

THE SECRET OF LOVE John 3:16

INTRODUCTION:

There was once a man and a woman who had been married for more than sixty years. They had shared everything. They had talked about everything. They had absolutely no secrets from each other except that the little old woman had a shoebox in the top of her closet that she had cautioned her husband never to open or ask her about.

One day, after many, many years, the old woman got very sick, and the doctor said she would never recover. The woman knew it was about time to reveal her little secret to her husband, and asked him to take down the box and bring it to her bedside. When the man opened it, he found two crocheted doilies and a stack of money that totaled \$25,000. The man asked his wife about the contents.

"When we were to be married," the old woman said, "my grandmother told me the secret of a happy marriage was to never argue. She told me that if I ever got angry with you I should just keep quiet and crochet a doily."

There were only 2 doilies in the box. The man was beyond himself with joy. His wife was angry with him only twice in all the years of their happy marriage and love! "Honey," he said, "that explains the doilies, but what about all of this money? Where did it come from?" "Oh," she said, "that's the money I made from selling the rest of the doilies."

Well, the woman in that illustration learned what her grandmother taught her was the secret to a happy marriage. I wonder if I were to ask you the secret for a happy marriage, what you would say. If I were to ask you the ingredients for a happy home, what would you say?

There are seven weeks from Mothers' Day to Fathers' Day and that seems to be a good time to concentrate on Seven Small Secrets to a Satisfying Home. I hope you can be here for all of these sermons. I've learned over the years that if I leave out even one ingredient in a recipe, the result is not what it ought to be. The same is true for our homes. We need all the ingredients to get the best results.

So, today, lets start our series of studies on Seven Small Secrets for a Satisfying Home.

If I were to ask you what is the number one key-ingredient for a happy home, I suspect most of you would say "love". And if we were on Family Feud, I'd say, "**GOOD ANSWER!**"

We talk a lot about love. We watch movies about it. And read about it. And sing about it. And dream about it. But do we really know very much about it?

Since Hollywood entertainers, high profile recording artists and other famous people are not known for being role models for lasting happy homes, let's look elsewhere for our example. Let's look in the Bible.

If we read God's Word we will learn that the greatest love the world has ever known is the love of God. This morning I want to see what God's Word tells us about how God loves and then I want that to become our model for love in our homes.

Surely the most famous sentence about love is the one that John penned when he wrote his gospel. In the third chapter of John's gospel, the sixteenth verse, John wrote:

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.*

From this text, there are three important truths about God's love that I want you to know. These same three truths about God's love are true about the love of a good mother, too. And in the best homes, you will find these three aspects of love to be characteristic of all the relationships in a family.

I. GOD'S LOVE WAS SUCH THAT HE GAVE

The first thing I note about God's love is that it was such that He gave. Too often we define love in terms of what we get or what we feel and then when we stop receiving or reacting like we used to, we think love is gone. But to define love with respect to what we receive or how we react is to be extraordinarily self-centered. And being self-centered, self-serving and selfish is the exact opposite of love. Love is, by its very nature, focused on the one who is the object of that love.

For that reason, love is not defined by getting; it is defined by giving. It is not measured by what is received; it is measured by what is rendered. And surely one of the best earthly examples of love that gives is the love of a mother.

A teacher put this question to little John in the arithmetic class. "John, suppose your mother made a peach pie and there were 10 of you at the table... your mother and father and eight children... how much of the pie would you get?" "A ninth, Ma'am," was the prompt answer. "No John. Now pay attention," said the teacher. "There are 10 of you. Ten, remember. Don't you know your fractions?" "Yes Ma'am," was the swift reply of little John, "I know my fractions, but I know my mother, too. She'd

say that she didn't want any pie." Mothers, your unselfish giving is a parable of God's unselfish giving.

Quarreling between her two sons prompted the mother to rush to the kitchen. Eight year-old Bobby and four year old Jackie were having a tug of war with the cookie jar. Only one cookie remained in the jar, and each boy thought it was his. Taking the cookie jar from the two youngsters, their mother calmly announced. "I'll solve the problem for you. I'll eat the last cookie myself." The boys looked up at their mother in disbelief. Then the four year old, with a mischievous grin on his face said, "Oh, no you won't, Mom. Whoever heard of a selfish mother?"

Who, indeed? And the example of our mothers is an illustration of the love of God. God so loved that He gave

II. **GOD'S LOVE WAS SUCH THAT HE GAVE HIS ALL**

God so loved that He gave his ONLY begotten son. Too often we define love as 50/50 but it is not.

