



*The Journey*  
Week of 04.25.10

## **The Big Party**

By Terrilynn Obrock

Even, if you are not a poetry reader, you have probably heard the opening line of one of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's most famous poems.

*"How do I love thee, let me count the ways."*

How many ways are there to love someone? There is cautious love, jealous love, abusive love, forgiving love, selfish love, selfless love, false love, critical love, unconditional love, tough love. You can probably add more to this list.

How do you love? I find that at one time or another, I have loved in many of these ways. Sometimes it was a very rewarding experience and other times have left me feeling as though I could have done a better job of loving. I know that today my capacity to love has been hindered by past hurts.

Some version of this quote by Mark Twain circulates on the Internet frequently.

*Sing like no one's listening.  
Dance like no one is watching.  
Love like you've never been hurt.  
Live like it's heaven on Earth.*

When I think of God's love, I think he loves like he's never been hurt. In today's sermon God's love was described as reckless and extravagant. Throughout the Bible, story after story shows how God's people have hurt him. I know I hurt him in small and large ways every day. But, still he loves me. Romans 8:39 says:

*"No power in the sky above or in the earth below –  
indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from  
the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

God sets the example of how we are to love. It is not easy. It often may not be fun. But, it will always be richly rewarding.

*"The beauty of life is, while we cannot undo what is done, we can see it, understand it, learn from it and change. So that every new moment is spent not in regret, guilt, fear or anger, but in wisdom, understanding and love."*

*~ Jennifer Edwards*

**Three Important Action Steps** related to this series: we're hoping that All Heartlanders will roll up their sleeves with us at our annual "What If The Church" Serve Day on Saturday, May 1st!

1. You must sign up and register to serve before April 28th and may do so by clicking [here](#). There's a variety of locations, projects, and skill levels for you (*and your family*) to choose from. So, if you can pick up a rake, you can serve. It will be a blast!

2. To stretch the dollars that every church has committed towards the Serve Day, we are also hoping for both cash and material donations. To make a cash donation, click [here](#) and be sure to read the instructions before taking the next step. When you get to step 2 on "Parish Pay" be sure to enter your donation in the "What If The Church" box. To donate materials for the sites, email [Tom Page](#).

3. We still need leaders for various projects. Please email [Cynthia](#) here to step up b/c we need ya!

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**(You are encouraged to use the SOAP – Scripture, Observation, Application and Prayer Method for a guide. Click [here](#) for an example SOAP journal entry. Page numbers refer to "The Story of God" Bible available for free at the Welcome Center in our atrium.)**

## **monday, 04.26.10**

Read: [Luke 15:1-2; 11-24](#) (pg. 716)

## **tuesday, 04.27.10**

Read: [Leviticus 23](#) (pg. 84)

## **wednesday, 04.28.10**

Read: [Deuteronomy 16:13-17](#) (pg. 131), [John 15:9-14](#) (pg. 739)

## **thursday, 04.29.10**

Read: [2 Corinthians 5:13-15](#) (pg. 792)

## **friday, 04.30.10**

Read: [Matthew 22:1-14](#) (pg. 676), [Isaiah 25:6-9](#) (pg. 482)

**If you don't already receive weekly email notification about The Journey, click [here](#) to sign up.**

**grow** (resources to help you in your study)

- **Sunday's Sermon:** Click [here](#) for podcast, or here for [video](#)
- **films:** to watch all of HCC'S "Rescue" films, click [here](#)
- book: [The Prodigal God](#), by Timothy Keller
- book: [Return of the Prodigal Son](#) by Henri Nouwen

**go** (action steps)

- **SERVE:** go to [www.whatifthechurch.net](http://www.whatifthechurch.net) to register and join us!
- **prayer?** Please send us an email by clicking [here](#)
- **care?** Do you need to talk with someone? Please call us at 913.341.5820 ext. 330
- **go**—Sign up to serve: email Lisa Zulke by clicking [here](#)
- **grow**—Join a small group, a 1:1 spiritual mentorship, or find about the many other [ways to grow](#)
- **give**—click [here](#) to make an online gift to Heartland and learn how you can set up recurring gifts

Small Group/ 1:1 Question Samplers:

1. What's your image of God – dour and angry? Weak and passive? Loving, passionate, and joy-filled?
2. Do you find it difficult at times to celebrate grace – like when someone in your life gets something they don't deserve?
3. What things in your life go uncelebrated while Jesus says that in heaven they're all blowing kazoos? (Luke 15:7, 10)