

CHURCH OF THE HIGHLANDS

The Most Excellent Way

Full Transcript

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February 17, 2026

Duration: 34:17

Introduction: The Brown Plastic Problem

- 0:41 Good morning, church. I was ready to get my leg warmers on when that track started playing. We had a little 80s vibe going on as we are in the Loveology series. And I get to be in week two of Loveology. Last week, Pastor Mark did an excellent job of helping us all understand that God is the definition of love. And so therefore, we have to receive the love before we can even begin to understand how to give away that love. And there was a beautiful moment as God's Spirit moved. And I know many of you were helped to understand the receiving of God's love in increased measure. And I think all of us last week were yesing and amening the message.
- 1:32 I know I was. But then we come to week two. And I get the one where maybe you won't be yesing and amening more than you're elbowing and shaking your head at someone nearby. Because I get to talk to us about how we live that love out in our relationships. If God is love, we have to understand that we therefore have to learn how to live that love out. And before you get your scorecard out, before you start become the judge and jury of how well or how badly someone is doing when it comes to expressing love in your life. Let me just share a little story that happened to me a couple of weeks ago.
- 2:15 Let me just share a little story that happened to me a couple of weeks ago. Let me just share a little story that happened to me a couple of weeks ago. Let me just share a little story that happened to me a couple of months ago. We are in our new home in Alabama. This is home sweet home Alabama for the Gambles now. And we're learning all Alabamian things. But we're in our home. And I kept finding in our home this brown plastic. It was like this brown stuff. And I had no idea where it was coming from. And I'm like, is it from the builders? Is it something left over from construction? And I would tidy it up and clear it up.
- 2:44 And then it would just disappear. And then it would reappear. I'm like, what is going on? And so I went down the track that we probably all would go down, which is someone is responsible for this brown plastic. And I am going to find out who it is. And so I began my interrogation of the family members. I asked my children, have you dropped something? Have you opened something? It kind of looked like raw pasta. So I'm like, did you drop the pasta on the floor? Have you walked the pasta around the house? They're looking at me like, no, mom, I didn't do that. It wasn't me. Maybe it was my sister. So I interrogate the sister.
- 3:19 It's not her either. I'm like, it must be dad. It must be my husband. And so I'm interrogating him. Did you lose or drop? But no, no, everyone is saying it's not me. And so then we start theorising about what it could be. I even take a photograph of it, go on Google to say, what is this stuff? Google's like, I have no clue. I'm like, thank you. Neither do I. And so then we come up with this theory, which is it's in the vacuum cleaner. And when we use the vacuum cleaner, it is spitting out black, brown plastic from when we had construction done. I'm like, great theory. But then the house was clean and then it appeared and no one had used the vacuum cleaner.

- 3:58 So the theory didn't hold up. And then we had some friends come to stay and I thought the house was clean. My friend goes upstairs, comes downstairs and she says, I found some brown plastic in our bedroom. I'm like, ah.
- 4:14 About 48 hours later, my friend, shrieks from our kitchen, she goes, I found the brown plastic. So I rush to a basket, which she is standing by. In the basket are moi's slippers. She holds up my slippers and the bottom of the brown plastic that is the sole of my slippers is disintegrating. And in that moment, I had a revelation from a song that is well -known by a popular artist. And the song title is this. It is me, I'm the problem, it's me. And I'm sharing that story with you because as I'm about to talk about living love, I
- 5:00 Sit in the seat of, it's me, I'm the problem, it's me. Before you blame your spouse, before you blame your children, before you start bringing up theories of why things feel or are a certain way, I think we all need a moment where we ask ourselves, is there something I could fit? That would help actually everything in my life be better because I'm learning to live love out first. So today, put your judgmental scorecard away and instead be very aware of maybe the brown plastic beneath your own feet. I had been blaming everyone and while I was walking around the house, blaming everyone, I was dropping brown plastic on my way. So often in life, that's the way it is.

Stand at the Crossroads: The Jeremiah Passage

- 5:49 And so today when we're talking about how do we love better, how do we live love out better, we've got to begin with ourselves. And you know, when I was thinking about what I was bringing to us this morning, church, I began to think about how oftentimes our relational life, the life of all of the different levels of relationship, it is so complex and it is so precious. And yet so often we handle it with such crazy care, carelessness. We speak too soon. We act too quickly. We decide things without taking the time to properly think through the repercussions of our decision. And as I was getting ready to speak to you about living love out, I found God take me to a scripture that at first seemed to make no sense.

