

Valentine's Day | Preparing, Discipling, and Celebrating

I. Preparing

- **Week One:** Set a reminder on your phone or around your house, office, classroom, or church to spend time every day meditating on specific passages of God's Word from our Valentine Bible Reading. You can find those at CelebrationOfGod.com. Simply click "Holidays" and select Valentine's Day from the list. You'll find familiar passages like John 15:13 and lesser well-known, but equally powerful passages like Isaiah 63:9. All in all, we have provided 4 weeks of Bible readings concerning biblical love.
- **Week Two:** Now, don't just read and study the passage from the Valentine Bible Reading, also dedicate time to prayer. Use the time to praise God for the love described in the verses. Ask God to forgive you for not embracing that love or living in that love. Confess the times you didn't show that love to others. Ask God to give you the strength and wisdom to pour that love on the people you encounter. This topic is extremely important for us to understand, so use these weeks of Preparation to start a conversation with Love Himself in order to truly know, understand, and live that love as He does.
- **Week Three:** This week you should be reading the passages from the Valentine Bible Reading, you should be talking to God about the love you're encountering in the Word, but you should also be actively looking for ways to live that love out in the lives of others.
- Take cues from the passages you've read, apply what you're going to learn from our next two episodes, take the whole week to truly love others as God loves you. It may be one of the best weeks of your life.

II. Celebrating

- Christ-Honoring Traditions
 - Take time on Valentine's Day to read what God's Word has to say about love. Work on memorizing some of the passages on your Celebration Wall
 - Take time on Valentine's Day to thank the Lord for love.
 - Take time on Valentine's Day to talk with your fellow disciples about love. We'll talk more about what this looks like on our next point.
 - Take time on Valentine's Day to actively and genuinely love others. Use the list you have posted on your Celebration Wall to spark ideas.
 - Take time on Valentine's Day to talk about the seasonal theme. Remember, this season is all about God's grace. We deserve Hell. We deserve consequences for our sin. But God loves us even though there is nothing inherently loving about us.
 - You can also take time on Valentine's Day to talk about the salvation focus for this season. December through February we focus on Glorification. This is a time to look forward to the day that we will be able to love God and His people perfectly.
- Potentially Christ-Honoring Traditions
 - We're not trying to throw out the old traditions, but we're willing to do so if we find they keep us from truly worshipping God.
 - But we are trying to throw out any of the old motivations for our celebration.
 - Let's be honest, children are looking forward to three things this Valentine's Day: Candy, Valentines from their friends, and more candy.
 - Are those things bad? No. Does looking forward to them automatically mean you're sinning? No.

- But we need to honestly understand our motivation so that we can be sure our motions of worship are actually Christ-honoring. True obedience — doing the right thing in the right way for the right reason in the right power — is better than superficial shows of worship like sacrifices.
- This will take conversations with our fellow disciples. This will take introspection. This will take intentionality.
- So, yes, we must be prepared to uproot some old selfish motivations if we're truly going to celebrate God this Valentines. From there, we will need to discover if we and our disciples can actually participate in certain traditions without falling into old habits.
- Now, what about the candy, the hearts, the Valentine's Shoe Boxes, the decorations?
- Again, none of those are inherently wrong, but you will need to be extra-intentional as you participate and guide your disciples through the experiences.
- We never should take our experiences or possessions and consume them for our own pleasure. Therefore, we need to give careful thought how we can eat and drink and give and receive Valentines all to the glory of God.

III. Discipling

- None of our holidays are designed to be solely for us. They're for God. They're given to us to worship Him, be conformed to His image, and help others do the same.
- That means that we need to be intentional with out involvement of other people.
 - Pastors, take the opportunities to preach and teach on love. Give practical examples of how your people can truly love each other and their community. Be specific.
 - Biblical Counselors, make sure God's love is a major theme in your discipling. If people have come to you for biblical counseling, then you know they have a love problem.
 - Teachers, help your students see the threads of God's love throughout every subject. Help them understand how they need to take what they're learning and use it in love for God and others. This may be as simple as reminding them to do their best out of love for their Creator and their parents.
 - Parents, if you have done a good job helping your kids Prepare for Valentine's Day, then it will be an easy step to leading them in love on Valentine's Day. Whether you're edifying them for the love they've shown, encouraging them to be loving, admonishing them when you see that they're starting to be selfish, or reproofing them when they've acted hatefully, all of the Preparation from before will help reinforce your discipleship in the moment.