

God's Love: A Standard (1 John 4 Wed.AM)

By Gordon Kirk

[worship band plays]

Speaker 1:

Philippians two verses three and four say do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind, let each of you consider one another as more important than himself. Do not merely look out for your own interests, but also for, for the interests of others. And for this, of course, we look to the example of Christ and how he, how he laid down his life for us. We want to spend some time thinking on the love that would cause the God of the universe, the God who sits above the vault of the Earth, uh, the creator of all, to uh, to give his own son for us.

[worship band plays]

That's right, uh, verses five through eight in Philippians two go on and say to, to have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ, who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.

Have this mind among yourselves, but emptied himself. Have this mind among yourselves, taking the form of a servant, have this mind among yourselves, and being found in human form he emptied himself, have this mind among yourselves, and uh, then became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Have this mind among yourselves.

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[worship band plays]

Verse nine goes on and says, therefore, since what, what Christ has done. Therefore, God is highly exalted him, and bestowed upon him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every, every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Let's confess it together. Jesus Christ is Lord.

Audience:

Jesus Christ is Lord.

Speaker 1:

To the glory of God the Father.

Audience:

To the glory of God the Father.

[worship band plays]

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Speaker 1:

Dear Lord, we do um, come before you and we're amazed at the love that you would show to uh, to become like us, to lay down your life for us. And, and we also exalt you just as the father has lifted you up and bestowed upon you a name that is above every name, the name of Jesus. We, we also exalt you, and uh, your name is sweet on our lips. Lord, we thank you for what you've done in us. In Jesus' name, we worship Amen.

Ron Hafer:

I want to thank Jim and Mary Kay Altizer, ivory and brass for uh, being here all day and uh, for leading us in worship. I, uh, I think I speak for all of us that we appreciate their spirit and their talent. Most of all, their ability to get our hearts ready, uh, not only to worship, which isn't preparation, but is the main thing, and then our hearts ready to be open for the teaching. Clear teaching, and the application of the word of God. Couple of very quick announcements that have already been made, but we're not presuming, A, that all heard, and B, that all were here last session, regarding Jim and Mary Kay and their worship, uh, seminar at two o'clock. It has been moved from Mayers auditorium. It's probably a safe announcement 'cause most don't know where that is anyway, and has been moved to Crowell Hall, to, to Crowell room one two two. All you have to do is find your way to the golden arches, walk in the door, and they'll point you, uh, to room number uh, one two two. And Jim and Mary Kay are leading us in a little mini concert tonight, and then preparing our hearts as Alistair Begg comes to open the word of God. Gordon Kirk has been, uh, a wonderful friend for, uh, I, I guess for about thirty years at least I've known him. I don't know that he's been a wonderful friend that long [laughs] but he's a good guy. And

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I'm looking forward to his buying me a lunch tomorrow afternoon. Uh, he is the husband of one wife. They have a son and a daughter. He is a Talbot graduate.

And I think, uh, it's important to let you know that he, uh, pastors Lake Avenue Congregational Church. He is our missionary, Talbot's missionary over to Pasadena and, and points up against the Hill. Uh, I uh, will insult your intelligence by reading what one of his parishioners who shall go nameless, said about him as the pastor. I believe that a person, uh, is best defined not by a bio sketch, which is, it gives us an advantage to give us a backdrop, but by who they are and the ministry to us on the given date. And uh, I believe that this individual was very true when he said Dr. Kirk has the heart of a shepherd, I know that's true, the zeal of an evangelist, and the presentation of scripture, like your favorite teacher. Actually, he mentioned his favorite teacher, but I thought, why not put in, leave it an open blank where you can decide. Now, some of you who read tThe Chimes read, and I, we love The Chimes. And I know some people who actually read every article, but uh, I would like to say thank you for the coverage we got regarding Torrey conference. But Gordon, there was a statement made in there that I hope I gave accurately that you were mentored by a Chuck. The Chimes said, by Chuck Smith, who would be a nice guy to be mentored by. But you were actually mentored in your youth by Chuck, uh, well, he's at Dallas Seminary now, Chuck. Swindoll. I give you, I give you a dear brother, a guy who loves the Lord with all of his heart, uh, and a man who loves to open and teach the word of God. Oh, I know what the other, uh, word was. That, once, after this, the introduction, the message goes quickly.

There will be outlines, and this is the last time I will say it. So, so hear it clearly. There will be outlines each time, uh, Dr. Kirk speaks. Come to the Chaplain and Student Ministries office, and

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let us know that you would like those outlines. They will be available, not this week, but next, because we have to dupe center them off. Let's welcome back one of our own, Dr. Gordon Kirk. God bless you Gordon.

[Kirk and Hafer speak unintelligibly]

Gordon Kirk:

Whoa, I tell you, it is incredible to try to express to you the nostalgia, the memories of being on campus. For those of you that are freshmen and those of you that are upperclassmen or graduates, I spent a number of years here at Biola. I came in 1967 as uh, a transfer student from a community college in Northern California. To let you know I was born in Santa Rosa, California,

[audience member cheers]

up above San Francisco, right on, sixty miles north of San Francisco. I grew up in a home where my mom and dad uh, lived in the same house the entire time of my living at home, and continued to live there until just last year. Both my mom and dad passed away within ten months of each other. My dad was ninety-one, my mom was eighty-nine. And they had been married for sixty-six years. Wow.