6:39

Jeremiah 6:16

This is what the Lord says: Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.

- 7:25 Jeremiah 6, 16, he says this. This is what the Lord says. Stand at the crossroads and look. Ask for the ancient paths and ask where the good way is and walk in it. And you will find rest for your souls. This is, just a few sentences. But today I put before you this wisdom that could save so many of you from the collisions you keep getting yourself in relationally. So many times we have a theory of love, like you have a theory of driving and you do the theory test and you read all the statistics and you learn all of the road signs. But just because you have the theory down does not mean you know how to drive.
- 8:19 And just because some of you aced it on Valentine's Day, hello, does not mean you know how to love. Just because you wrote a card with a lot of words in it does not mean you know how to live love out. So I'm sorry for those that are sitting here thinking I did good yesterday. I'm about to ask you to run a check across the whole way that you live your life. And so this is a warning that God's saying, hey, you're

making some decisions. You're making some decisions. making some decisions. You're making some decisions too hastily. Hey, you're saying some stuff too quickly. And some of you need rest for your souls today. I feel so strongly in my spirit when I was preparing this message that some of you are so worn out relationally, exhausted, whether it's with your children or in your marriage or in a set of family circumstances or something to do with friendships, but you feel weary, frustrated.

Slow Down: The First Instruction

- ^{9:16} And today I want you to know there is rest for your soul. I might not have the way to fix it, but I have a way that I want to put before you today that if you walk in this way, you're gonna find rest for your soul. This is saying number one, slow down. Turn to the person next to you and say, whoa, slow down. Slow down, slow down. Everything to do with living love out, everything to do with our relational world, it is so consequential. Every decision you make has something on the other side that you're either gonna learn to love or something that's gonna bring you pain. And yet we make so many decisions without slowing down.
- ^{10:05} Whoa, slow down. Don't say it, I know you feel it. Don't say it, hold it. Slow down, don't make that decision just because you're desperate. Hold it. Hey, hey, hey. I know that you feel like you're lonely, but there's worse things than being lonely, and that's marrying someone just to fix lonely. Whoa, slow down, slow down. I know you think your life is over because you're 15 and you're on the shelf, but you're 15, slow down. And all the parents said, amen. Slow down, slow down. But passion races and desire drives and resentment. Resentment avoids, and so all of our emotions get in the driving seat, and then we wonder why our relational life is one collision after another.
- ^{10:59} One head -on collision with our kids after another. One car crash after another. It's because we are trying to go too fast before we learn how to actually live love out. And so God's advice to His people is whoa, slow down. Slow down, you're at a crossroads right now. Stop, and some of you, I felt this today, some of you are literally at a relational crossroads. You're literally here at a crossroads about what to do with a son or a daughter, what to do in a marriage, what to do with a parent, what to do with a child, what to do with a friend, and you're at a crossroads. And before you just power through,
- ^{11:41} Because you know how to power through, maybe you need to slow down. You need to slow down, the second thing that Jeremiah says is then you gotta ask. Why is it we ask for help in every other area but not our relationships? I'll talk to you about the weather. I'll talk to you about your sports team. I'll talk to you about what's happening in your job, but I ain't gonna talk to you about my marriage. I ain't gonna talk to you about my dysfunctional parenting relationship. I'm not gonna talk to you about the fact that I've not spoken to my brother or my sibling for the last 15 years. Why do we not ask? We ask for help in the area that actually costs us so much pain in our soul.

