

DAY ONE: LOVE IS A VERB

[The King James version] often translates what other Bible translations call love as charity—the looking out for the interests of another selflessly. . . . Love is not just an emotion, as the world sees it. It is action. While admittedly it does have emotion involved with it, it is not as unstable or changeable as emotions are. Affections come and go, grow and fade, but love does not. It is constant because it is more than an emotion, it is more of a constant state of selflessness that produces action.—BJ Higgins, letter to a friend, 2004

Unsheathe Your Sword: John 21:15-17

Raise a Revolution: Love—such a common word in our today’s culture. Do we really understand it? Most of us would say that we “love” our favorite food, song or professional sports team. How do the people who see us each day know our love? How will others recognize it?

Jesus got it. He understood love as action. That’s why, in John 21, He gave Peter specific commands about caring for His sheep. Notice: Jesus’ question, repeated three times, doesn’t mention sheep at all! Instead, His words draw Peter’s thoughts back to the love relationship he shares with his Master. Today, Jesus is asking you the same question: *Do you love me?*

What command or word of instruction does He have for you today?

What action does He want to perform through you?

How does He want to encourage another via your voice?

Die for You: *Lord, I know that I will encounter many new people and situations today. Remind me of Your promise to be with me always. Live through my actions and words in such a way that everyone I encounter will recognize my love—and Yours.*

DAY TWO: LOVE IS NOT PROVOKED

Love is not easily angered . . . When [temper] is worn thin and the person bursts, what is the feeling that surfaces first? A feeling of not being loved. True enough, the world is full of short-tempered people, but Christ said, "You can recognize my followers by their love for each other." You see, we live in a non-loving world, so to love is to stick out, be different, go against the flow.

What is it that 90-100% of the time brings people to Christ? Love. God's love is something that this unloving world has never seen before. Our biggest witness should be our love—the reflecting of God's love (2 Corinthians 3:18), and the most obvious non-loving act is anger. Love is not provoked.—BJ Higgins, letter to a friend, 2004

Unsheathe Your Sword: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Raise a Revolution: Anger often seems an obvious response to a new or stressful situation. We feel confused, so we get angry. We feel afraid, so we get angry. We feel frustrated, so we get angry. No one can blame us. After all, we're not like Jesus, are we?

Or are we? Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 13 paint a beautiful portrait—not of a love that we muster up when all the feelings are right, but of the enduring love of Jesus Christ. Nothing about sin and self reveals this love. Everything about Jesus does.

When you face new situations, do you find yourself easily provoked?

When you are stressed, do your words reveal underlying anger?

Die for You: Jesus, I am running to You. I ask you to remind me of Your unfailing, unceasing, endless love. So often, I find myself easily provoked. Empty me of myself so that You may fill me with the love that You are.

DAY THREE: HOW TO GET TO HEAVEN

How to get to heaven is an issue often disagreed on, but the fact that some people don't believe the truth doesn't make it less true. I am here to merely offer you the truth on how to get to heaven. . . . When you believe that Jesus was the Messiah, that he died for your sins, and that He desires to know you and have a personal relationship with you, and when you confess your sins and commit your life to Jesus Christ, then you are saved from eternal damnation.—BJ Higgins, “How To Get To Heaven: A Writing to Inform Paper on Salvation,” 2003

Unsheathe Your Sword: John 3:16-21

Raise a Revolution: Scripture teaches us that Satan comes to lie, steal and destroy. He is an expert in these areas because they represent his dominion. Contrast this with Jesus' dominion: Truth—not one of His promises has failed. Grace—He freely gives us everything we need. Life—the very opposite of destruction and death.

When we invite others to heaven, we invite them to leave enemy territory. When you encounter others today, listen for those who are trapped in lies. Ask God to show you souls whose joy and peace have been stolen. Watch for situations that speak death and destruction rather than life in His name.

We know that Jesus is the Way. What are some other “ways” people believe will get them to heaven?

We arm ourselves first with the helmet of salvation. Outline your salvation experience in five to ten words.

Die for You: *Jesus, I confess that salvation is found in You alone. Thank You for saving me. Use me to bring Your life to others—today.*

DAY FOUR: SHARE THE GOSPEL

This is purpose, passion, life. My personal relationship with Jesus Christ is my first priority. In my walk with him, I have goals. Some today, some long-term. On a day-to-day basis, I try to spend time in the Bible, praying, and seeking God's will. More long-term, though, is that I hope to be an influencer at school, a light. If I help show one person the way to God, if I can make one person question the meaning of life and find it, I will have fulfilled my goal and part of my purpose for living.—BJ Higgins, "Goals," School Composition, 2004

Unsheathe Your Sword: Acts 1:6-8, 2:14-41

Raise a Revolution: Purpose. We Christ-followers get it wrong sometimes, and Jesus' disciples were no exception. They designed their question to point Him back to what they considered important. Wisely and lovingly, He drew them back to Himself. Instead of telling them *what to do*, He cast a vision for *who they would become*—His witnesses in Judea and Samaria and the ends of the earth.

