

## Introduction:

In a fallen world, our failures are often an attempt to obtain “good things” in a bad way.

- We seek **acceptance and belonging** by forming cliques, and criticizing, and excluding others . . . causing division (chapter 3).
- We seek **connection and intimacy** through illicit sex, pornography, and emotional affairs that destroy marriages and ruin families (chapter 5).
- We seek **security and significance** through obsessive financial accumulation and destroy relationships by our greed (chapter 6).
- We seek to **protect God’s holiness** by misguidedly judging other’s motives and differences resulting in disunity and broken relationships (chapter 8).
- We seek **legitimate godly pleasure** with no consideration for those with a weaker faith and allow our freedom to destroy their relationship with Christ (chapter 8).

**Summary:** So many times our gravest failures are our attempts to “look for love in all the wrong places.”

## Learning to Love in “Real Time”

### **Situation #1 – How does love respond to hurts?**

- Truth: *Love is patient, love is kind . . .* 1 Corinthians 13:4a
- Practice: When you are hurt, wounded, rejected, or ignored, love “absorbs the blow (pillow) and returns a hug” (kindness).

### **Situation #2 – How does love respond to differences?**

- Truth: *Love does not envy, it does not boast, it is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.* 1 Corinthians 13:4b-5
- Practice: Love celebrates our differences! Love refuses to compare upward (envy) or downward (arrogance) 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

### **Situation #3 – How does love respond to failure?**

- Truth: *<sup>6</sup>Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup>It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. <sup>8</sup>Love never fails.* 1 Corinthians 13:6-8a
- Practice: Love responds to failure with truth and grace. Truthful and grace-filled love chooses to . . .

- A. “\_\_\_\_\_ all things” – to cover, not bury or deny.
- B. “\_\_\_\_\_ all things” – believes the best, but is not naïve.
- C. “\_\_\_\_\_ all things” – hopes in God’s sovereign power and promises, not the person’s ability to change.
- D. “\_\_\_\_\_ all things” – actively tolerates and stands with a person through adversity and failure, but is not enmeshed or co-dependent.

**The Result:** “\_\_\_\_\_ never fails!” – because God is **ABSOLUTELY SOVEREIGN!**

Romans 8:28, Genesis 50:20

Reference – *The Real God*, pp.89-116, Chip Ingram

### **The Application: “Serving in Love”**

*<sup>9</sup>Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup>Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup>Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. <sup>12</sup>Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup>Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*

Romans 12:9-13 NIV

### **Discussion / Personal Application Questions:**

1. Who has failed you that God wants you to love?
2. Why is it so important that your response of love be both truthful and grace-filled?
3. Did God bring someone specific to your mind that you need to:
  - a) cover the failure?
  - b) believe the best about them despite the circumstances?
  - c) trust that God can and will work in someone whose life seems hopeless?
  - d) continue to endure and help someone who you know you don’t have to?
4. Share what your “next steps” of love might be and ask those close to you to help you.
5. Do you believe God really deals with your failure in the way we’re told to love others? Why? Why not?