

## LOVE FROM AFRICA



*Scripture:*

**Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17**

<sup>1</sup>Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. <sup>2</sup>Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

<sup>3</sup>You turn us back to dust, and say, “Turn back, you mortals.” <sup>4</sup>For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night.

<sup>5</sup>You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning; <sup>6</sup>in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.

<sup>13</sup>Turn, O LORD! How long? Have compassion on your servants! <sup>14</sup>Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. <sup>15</sup>Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us, and as many years as we have seen evil. <sup>16</sup>Let your work be manifest to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. <sup>17</sup>Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and prosper for us the work of our hands — O prosper the work of our hands!

**Matthew 22:34-40**

<sup>34</sup>When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, <sup>35</sup>and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. <sup>36</sup>“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” <sup>37</sup>He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ <sup>38</sup>This is the greatest and first commandment. <sup>39</sup>And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

**This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!**

*Our guest preacher was Dr. Rosemary Mbogo, a professor currently teaching at Africa International University Nairobi and the Director for Quality Assurance. She holds a PhD in Education Studies specializing in leadership and administration from Biola University, Los Angeles, California. Dr. Mbogo co-founded the Tumaini school in Nairobi in the slum of Mathare. Rosemary and her husband, Stephen (who is the head of African Enterprise International), have two biological children and sixty+ children at the ByGrace Children's Home in Ngong. There is a great need for sponsors to enable the orphaned children to attend school. Dr. Mbogo will be speaking at our Forum today.*



## LOVE: THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT OR COMMITMENT?

What is love? Haddaway, a song writer and performer who lives in Austria and Germany has an answer, the lyrics of a song, *What is Love?*

Oh baby, don't hurt me  
Don't hurt me no more  
Oh, baby don't hurt me  
Don't hurt me no more.  
What is love?  
Yeah  
Oh, I don't know why you're not there  
I give you my love, but you don't care  
So what is right and what is wrong  
Gimme a sign.

### GOD'S LOVE

What does it mean to love? Love is more than a feeling, an emotion, an attitude and a state of being. True love is mostly a combination of all the above. God is the greatest example of love.

In Ezekiel, he gives us the image of his love comparable to a romantic lover pursuing his prostituting wife. (Ezekiel 16:15-34)

The same image is given in the book of Hosea where God asks the prophet to demonstrate God's love by loving his harlotry wife.

God again uses the image of a romantic lover who loved unlovable, filthy ladies. He begins by cleaning their filth and nursing them to the point that they grew to be attractive women.

However, they do not show respect towards their lover. They become prostitutes. (Ezekiel 23:7)

## THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

In Matthew 23:34-40, Jesus gives the most profound answer to the question of the greatest commandment.

The Pharisees and the Sadducees had reduced the Law of God to mere sets of rules and regulations. By the time of Jesus they had about six-hundred-thirteen laws. They differed in their opinions about the interpretation of the Mosaic Law.

In our passage, they appear to have been in competition to know who wins. The Pharisees are hoping that Jesus' answer will favor them.

**But Jesus sums up the  
whole essence of the law.  
In a way there is no winner.  
They are all called to the  
highest calling, to love.  
It's not about laws,  
it's about love.**

The first level of love is love for the Lord your God.

What does it mean to love the Lord? The implication is that he is the Lord of our lives. Loving him means a willingness to love back.

It is more of an attitude of surrender. We want him to take preeminence in all our affairs.

### MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT GOD

I was not born in a Christian family, and for some reason God, to me, was a huge old man holding a big stick and he was waiting to hit me whenever I did something wrong. He would eventually throw me to hell if I did not get converted.

In Africa, an elderly man is a symbol of authority. Such a man usually had a walking stick which was also used to discipline unruly youth and to affirm good behavior.

The image was further cultivated when I went to school in the hands of ruthless teachers. School was not fun. It was more like a place for being policed and punished when rules were broken.

At home, there were not clear set rules, but you would know there was a rule after facing the wrath of my mom.

These situations did not nurture a love for God but a phobia for him.

### **LOVE YOURSELF**

The second level of love, according to Christ, is like the first: Love your neighbor as you love yourself. In this passage, Jesus shows the importance of self love. In most cases, we cannot give what we do not have.

According to Christ, the loving other people flows from love of God and then one self.

With so many hurting people, the only solution is to find a lover, an unconditional lover. The world hurts because of many conditions, explicit and implicit. The world wants to receive unconditional love. But many times one is required to be nice, good, cool, etc., to receive the love.

Even loving parents many times succumb to their human limitations to stress, phobia, anger, etc. They may not be able to love their un-conforming kids unconditionally. Agape love is the true source of hope for such kids, and for their parents, too.

Our backgrounds usually contribute to who we are and how we love ourselves. Many people struggle to love themselves; then it becomes impossible to love others.

For example, I grew up in one of the “slums” of Kiambu town, in the Central Province of Kenya. Love was not known to me because I barely saw it in my surroundings. When I was seventeen, I got to know Christ as a savior and a lover. My journey with God as lover for over twenty-six years continues to inform me on how to love ME!

### **LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR**

The third level of love is love for the neighbor.

**According to Jesus,  
your neighbor is not necessarily  
the one who lives close to you,  
but the one who needs your help,  
like the injured man and the priest,  
Levite and Samaritan.  
This is a call to do something  
to help someone in need.  
All of us, motivated by God’s love,  
can do something  
about situations of need.**

It is the knowledge of “wanting to do to others what you want them to do to you when you are in need” that pushes us to help.

For example, my passion to see orphans thrive is also informed by my former experience as an orphaned child. My father left when I was seven years old, and my mother had to struggle to raise four children. My mother died when I was twenty-one years old and I was responsible for my three younger brothers and sisters. It was a very hard life.

My conclusion is that the love for God can help us to love Him, ourselves and others. Let’s ask God to endow us with his LOVE to enable us to love him, ourselves and others unconditionally.

I'd like to close with a quote that I love.

**"You've gotta dance like  
there's nobody watching,  
Love like you'll never be hurt,  
Sing like there's nobody listening,  
And live like it's heaven on earth."  
(William W. Purkey)**



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