

EXTRAVAGANT LOVE – the woman who poured out on Jesus

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PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION

DISCUSS: How do you feel about PDAs?

and ...when did you last say “I love you?” – to who and what actions went with it?

The extravagant love of the “sinful woman” who anoints Jesus... It’s a really embarrassing PDA
Let’s think about the situation...

It’s a bit embarrassing isn’t it?! She gatecrashes a dinner party
(acceptable at the time providing you kept your distance).

Jesus would have been reclining at the table. She stood behind him crying and his feet got wet.
Then wiped his feet with her hair. Women feel the need to mop up mess!
Then poured perfume upon them.

It wasn’t unacceptable for her to be present but it was pretty scandalous for her to interact.
She moved from the background to the forefront becoming a player not just a spectator.
It’s shocking that she moves near to God and even more shocking that he lets her!!! She had a
reputation of being a sinner, unreligious – a prostitute.

So what was significant about what she did?

- She brings her best to Jesus – an expensive perfume worth a year’s salary
- She brings her pain, gratitude, relief to him as she wept, washing his feet with her tears
- She brings her humility and resourcefulness to him - wiped them with her hair –no towel and it was shocking to let her hair down. That showed what kind of woman she was - culturally identifying herself as a prostitute. She was herself before God.
- She brought her devotion to him as she kissed his feet repeatedly – which were dirty – covered in goat and donkey poo, dust etc
- She poured perfume upon him – she brought her extravagance and generosity, lavished love upon him

Her extravagant outpouring of love was evidence of her having truly understanding God’s love for her. She knew forgiveness and freedom came from Jesus alone and so came with love and gratitude. She is moved by the forgiveness available in Christ.

Are we so embarrassingly grateful to God that he has forgiven us or are we embarrassed by the PDA? There’s a limit to how much love you should show, you know!!!

But are we minimalists like Simon, the Pharisee?

What was Simon the Pharisee’s response? We are told he said to himself – if he were a prophet he’d know she was a sinner, a prostitute and wouldn’t let her anywhere near him. He questions Jesus’ identity/claims to be from God. Jesus goes on to show much more than being a prophet but he is in fact able to forgive her sins – therefore claiming to be God!

The mistakes of the religious –

- He should have offered footwashing. That was the minimal gesture of hospitality.

- She did the servant's job for Jesus.
- He should have kissed Jesus in greeting to show his trust and acceptance, a welcome, but he didn't.
- She was over the top! Never stopped kissing him. Shockingly intimate act.
- He should have offered oil as a token of refreshment, but didn't. He was stingy. She was extravagant.
- He failed to recognise who Jesus was and his own need for forgiveness.

Jesus goes on to tell a story about 2 men who owe a debt, one small one big. The point being the one who has a big debt cancelled is more grateful than the one whose debt was small. Jesus says that the sinful woman loved much because she had been forgiven much but **those who have been forgiven little love little**. Now I'm not suggesting we go out and commit heaps of big sins to know more forgiveness and therefore become more extravagant lovers of God but maybe we need to be aware of how much it cost Jesus to forgive our debt to God.

If we pride ourselves on our own goodness we will love God little. I hear so many Christians saying "but God isn't doing anything for me" and I put on a pastoral smile and talk about acknowledging the small things but part of me is really thinking "ungrateful brat!" If we are self righteous we will love little. We will always put our pride before our willingness to submit to Jesus as Lord. He's done the greatest things for us. Remember that thing he did to show us his love – like the cross?!

She came with gratitude, understanding how much it would cost Jesus to provide for her forgiveness. What about us? If we don't grasp this we will always have little love for Jesus. An extravagant love for God and gratitude towards him comes from the realisation that he has done everything to take away *my* offences/sins/mistakes/rebellion.

When I was a teenager I was mercilessly mocked by my family. Non-Christian home of alcohol, smoking, occult activity, dysfunction – a whole other story. I tried every which way to preach the gospel to them: The love of God, his desire for relationship right thru to hell fire and brimstone back to love, grace, fatherhood. One day they were bombarding me, "**Well why do you have to be so enthusiastic about God?**" And I told them about the cross – in graphic detail – the scourging, the nails, the humiliation, the struggle to breathe. And I ended up crying and saying "I just love him so much, I **love him because he first loved me**. He's done everything for me. I just love him." That passion has never changed because I realise what it cost him to get me into relationship with him.

