet that was the ultimate demonstration of love, kingdom, leadership and power.

Visit [Love Your Streets](#) and take part in the [#Do1NiceThing](#) daily Lent challenge!

Finish with some quotes:

Pope - *"I prefer a church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security"*

Victoria Fagg - Community Pastors, Ramsgate - *"I think that there is something so powerful that happens in the spiritual atmosphere when we love unconditionally - when we action the truth of what we know and have experienced with Jesus, it tears down walls, breaks through barriers. Some of our interactions may well be a seed that is watered and nurtured by someone else but we get the ground ready. God knows what he is doing."*

Bono - *"If only we could be a bit more like Him, the world would be transformed."*

Milton Jones - *"apart from being involved at the beginning of science, systems of government, philosophy, art, schools, hospitals, the emancipation of women, the abolition of slavery, social welfare, helping form the basis of the moral code most people live by, and introducing popular notions of justice, mercy, decency and compassion – what has Christianity ever really done for the world?"*