Ask for the Ancient Way: 1 Corinthians 13

- 12:21 It's the way of the world to not ask, and yet God says through Jeremiah, you're at a crossroads, ask, and don't just ask anybody. Hello. It says ask for the ancient paths. What does that mean? The tried and tested paths. In other words, you don't ask the friend whose last three relationships were a disaster just like yours. You don't ask your peer who can't hold down a relationship just like you can. You don't ask the bitter person that's mad from the last thing that they were in about what to do with the thing you're in. No, whoa. You ask for the tried and tested way. What does that mean? Well, it's the root word in the Hebrew of olam, which is the everlasting way, and God gave us a way.
- 13:13 He gave us a way. And so I know, I know some of you are praying, God, give me a sign. Give me a sign in my marriage. Give me a sign in my parenting. Give me a sign in this relationship. Hold it, I got a sign. I got a sign.
- 13:35 I got a great big sign for your life. God gave you a sign. He actually gave you a sign in 1 Corinthians 13. He gave you a sign of the day. A direction of living love out. He actually made a way for you to follow. It's a tried and tested way. And so it says in 1 Corinthians 13,
- 14:08 In other words, if I have all the theory and no practise, it's no use. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries, knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. In other words, the reason why you feel empty is because you're doing a lot, but you're not living a life of love. Doing is different than being. I don't need you to do all the great things one day a year called Valentine's Day. I need you to be love.
- 14:56 I need you to live love. I need you to speak love, okay? It's me, I'm the problem, it's me, all right? So let's look at the way of love. Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy. It does not hate. It does not boast. It is not proud. It does not dishonor others. It is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. Ask for the ancient way. Ask for the tried and tested way. And then God gives us in this book the way of love.
- 15:58 You wanna know what love lived out looks for? This is the way. Some of us are often asking God to fix a problem while we're walking the wrong way. God fixed my marriage, but you're walking the way of anger. God sought out my kids, but you're walking the way of impatience. God fixed that thing in my extended family, but you're walking the way of dishonor. I can't walk, if you're walking the wrong way, I can't show you the way. And I felt today like some are gonna be here and it's gonna be up in your face a little bit. It's okay, it's just a lot of Jesus going on. He's just trying to help you and he's just trying to get some of you to do a U-turn so you can walk out of here the right way because some of you came in the wrong way.

Love Is Patient: The Posture of Waiting

- 16:46 Love has a way. And so let's look at a couple of the things that are the way of love just so we are clear what love way looks like. Love has a posture that is patient. I don't know about you, but I'm not the most patient person in the world. My patience sometimes looks like this.

17:10

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

17:51 He doesn't wag the finger and chase the boy to the places that he knows the boy will never find what he's looking for. But he patiently waits and he patiently loves because he knows at some point in time, this boy is gonna realise there's no love down the bar. There's no love in the pig pen. There's no love in the place that you think love is. And when he realises, the Bible says, when he comes to his senses, he's gonna go back to where he knows love. Love lives not where impatience lives.

18:25

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

18:54 Impatience makes something happen because I'm just gonna make something happen. But whatever you make happen, you still have to raise. And God promised there was an Isaac coming. Yes and amen. God promised there was an Isaac coming. And listen to me, God has promised some of you an Isaac in a relationship or an Isaac in a situation. God's promised you he's gonna do what he said he's gonna do, but it didn't happen when you thought it would. So you're about to walk the wrong way and create an Ishmael. Which by the way, once he's created, it has to be taken care of by you, has to be cared for by you. You don't need an Ishmael when you know there's an Isaac coming.

19:33 But impatience will tell you you do, so we gotta learn that love is patient. It also says that love's cadence is kind. I think we use the word kind a lot, but I'm not sure we really know how to be kind. I'm not sure we really understand that. understand how love is kind, because kindness is not just an action, but kindness is the way you are. It's the way you speak. It's the way you think. It's the way that you actually plan. In other words, if I was to say how kindness works, I'd say kindness always sees the person before the problem.

Love Is Kind and Fluent in Forgiveness

20:17 Kindness always sees the person before the project. Kindness sees the person before the pressure. Jesus always saw the person, not the problem. He saw the person, and his kindness let them know, I see you, and now my kindness is going to help you. But kindness says, I see you. I see you just as you are. And he looks up in a tree, and he says, Zacchaeus, I see you. His kindness saw him, and from a place of seeing him, he brings him down. And eats with him. He saw the woman at the well, not the sin and the shame, not the problem past, but he saw the woman at the well. And when he saw her, he was kind to her.