It disturbs me how much of an effort we Christians find it to worship or come to church or pray. Until we understand what the cross cost God we will love little. But when we realise how much forgiveness, grace and liberty there is in him how can we help but love him? I wonder if we don't even get as far as *trying* to get time alone with God. How many relationships suffer because of a lack of quality time together? We need to just be with each other often. Why do we think it's any different with God? How about trying a new expression of loving God that is costly to you?

Little devotional time. Just lovin. Worship. Is it just a Sunday thing? Is it deliberate, intentional? Robotic love is no love. Duty and doing the right thing is not the same as embarrassingly pouring out your love for God. How much love do we pour out on Jesus?

Do we pour out our love?

Is it costly for us to do so? Is it humbling?

It's the first commandment and the one thing that Jesus saw as top of the list.

Not service, busy-ness, not outreach programmes, not church activity (though these are all great) but **LOVING, WORSHIPPING, BEING GRATEFUL** – all speaking of relationship.

Maybe a little discomfort at our own lack of PDAs is appropriate. We sing "I'm coming back to the heart of worship and it's all about you Jesus" Do we mean it or have we made it all about us? Christian writer A.W. Tozer said, "**Christians don't tell lies – they sing them**".

Another song: How deep is your love?

Jesus said in our crazy time the Love of most will grow cold.

Crazy world increasing in wickedness in which the love of most will grow cold: compassion fatigue, just another cause, plight, NGO, another disaster appeal... but what we do for the least we do for Jesus.

Are you hot or cold, passionate or sterile?

Matthew Henry's Commentary:

This is the first and great commandment of God's law, that we love him;

and that we do all parts of our duty to him from a principle of love;

My son, give me thine heart. We are to love God with all our heart, and soul, and might.

That is,

1. With a sincere love; not in word and tongue only, but inwardly in truth.
2. With a strong love. He that is our All, must have our all, and none but he.
3. With a superlative love; we must love God above any creature whatever, and love nothing but what we love for him.
4. With an intelligent love. To love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, we must see good cause to love him.
5. With an entire love; he is ONE, our hearts must be united in his love. Oh that this love of God may be shed abroad in our hearts!

DISCUSS: how do you best express love?

5 love languages:

Gifts

Time

Acts of kindness

Words of affirmation

Touch

I wonder if we can apply these to God? We're probably quite good at acts, service etc but may be embarrassed about words, saying it, publically demonstrating it. What about our physical stance before God? Do we ever bow the knee? Do we give time to being in his presence in stillness? We know strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord but do we do the waiting? – alone, praying in secret like Jesus said we should. Not just Sundays. Do you raise your hands, sing to him, praise him verbally when you're alone?

David danced before the Lord and his wife wasn't just embarrassed she despised him for his liberty and joy. **Who are you annoying with your extravagant love for Jesus?**

My best friend back home Geraldine is a great evangelist. She is a nurse and often deals with terminally ill people and is quite direct with them about getting right with God. When I first met her she was a Jesus nut. I went to work in her church as the youth pastor. On the first day there she didn't know who I was or why I was there and said "Hello, is this your first time here?" "Er... not quite" "Have you asked Jesus into your heart?" "I'm here to be the youth pastor." "Well that doesn't mean anything, do you love Jesus?!" Laughed later but she said I wanted to make sure! She's a bit of a nutcase but her love for Jesus is evident in everything.

Paul said, "**I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ...**" Let's not be ashamed of being a bit more grateful, thankful, an extravagant lover. Let's not be "appropriate". And don't misquote but "God likes things done decently and in order." We're not talking about having a spiritual gifts

competition like the Corinthians were when Paul wrote that! We are commanded to love God with all our hearts – Greek term for that means with all your guts!

Why should I love God?

He chose me, he took the initiative, he first loved me, he sent Jesus for me, love come from God – it was his idea, he knows me and still accepts me, he wants me, he forgives heals and cleanses, what's not to love, his love is everlasting.

If your love has gone cold, stir it up.

Remember who he is and what he's done.

Humble yourself – lift your hands, bow your knee, present yourself as a living sacrifice, kneel before him, cry before him in worship. Let your gratitude rise – let a shout of thanks and praise come forth.

Don't let embarrassment or pride come before worship.