

# The LOVE Test

## “Are You A Scorekeeper?”

Part 5

### Scripture Reading

*“And I will show you a still more excellent way.” (1 Corinthians 12:31)*

*“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal. If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”*

*“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not **irritable or resentful**...”*

### Prayer of Blessing

#### Introduction

I love the way *The Message* translates the fifth section of our “The Love Test” – **“Love doesn’t fly off the handle; it doesn’t keep score of the sins of others...”**

OUCH!

God definitely doesn’t let up, does He? As if being patient, kind, content, humble, courteous, and other-seeking aren’t challenging enough; God ups the ante and puts our temperament to the agape test. This morning, God wants to test our temperament and grace when we’re faced with irritating and sinful people.

Let’s be honest with each other, irritating and sinful people surround us. If you are married, you’re doing life together with someone who, at times, irritates the heck out of you. (And all the wives said – “AMEN!”) If you are a parent, you’re attempting to raise children and teenagers who, at times, absolutely exasperate you. If you have a job (which I hope you do), you work for and with people who, at times, agitate you to the core of your being. If you’re a teenager...well, everyone in the world but you is irritating and sinful.

This is not an indictment nor is it a pessimistic view of humanity. Rather, it is a reality of life. Our shortcomings, idiosyncrasies, weaknesses, habits, quirky personality’s, and self-centeredness coupled with our tendency to sin and fall short of the glory of God inevitably irritate, agitate, and provoke people – even the people we love the most.

When we’re tempted to become irritated, how we handle our temperament and whether or not we distribute grace is what God seeks to test this morning.

As we prepare to take the fifth section of God's love test, here are a couple of questions to ponder:

- **Are you easily angered and irritated by people and circumstances?**
- **Are you a scorekeeper when it comes to people?**

The first question is one of temperament. The second question is one of grace.

Are you easily irritated? Are you a scorekeeper? How would your spouse answer these two questions? How about your children? What about your coworkers or your employees?

How about you teenagers? How would your parents answer these two questions? Are you easily irritated? Does even the slightest thing set you off? Are you a scorekeeper? What would your friends say? How about your teachers and coaches?

## **“Love is not irritable...”**

In verse five, the Apostle Paul writes – **“love is not irritable...”**

Were you aware that a volcano erupted yesterday in the United States of America? Yesterday morning around 4:30AM EST, Mount Redoubt, an active volcano in Alaska, erupted and sent an ash plume more than 50,000 feet (almost 10 miles) into the atmosphere. According to scientists, the ash spewed from Alaska volcanoes are small rock fragments with jagged edges and have been collected and used as an industrial abrasive. As a result of Mount Redoubt's eruption, these tiny jagged rock fragments will span a 150-mile radius. People will suffer skin and eye irritation, along with respiratory problems.

Many of us are a lot like Mount Redoubt. We're active volcanoes that are prone to erupt when agitated and/or provoked. When we erupt, the results can impact many people – more people than we want. Our words and our actions are like tiny jagged rocks that irritate, burn, and injure people – sometimes the people we love and cherish the most.

Are you a temperamental volcano who has the tendency to erupt? If so, listen carefully to what the Bible says about the hot-tempered person.

*“A man of quick temper acts foolishly...” Proverbs 14:17*

*“Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.” Proverbs 14:29*

*“A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.” Proverbs 15:18*

I don't know about you, but I have no desire to exalt folly and stir up strife in my life. Yet, that's what the Bible tells us will happen if, and when, we lose control of our temperament and become irritated individuals.

Agape love – supernatural, God-love – is not easily irritated. The Christian who is filled with agape love is not easily irritated or provoked to anger by people who may not love them, communicate to them, lead them, compensate them, or treat them the way they want or deserve.

This word irritate literally means to be angered; to be provoked; to reach a point of exasperation. One commentator wrote that this action (irritation) indicates the notion of reaching a level of **exasperation**.<sup>1</sup> To be exasperated means to be irritated, annoyed, and provoked to a high degree. It means to arouse and inflame another person's anger and temper. It means to erupt.

Agape love does not erupt at the first sign of provocation; at the first sign of things not going his or her way; at the first sign of being offended, wronged, or questioned. On the contrary, as we learned in the second section of "The Love Test," love is long-suffering, long-tempered, and long-fused toward people.