- 21:02 When we have kindness, and we walk in the way of kindness, we see people before we handle people. And maybe today you've just been handling people. You've been handling the situation. You've been handling the problem, but the problem is in all your handling, you've lost the way of kindness.
- 21:23 Kindness marks your life. Do you remember someone that was kind to you? They marked your life because they showed you kindness. Love is kind. Doesn't mean it's weak. Sometimes you have to say hard things, because love doesn't lie. Love tells the truth. But how you tell the truth, and the tone of telling the truth, and the way you tell the truth, you're either going the way of love, which is kind, or you're going the way of the world, which is unkind. And in a world that does not really know what love is, it is upon us, those that have received God's love, to show them the real definition of love. Love is patient. Love is kind.
- 22:13 Love is fluent in forgiveness. This was one that was hard, for me, when we first got married. This was our 34th Valentine's together, for Steve and I, and 34 years of building life, and doing life, and loving together. But in our first years of marriage, I don't know what happened. I just, every time I should have said, I'm sorry, or I forgive you, it like got stuck in my throat. I don't know what was the problem. I can't get the words out to say that. And so I just move on, and not say, I forgive you, or I'm sorry. I tried to avoid that point of the conversation. And I certainly didn't understand the recording of wrong, because after I said, okay, and moved on, man, I logged the time.
- 23:05 I noted the date for my recall purposes, for when he messed up next time, to remind him of the last five times he messed up. I had a good record -keeping account.
- 23:17 But for every record I kept, and for every time I struggled to say, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Or I forgive you. I didn't realize I was taking our marriage the wrong way. I was building a ledger of what I felt he owed me, instead of realizing, if I use the same ledger towards me,
- 23:37 If I thought about my own life that way, then I wouldn't even have the life I have, because it was his great forgiveness, the undeserved grace of God that put my life back together. And he's forgiven me. Much of those who are forgiven, much love, much.
- 23:57 I don't know where you're at in your relational life of living this out, but I feel today some of you have situations, and I'm going back years, and you're still angry about it, and you're still mad about it, and you still talk bad about it, because you never learned to walk the way that forgives. Forgiveness doesn't mean, that they might do everything you want them to do. It means you set yourself free to live the life that God called you to live. And some of us just need to walk in the way of forgiveness. I know they might not deserve it, but neither did you.
- 24:41 Forgiveness begins to take us a different direction. Forgiveness changes the atmosphere in our lives. I know that child has tested every one of your nerves. And I know they don't deserve it, but I know they don't deserve it, but I know they deserve what it is that you know they're going to come running to you for. But love leaves the door open and believes that God is able and understands if I can forgive them, maybe they can begin the journey of meeting the one that forgave me.

Love Perseveres: Snow Tires, Fog Lights, and Wipers

- 25:12 Fluent in forgiveness. Not only is the way forgiving, but the way of love is perseverance.
- 25:26 I drive my car, like you drive your car, through all different terrains. Sometimes, you know, we might have, in England this was true for sure, a snowstorm rolling. All of a sudden the terrain looks different because last night we had a lot of snow. And I need to get somewhere. So I go to my car and I realize my car right now is going to have to persevere through a circumstance. It's not usually having to persevere. So I'm going to have to persevere through a circumstance. I begin to do things to my car so that it can get through the snow. I don't say my car is useless because it snowed. I get snow tires.
- 26:08 I don't quit using the car. I change the tires. If it's raining like it likes to do every now and again in Alabama.
- 26:19 If it's raining, I don't say I can't drive my car today because it's raining. I say I'm going to have to use the window wipers today because it's raining. And if I use the window wipers, I can still drive my car. If it's foggy, I don't say I can't drive today. I say I've got some fog lights. I better put them on because I wasn't expecting the fog. But with the fog lights, I can keep driving. Love keeps driving. Love changes the tire. Love puts on the window wipers. Love puts on the fog lights.
- 26:52 How many people in here that be married half a minute? Oh, it's so hard. Get some snow tires.
- 27:03 I can't see. Put on your fog lights. Love perseveres. There's going to be terrain that you have to journey as a parent, as a friend, as a spouse, as a sibling. There's going to be terrain that you didn't expect, nor do you necessarily like. But the Bible says that love always perseveres. Love always hopes. Love always protects. Love always trusts. Love always perseveres. Some of you need to get some grit back in your love and persevere again. Say, but it's hard.
- 27:40 Yes, it is. It's called work. If it was easy, we wouldn't need this lesson.
- 27:51 And I just feel like some of you are about to quit on something you shouldn't quit. Some of you are about to slam a door on something you shouldn't slam a door on. Some of you have to say, I'm done. And you have no idea what God can see. You only see God. You only see what you can see. And if you keep quitting because of your limited perspective, you'll never allow heaven to play its part in the much bigger thing that's going on. Don't quit now. Love never quits.