Frequently, when I am doing marriage counseling, I run up against factions that are really problems of fractions. The husband and the wife both believe that marriage is a 50/50 relationship. But by his calculation, he believes he is being asked to give more than 50%. And by her calculation, she believes that she is giving more than 50%. As we dig deeper, we find out that he's counting some things that she thinks don't count. And she's counting some things that he thinks don't count. So the math doesn't work out and the relationship suffers.

But the real problem is not a problem of arithmetic; it is a problem of expectations. Both partners have expected that love was a matter of giving 50% and receiving 50%. And that is an incorrect expectation.

True love is giving 100%. And the best example of that is the love of God. God so loved that He gave his one and only son. God did not give 50%. He gave all He had to give.

It has been told as a true story from the time of Oliver Cromwell in England. A young soldier had been tried in military court for some major infraction or for some serious crime. He was sentenced to death. The military court decreed that he was to be shot at the "ringing of the curfew bell." His mother climbed up into the bell tower several hours before curfew time and tied herself to bell's huge clapper. At curfew time, when only muted sounds came out of the bell tower, Cromwell demanded to know why the bell was not ringing. His soldiers went to investigate and found the loving mother cut and bleeding from being knocked back and forth against the great bell. They brought her down, and, as the story

goes, Cromwell was so impressed with her willingness to suffer in this way on the behalf of someone she loved that he dismissed the soldier saying, "Curfew shall not ring tonight."

Whether the story is true or not, it illustrates the nature of a mother's love that is so intense, so extreme and so selfless that she would willingly give her own life to save that of her child.

Child of God, know this: God so loved you that He gave His one and only son in order that if you trust in Him, you need not perish but you can receive eternal life

III. **GOD'S LOVE WAS SUCH THAT HE GAVE HIS ALL SO THAT THE LOVED WOULD RECEIVE HIS ALL**

And that really brings me to my last observation about the love of God. Quite often, even our giving is selfish, it is manipulative and it is controlling. Too often, we give with the intention of receiving something in return.

But that is not like the love of God. God gave with the intention of giving even more. God gave His one and only son in order that, if we accept His son, He would be able to give us even more: eternal life.

CONCLUSION:

Folk, if we love like Hollywood loves, we will have homes like Hollywood has: factious, fractured and failed. But if we love like God loves, we will have homes like His: enduring.

God extends His love to us, not because we deserve it but because we need it; not because of who we are but because of Whose we are. It's a lot like the way mothers love.

Max Lucado has an intriguing explanation of a mother's love in his book: ***A Gentle Thunder***. Lucado writes:

Moms: Why do you love your newborn child? I know, I know; it's a silly question, but indulge me. Why do you?

For months your babies brought you pain. They made you break out in pimples and waddle like a duck. Because of them you craved sardines and crackers and threw up in the morning.

They punched you in the tummy. They occupied a space that wasn't theirs and ate food they didn't fix.

You kept them warm. You kept them safe. You kept them fed. But did

they say thank you? Are you kidding?

They were no more out of the womb than they started to cry! The room is too cold, the blanket is too rough, the nurse is too mean.

And who did they want? Mom.

Did you ever get a break? I mean, who has been doing the work the last nine months? Why can't Dad take over? But no, Dad won't do. The baby wants Mom.

They didn't even tell you they were coming. They just came. And what a coming!

They rendered you a barbarian. You screamed. You swore. You bit bullets and tore the sheets.

And now look at you. Your back aches. Your head pounds. Your body is drenched in sweat. Every muscle strained and stretched. You should be angry, but are you?

Far from it. On your face is a longer-than-forever love.

They've done nothing for you; yet you love them. They've brought pain to your body and nausea to your morning, yet you treasure them. Their faces were wrinkled and their eyes were dim, yet all you could talk about were their good looks and bright future.

They were going to wake you up every night for the next 6 weeks, but that didn't matter. I could have seen it on your face. You were crazy about them.

Why? Why does a mother love her newborn? Because the baby is hers? Even more. Because the baby is her. Her blood. Her flesh. Her sinew and spine. Her hope. Her legacy.

It bothers her not that the baby gives nothing. She knows a newborn is helpless, weak. She knows babies don't ask to come into this world.

And God knows we didn't either. We are His idea. We are His. His face. His eyes. His hands. His touch. We are His image. We are Him.

The love of a mother for her child is only a small taste of the love God has for you. When He looks at you He sees His finest creation. But there is one thing that mars the beauty that He desires for your life. It is called sin. And sin is what separates you from the completeness of His love for you.

05/10/09

That's why we give an invitation at the end of every service. We want to give you a chance for God to remove the sin that mars the beauty He desires for your life. We want to give you a chance for God to remove the sin that separates you from the completeness of His love for you.

INVITATION: #N/A – *“For God So Loved The World”*