Do you find yourself in a constant state of agitation? Is everyone around you on full alert, bracing themselves for a volatile eruption when things don't go the way you want them to? Do your kids flee to the far corners of the house when you come home from a long day at work?

There isn't a person here this morning that hasn't experienced a temperamental eruption. Most of us have gone through challenging seasons of work, parenting, marriage, and just life in general that have caused us to live in a perpetual state of irritation. Maybe you're here this morning and if you were honest, you are easily irritated by your spouse? Maybe you're prone to irritableness with your children? Maybe you're an irritable boss or employee? Whatever the case may be, the antidote is simple – remember God's love for you.

Throughout the Bible, God reminds us over and over and over again that He is our Father in heaven who is "slow to anger."

*"The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, **slow to anger**..."* Exodus 34:6

*"The Lord is **slow to anger** and abounding in steadfast love..."* Numbers 14:18

*"But you O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, **slow to anger**..."* Psalm 86:15

Our Heavenly Father is not an irritable God. God is not easily irritated with our daily rebellion and sin. God is not quick to erupt over our constant failures and grievances toward Him. God is not easily provoked to anger when we fall into the traps of materialism and idolatry. God does not explode with anger when we lust, covet, and boast. God is not exasperated by our pride and selfishness.

Is He offended? Absolutely! Our sin is offensive to the holiness of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton. *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians*, p. 1052.

Is He broken-hearted? Sure He is! Few things are more painful than watching your children live sinful, immoral, self-centered, rebellious lives.

Yet, in the midst of being offended and broken-hearted, God is slow to anger. God's holy and righteous anger is not quickly kindled toward you and me. God is long-suffering, long-tempered, and long-fused.

When we find ourselves at a place in life where anything and everything seems to ignite an irritable eruption, then what we know for sure is that we have forgotten the love God has graciously credited to our account – a love that is slow to anger.

Can you imagine if God treated us with the same irritableness that we treat each other with? Can you imagine if God was as quick-tempered as we are? Can you imagine if God was provoked to erupt in anger as easily as we are? Can you imagine if God became exasperated with us as quickly as we become exasperated with each other?

Do you want to cure your irritableness? **Meditate on the love of God toward you** – a love that every minute of every hour of every day is SLOW TO ANGER! Refuse to forget the long-suffering love of God toward you.

### **“Love is not resentful...”**

At the conclusion of verse 5, Paul says – *“Love is not resentful...”* *The Message* translates this word best - ***“Love doesn't keep score of the sins of others...”***

The Greek verb for resentful literally means “to keep records of debits and credits for the purpose of settling an account.” It carries with it the idea of keeping a mental record and a list in one's heart.

The word resentful is an accounting term. Imagine if you will an accountant who diligently records debits and credits to a specific account. The purpose of his diligent recording is to have the ability to settle the account at any given time. Thus, with each of his customers, the accountant can flip through his ledger and reveal, right down to the penny, what has been received and spent to date. As a result of his precise recording practices, the accountant is able to give an itemized list of all transactions – regardless of when the transaction took place.

Now...if you're a business owner or investor, this is exactly how you want your accountant to operate. You want an accountant who keeps diligent records on your behalf. However, when it comes to marriage, parenting, and friendship, this is a recipe for disaster. From a relational standpoint, one of the worst things we can do is keep score. Yet, that's what so many of us do.

Most of us are scorekeepers, aren't we?

In fact, if we're honest, we revel in scorekeeping. With almost every interpersonal interaction - whether it's with a spouse, teenager, coworker, boss, or friend - a mental

record is recorded in our mind and heart for the purpose of settling the account at a future date.

As some of you know, my favorite sport is golf. This past week, I was doing a little research online when I stumbled across the Golf Digest website. On the Golf Digest website, there is a webpage called “Make Me Better.” The “Make Me Better” page is full of interactive tools and videos that are supposed to improve a golfer’s game. One of the free tools offered is a customized scorecard. Regardless of the course you’re playing, you can record important data like GIR (greens in regulation), sand saves, number of putts, up and downs, fairways hit, etc. Then, once you’ve finished your round, you can go online, download your data, and Golf Digest will create a customizable plan for improving your golf game. Pretty cool, eh?