Walk the Way: A Choice and a Prayer

- 28:25 Love has a way. Doesn't dishonor young people. I know your parents might not what you think understand you, but love doesn't dishonor. Love is kind. See, we've got to listen from where we live. And ask yourself, is it me? Am I the problem? Is it me? When you drive the way of love, the landscape soon changes. The temperature soon shifts. How you see and feel begins to line up with the way in which you're going. But in the other way, anger becomes more strong. Pride becomes more enforced.

Frustration becomes fed.

- 29:12 And Jeremiah says, stand, stand. Slow down. Ask. That's why some of you need to go to the marriage conference. Because you need to know the ancient way. You need to go sit in a room. And some of you that feel your marriage is great, you need to go because there's people going whose marriage isn't great. And you know some stuff that you can help them with. You can show them the way because they don't know the way and their parents didn't model the way. But if you show up, you can help be part of the answer and show. Show them the way. It says, you slow down. You ask. And then it says this. When you find the way, when you've asked for the good way, now you got to walk in it.
- 30:00 I've seen some of you taking little snapshots of the poster and the sign. Do it. Take a photograph of the sign. But a photograph ain't going to help you. Oh, I got the photograph. I know the way. No. You now have to walk. Walk in the way. You now have to say, okay, I see I've been going the wrong way. I'm actually going to walk the right way, which means you're going to have to stop some things coming out your mouth that before you just let roll out.
- 30:34 You're going to have to say, whoa, to the anger that you always let be unbridled when you feel the way you feel.
- 30:44 You're going to have to stop tapping your foot and pointing at your watch in the area where you're frustrated that there's not been enough change. Don't just ask me for the way. Now I need you to walk in the way. And here's what Jeremiah tells the people, which he's telling them because God told him to tell them. Tell the people to ask for the good way and then tell them when they ask for it to walk in it. And this is why. Because when you walk in it, you're going to find rest for your soul.
- 31:19 Some of you desperately need rest for your soul. Your soul is worn out. Your soul is feeling so fragile. Your soul is feeling frustrated. And the only way you can find rest is not by trying necessarily to fix everything, but maybe just today, all you need to do is say, I'm going the wrong way.
- 31:48 I'm just going to make a turn. I'm just going to take a step in the most excellent way. I'm just going to slow down and I'm just going to take a step in the most excellent way. I'm just going to slow down and I'm just going to decide to walk in a way that I'm not actually used to because my parents didn't show me this.
- 32:07 People haven't handled me this way, but this is the way of love. And the travesty of the story in Jeremiah is that it says, but you said we will not walk in it.
- 32:24 And the truth is, it's a choice. So today, church, as we consider how do we live love out, I'm asking you, are you going the right way? And if you go in the right way, these are all the things you should be feeling, hearing, and seeing.
- 32:43 All across the house, I want us to stand to our feet. Because today, as we get ready to close, I just felt God instruct me to create a moment to pray over you. Pray over your marriages and your families and your parenting. And I don't know what it is that you know right now you need love to

- 33:05 Be lived out. Right where you are, just close your eyes. Maybe as a couple, you need to take hands. Maybe it's about your marriage. Maybe it's about one of your children.
- 33:15 God, you see in this moment where our soul is weary. And God, you know in this moment where we've gone the wrong way. And God, I thank you that you don't judge us and you are not impatient with us, but your arms are extended towards us, God, inviting us just like you did through Jeremiah, inviting us to walk the right way and find rest for our souls. And I pray today for rest to come in marriage. For rest to come in individuals' hearts and minds. I pray today for there to be a sense of peace that passes understanding, trust that perseveres. I pray today that we walked in one way, but we would walk out differently.
- 33:58 We would walk the most excellent way. I pray for conversations over lunch. And I pray for situations to be navigated differently because we're going to do it love's way. God, I thank you that you are all of these things to us, you want to be all of these things through us.