How did these men move from questions to courage? The Acts 1 passage gives us the key: the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit. We see the results in Peter's sermon in the next chapter. No wonder God used this post-Pentecost message to add more than three thousand to the church. It overflows with Holy Spirit power!

List two of the goals you have for your life.

Do you believe these match Jesus' purposes?

How does He want to use you to touch the "ends of the earth" today?

Die for You: God, I surrender to Your heart for the nations. Forgive me for the times when I have chosen my ways over Yours. Live through me today that I may reveal Your glory.

DAY FIVE: KNOW THE WORD

Also, as far as reading the Bible, I encourage you to start reading a little bit every day, so that you can get to know God better, and what He wants you to do with your new life. I would start in the book of John. There [is] some really powerful stuff in there.—BJ Higgins, IM Conversation with Zach, 2005

Unsheathe Your Sword: Matthew 22:23-32

Raise a Revolution: Those who challenged Jesus always did so according to their own agenda. Satan had his when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness. The Pharisees had theirs when they asked him about working on the Sabbath. In this passage, the Sadducees had an agenda of their own. They did not believe in resurrection, so their lengthy question was meaningless.

Jesus put it bluntly: *You do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God.* When we fail to spend time in the Word, we fail to see His power. When we do not know the truths it contains, we cannot apply those truths to the situations we face every day.

We spend time with the people we care about. Theirs are the calls we answer, the e-mails we read, the conversations we have. The time we spend (or fail to spend) with Jesus reveals how much or little we care about Him.

Is your Quiet Time a religious activity, a box to check off on your work for the day?

How have you come to know your Father better as you read His Word?

List some ways that you could encourage others (including new Christians, like Zach in the quotation above) to spend time in the Word?

Die for You: *Lord of my life, I surrender to a living relationship with You. Help me come to know You more as I read and study Your Word.*

DAY SIX: GOD-POWER

BTW...while even I often have to stop and figure out something that the Bible says that may have previously been contrary to my beliefs, you're looking at the Bible the wrong way to say that when you find out about a portion of it, you disagree with it. Instead of only believing the Bible if it matches your own personal beliefs, make your beliefs to match what the Bible says, because it has much more authority and relevance than our petty circumstances which bring about unsolid opinions. Many times my beliefs have changed due to finding a passage in the Bible that contradicted my old beliefs, but when this happens, do not assume that the Bible is wrong, assume that you are wrong. Because we are wrong a lot, but God is never wrong.—BJ Higgins, <http://theno1hangout.proboards3.com>; May 28, 2004

Unsheathe Your Sword: 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Raise a Revolution: The Bible is unique—not because it comes in many different versions (although it does) or because it's the best-selling book of all time (although it is). Your specific identity makes you unique. The Bible's specific identity makes it unique, too.

The Bible stands as the only book whose every part is *inspired* by God. This Greek word pictures a vessel, carried across the sea via wind-filled sails. In the same way, God's Spirit filled the individual writers, carrying them along to produce His words.

Do you grasp the incredible power and authority? Neither man's work nor his energy (manpower) has the ability to touch and change lives. The inspired Word operates on God-power! Approach it and encounter Him—face to face.

Write out a Bible verse that recently moved you to change.

Which of the four ways (verse 16) that Scripture is “profitable” applies most to you? Why?

How has your knowledge of Scripture equipped you for “every good work”?

Die for You: *God, I confess my failure to know Your Word. Use its power to change me—today.*

DAY SEVEN: HEED GOD'S CALL

To sum it up, [Dad] basically gave three ways that God speaks to His children. Those were through the Holy Spirit, through His Word, and through other Christians or Christian literature.

Not long after this, God used all three ways that were mentioned, several times, to speak to me. I heard several sermons on living your life for Christ and being real about it: not just going to church and going through the steps and rituals of being a Christian. While doing my devotions, I came across several verses that had to do with the same idea. Finally . . . I made the connection during yet another testimony around the same topic. Many other people would dismiss these circumstances as coincidence, but I knew, and still know, that often times, coincidences are actually God trying to show you something.—BJ Higgins, “BJ Higgins, 2003,” a school assignment

Unsheathe Your Sword: Acts 9:1-19

Raise a Revolution: God has many ways to get our attention. He may not blind us with a light from heaven, but our Father is both patient and persistent. He never stops reaching out for us—whether or not we pay attention.