**MAKE ME BETTER 2009**

COURSE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ SLOPE: \_\_\_\_\_ RATING: \_\_\_\_\_

HOLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	TOTALS
SCORE																			Enter these stats to get your personalized practice plan at <a href="http://golfdigest.com/makemebetter">golfdigest.com/makemebetter</a>
GIR*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	SCORE
PUTTS																			GIRs
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<small>* GIR = green reached in regulation **Saved = one putt (or less) following a short-game shot. Chips, pitches and sand shots from 50 yards and closer.</small>																			

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**SHOT BY SHOT** Game analysis provided by [shotbyshot.com](http://shotbyshot.com). Copyright 2009 Golf Research Associates

Everywhere we look, people – even Christians - are living “scorekeeping” lives. We’re walking around with a never-ending scorecard, quick to pull it out and record the score. Just like my customizable golf scorecard, many of us have a variety of scorecards that are customized for specific people in our lives. We’ve got scorecards for our husband or wife, our teenage daughter or son, our boss, our coworkers, our friends, our parents, and our brothers and sisters.

When these people we profess to love and cherish penetrate the parameters of our lives, what are many of us quick to do? We quickly pull out that person’s customized scorecard. We want them to know that everything “counts.” We’re keeping diligent records of every harsh word that’s spoken, every sin that’s committed, every promise that’s broken, every commitment that’s forgotten, and every need or want that goes unmet.

**SHOW VIDEO!**      *Erase* (3:21)

Are you one of those people who are constantly holding up your scorecard for people to see?

- Husband, do you have a customized scorecard for your wife?
- Wife, do you have a customized scorecard for your husband?
- Parent, do you have a customized scorecard for your teenager?

- Teenager, do you have a customized scorecard for your parents?
- Employee, do you have a customized scorecard for your coworker or boss?
- Kids, are you keeping score with your brothers and sisters?
- Christian, are you keeping score with the Church and her leaders?

God says that agape love does not keep score with people. It is impossible to love people the way Christ has loved us when we're in a perpetual state of scorekeeping. Scorekeeping is conditional, judgmental, prideful, and self-centered love. Scorekeeping is a nasty virus that will infect your relationships and hinder you from experiencing relationships the way God intended.

Maybe you're here this morning and you've been convicted about your scorekeeping. You're keeping score with your husband or wife; your teenager; your boss; your parents; your church. If so, the cure is simple, **reflect on the amazing promise that God doesn't keep score with you.**

Did you know that? God doesn't keep score with you! Your Father God doesn't have a customized scorecard with your name on it. God doesn't operate that way. His love for you is all together different. The Bible says so.

*"If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, **not counting** their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us." (2 Corinthians 5:17-20)*

*"I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins." (Isaiah 43:25)*

Through the sinless blood, death, and victorious resurrection of Jesus Christ, your trespasses have not been counted against you. Because of Christ Jesus the Lord, God the Father promises to blot out your sins – however heinous they may be – and remembers them no more.

**God doesn't keep score with us!** Why do we keep score with others?

The truth is this; when we find ourselves quickly whipping out our customized scorecards, we have been blinded to and have forgotten the glorious reality that God does not keep score with us as sinners. When we find ourselves keeping score with other peoples sin, shortcoming, and failures, we have forgotten what Christ did for us on the Cross.

**SHOW VIDEO!**      *No More Keeping Score* (2:35)

Can you imagine what our lives would be like if our Father God kept a customized scorecard with our names on it? Can you imagine what our scorecard would look like if God kept detailed records of our lustful thoughts, our gossiping, mean-spirited words, our broken promises to Him and others, our intentional neglect of unmet needs, and our poor and selfish stewardship? In golfing terms, our handicaps would be exorbitant. Life would be dreadful and hopeless. Praise God for the cross of Jesus Christ!

## **The LOVE Test – Part 5**

There you have it, that's the fifth section of "The LOVE Test." Here are two specific questions Jesus wants you to answer this week:

- **Are you easily angered and irritated by people?**
- **Are you a scorekeeper when it comes to people?**

Agape love is not easily irritated. Agape love does not keep score of other people's sin.

According to God's Word, this *is* the most excellent way. Be an agape lover this week!