

others to share their hearts. Listen attentively. Do not interrupt. Never underestimate another's burden; it may be just the tip of an iceberg. Seek to see things from the other's perspective. Try to hear their heart's cry. Repeat what you heard to make sure it was what they truly said. Never belittle another's comments, even if they sound silly to you.

- 4) **Express love openly in your family.** Tell your family members that you love them. Say, "***I love you***" and mean it. Give meaningful hugs and kisses. Write love notes.
- 5) **Show your love by helping one another.** (Galatians 6:2) "*Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*" Pitch in and help when someone needs a hand even if it is not your assigned job.
- 6) **Treat others as you want to be treated.** (Matthew 7:12) "*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*" (cf. Proverbs 24:29)
- 7) **Resolve conflicts biblically.** (Ephesians 4:31-32) "*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*" Put away all anger. Be kind. Have a tender heart. Admit your failures completely. Quickly apologise for wrongs. Seek forgiveness and forgive completely as Christ forgave you.

**Conclusion:** A few rationed vegetables served in a loving home is far better than the finest steak served in a hateful home. God created us to love. We need love. We need loving homes. This applies to every one of us. **Are you doing what you can to strengthen love in your family?** (Review)

Biblical love is unilateral. That means you must love as God has commanded even if others fail to love you as they should.

**Song:** O I Want to Be Like Jesus - 320

# Better Choice – Love

13 September 2020 PM – Proverbs 15:17 – BC20 – Scott Childs

**Introduction:** If you were truly hungry and given a choice between a tiny bowl of vegetables or sitting down to a feast featuring organic prime beef, most of you would probably choose the organic prime beef. However, if you learned that the tiny vegetable dish was served in a loving home and the organic prime beef was served in a home full of hate, I hope you would change your mind. That is the theme of the Better Choice verse before us in Proverbs 15:17.

**Transition:** This evening I want to show you the value of family love and give you some tips on how to strengthen family love.

## 1. God wants us to Value Family Love

### a. Our verse contrasts love and hate.

- 1) Love is not easy to define accurately. There is maternal love of a mother for her child. There is filial love of a child for his parents. There is a husband's love for his wife. There is marital love between a husband and wife. There is a friendship love between two companions. There is a fondness love between a person and a pet, an object, or a food.
- 2) Love is a feeling, yet it is far more than a feeling. We might say it is an emotion, but that is not sufficient. While it is a bond, it is also a choice. Love is choosing to give of one's self to meet the needs of another expecting nothing in return.
- 3) Love is the opposite of hate. Hate is an intense dislike. Hate often includes unhappiness, bitterness, anger, and resentment. Hate desires to hurt not to help. Hate holds grudges. It desires revenge. Hate and love cannot coexist together. They repel each other like poles of magnets.

### b. Love does not depend on prosperity.

- 1) Our verse brings prosperity into the equation. A *dinner of herbs* literally refers to a traveller's ration of herbs, vegetables or garden greens. Not only is the type of food in consideration here, but the **quantity** of food. It is a

limited ration.

- 2) Love is able to exist just fine even when there is nothing for the family to eat except a limited ration of herbs.
- 3) The *stalled ox*, on the other hand, does not refer to an ox to refuses to go like a stalled car. It refers to an ox that the farmer brought in from the paddock, but it in a stall and fed it fattening grains to get it ready to become juicy steaks. In Bible days, the fatted calf or stalled ox was reserved for times of celebration or special guests. It here portrays a rich man's feast.
- 4) When love is replaced with hatred in a home, even the juicy steaks of the stalled ox become unsavoury.

### c. Love makes the simple meal superior

- 1) God tells us that a poor, yet loving, family's limited ration of garden vegetables is far better than the best steak dinner in a house full of hatred.
- 2) Prosperity does not bring joy to hateful hearts. True joy in life comes when a family loves the Lord and loves each other.

## 2. God wants us to Strengthen Family Love

### a. God is the origin of love

- 1) God is love. (1 John 4:8) "*He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*" (1 John 4:19) "*We love him, because he first loved us.*" Not only is God loving, but love is part of God's very nature. He is the sole source of love.
- 2) God created humans with the ability to love. Love is not an accident of evolution. **How could love evolve?** Love is a wonderful human ability designed and created by God. Thankfully, we have God's account of creation, which says, (Genesis 2:7) "*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*"
- 3) God programmed man to love as He loves when He created man in His image. (Genesis 1:27) "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*"
- 4) God gives us a perfect example of love, as He sacrificially

loves us. (John 3:16) "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" (1 John 4:10) "*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*" He loves us **even when we are unlovely**. (Romans 5:8) "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*"

- 5) Where love is there is peace, joy, affection, kindness, support, defence, giving, sacrifice, contentment, loyalty, and faithfulness.

### b. Here are seven ways to strengthen family love

- 1) **Choose to obey God's commands to love.**
  - a) God commands husbands to love their wives as He loves us. (Ephesians 5:25) "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*" Christ seeks to purify and cleanse us to make us better. Husbands must love their wives as they love their own bodies. (Ephesians 5:28) "*So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.*" As we care for our own hunger, exercise, sleep, cleanliness, pain and protection, so we must equally give of ourselves to care for our wives.
  - b) God commands wives to love their husbands with a companionship love. (Titus 2:4) "*That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,*"
- 2) **Esteem others better than yourself.** (Philippians 2:3) "*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*" There is no room for selfishness in love. You cannot be selfish and love at the same time. Selfishness kills love; therefore, you must quash selfishness.
- 3) **Build love with caring communication.** (Ephesians 4:29) "*Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*" **Use your tongue to edify not to crucify.** Take time to talk. Make it **easy** for