Are you longing for God to call you into something more? Ask Him to make you more and more aware of His voice. He does not hide from His beloved children. Wait. Watch. Listen. He will gladly come to you!

What is the last thing God showed you through circumstances or situations?

What has God said to you today through the reading of His Word?

Die for You: Lord, I cannot respond to Your call if I do not hear Your voice. Teach me to see You more and more as I make myself less and less.

DAY EIGHT: RITE OF PASSAGE

For too long I haven't really been able to take myself seriously, and only saw myself as a boy, and was just a boy. . . . Walker's lesson was on becoming and acting adult. He said that God's will has no adolescence and that we can't afford to take an adolescent on the trip. Then he called for those who desired to leave adolescence, experience a rite of passage, and become an adult to stand, pray and promise it to God. God anointed this, and now I know that I am a man of God— through God—and not a boy. . . . I pray that God would work in me and that I would act like a man; as I know that I now am.—BJ Higgins, Peru Journal, July 18, 2004

Unsheathe Your Sword: 1 Timothy 4:12

Raise a Revolution: Right or wrong, our culture often expects students to act like confused adolescents who can't assume responsibility. In this way, people typically "look down on" or "despise" you because of your youth.

Notice that Paul does not tell the culture or church to change its thoughts about young people. Instead, he encourages Timothy to grow. The best way to change others' opinions is to allow God to change us!

How do you act like an adult? Paul lays it out, simply and powerfully. Strive toward these five marks of maturity, and others will see God at work.

Which area (speech, life, love, faithfulness, purity) is a weak point for you?

In which one has God helped you grow most?

How does God want you to demonstrate maturity today?

Die for You: Father, You see me as the adult You intend me to be. Help me walk out Your good plans, showing others Your power to change and grow.

DAY NINE: GROW UP!

God, give me courage today to lead as You have called me. God, I cry out to You, work in me and help me to be the man of God that You desire and have called me to be. Father, please help me to step it up and lead. Father, I am in awe of the task that You have given me. Just give me faith, focus, courage, and strength to run the race, to complete my task.—BJ Higgins, Peru Journal, June 21, 2004

Unsheathe Your Sword: Hebrews 12:1-3

Raise a Revolution: When God places a desire within our hearts, He stands ready to bring about its fulfillment. Since He has entered us in a race by joining our lives with His, He is already giving us all that we need to finish well.

Let's examine one word in the passage a bit more closely. In most translations, this word reads "endurance" or "perseverance." The Greek literally means, "remain under," probably referring to continuing in spite of stress or pressure that comes over you.

It's hard to run with weights dragging at your ankles. It's equally hard to run with constant pressure forcing you down. You need His strength—supernatural strength—to finish.

You can't buy endurance online or at the local discount store. It comes just as this passage says—by fixing your eyes on Jesus. Watch Him, and keep running toward the mark.

Name two things that have kept you from "running the race" in the past week.

List three practical ways you will "fix your eyes upon Jesus" today.

Die for You: *Jesus, I want to fix my eyes on You and You alone. Help me to persevere under stress. Show me Your cross and reveal Your glory to and through me today.*

DAY TEN: BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS

In Joshua 1:6a,7,9 God reiterates three times to Joshua: "Be strong and courageous." And so, the same command has been given us. We must live our lives in courage and in strength—strength that flows from God. . . we live in a world at war, where courage is absolutely central to our survival.

How are we to be courageous? How are we to be strong? We must remember two things. One comes from Galatians 1:10: we live to please God, not men. The other comes from this verse (Ephesians 6:10). The words used to say "be strong" is also translated "be made strong." This way of saying it (passive voice) implies that we cannot be strong on our own, but must be made strong. . . . We derive our strength, our courage, from Christ alone.—BJ Higgins, from an e-mail to a friend, March 15, 2005

Unsheathe Your Sword: Joshua 1:6-10; Ephesians 6:10

Raise a Revolution: Joshua faced a task that we would only call significant. Moses was dead. The time to enter the Promised Land had come at last. But how?

Even in this brief portion of his story, God's promises surrounded Joshua. *I will give you every place where you set your foot. No one will be able to stand up against you. As I was with Moses, so I will be with You.* The source of Joshua's strength was his intimate relationship with God, forged through years of trial in the wilderness.

What about you? What is your greatest strength?

Describe one area of weakness in your life.

In what way(s) is God calling you to "be strong and courageous" today?

Die for You: Lord, I know that in my weakness you are strong. Equip and empower me today to do the work that You have for me.