[audience cheers]

So, Ron, when you were candid enough to share about not meeting your dad until just a few years ago, it's wonderful how God gives us as different leaders and speakers and brothers in Christ various experiences, because mine was just the opposite of yours, and just how God works in those very unique ways. You know, I came to Biola in 1967. Ron Hafer was the chaplain at that time. And Ron, I want to thank you for your faithfulness.

[audience laughs and cheers]

I had as much hair as Ron had at that time. Mine was even darker and thick. Right, remember those wonderful days? Clyde Cooke, our president, was a mission's teacher, taught me the Book of Acts back in those days. And so just a lot of great memories. And sitting on the front row today is Bill Kardon, who was the admissions director at that time. And I remember as I made admission to Biola back in 1966, and he guided me through that process and came in 1967. I thank you for your friendship. Bill is said to be eighty-six years old this year, and thanks for sitting in the front row. So a lot of memories. I graduated from Biola in 1970 and then went on to Talbot and graduated there in 1973 with my M.Div and seventy-four with my ThM, and then God allow me to begin teaching at Biola. And so I was here from 1973 until 1983, and I just uh, grateful for those years and what God has done. But I want you to know that I believe that Biola has had the most dramatic impact on my life of any segment that I've ever gone through. There was something about the mentoring, there was something about the authenticity of whether it was the general ed classes, the wider liberal arts dimensions or the theological areas that I studied that dramatically changed my life. The short term mission's involvement, the overseas opportunity, there's something shaping about that unique college young adult time. I mean, I love

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junior highers, I love high schoolers. But there's still a lot of peer pressure. There's still a lot of, you know, what do my parents think or what do my friends think or, you know, what's happening around me.

But there's something about that college dimension, that young adult moment when all of a sudden it's, you know what do I believe about the Holy Spirit? You know, what do I believe about the word God? What is God saying to me as far as a life dimension and a, and a life focus? And so to see my own life transformed in those ways and to be a part of the faculty and see a number of students transformed those same ways and just wonderful, wonderful memories. Our theme for this entire Torrey conference is going deep into Jesus' love.

I think it's interesting, as we would think about Jesus' priorities, that love was foremost. I brought along one of the friends I had during my years as a student at Biola, can you see it, the wonderful Cliff Notes. [laughs]

[audience cheers]

You know, I think about that because I think it's fair to say that there was a point when Jesus was asked, what are the cliff notes of the Old Testament? What's the sort of Reader's Digest version? Give it to me in a capsule form. And this morning as Ron began the series and focused on the Ten Commandments, that's how basically Jesus answered. 'Cause they asked the question, what's the greatest of all the commandments? What would you put as sort of that cliff note package, that, that priority? And Jesus said, love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, your

mind, and your strength. And love your neighbor as yourself. There's no greater commandment. And it's obvious to us all those, that was not one commandment, it was two. But see, God always looks at that unique dimension of, what is it that we know to be true about him, that we can go deep in the love, deep in the character, deep in the trust of what God reveals to be true about himself. But then it also impacts how it spills over into lives. And so as we think about the whole concept of going deep into Jesus love, I'd like us to take a moment and build off of that Ephesians passage, which is our theme. Would you say some of the excerpts with me from Ephesians three? I pray that you may grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. And to know this love that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled to the measure of the fullness of God. See friends, consistently Old and New Testament. That's the theme. Jeremiah said it in this way. He` says, this is what the Lord says. Don't let the wise person boast of his wisdom.

Now, men and women, there's nothing wrong with wisdom. There's nothing wrong with academic learning. God doesn't flip some premium on ignorance. But he says it takes more than knowledge to be able to have a fullness to life. He then says, don't let the strong person boast of his strengths, or the rich person boast of his riches. But let the one who boasts, let him boast of this: That he understands and knows me, that's one of the deepest passions of every one of your faculty members. No matter what class it is, it's the integration of seeing God as creator, God as designer, and the very special plan that he has for your life and the design that he has for your future. And God said to Jeremiah, I want you to have confidence not just in your academic degrees, not just in your strength, not just in your riches. I remember as a student at Biola, it was an era when Corrie Ten Boom was still living and she was a godly sort of senior citizen at that

time. She had gone through the, the German Holocaust. She had been captured from her family and taken to a concentration camp. And I remember the movie, *The Hiding Place*, where she began to tell her story and how they were in that great little village. And I believe her family had a clock shop and they, you know, made and repaired and sold clocks. And it was a wonderful little village and all it took place. All of a sudden, she was in the concentration camp.

All that was gone. And she stood there with thousands of others in a line as they sprinkled powder on her head, and, with thousands of others, to try to get rid of the lice. And yet she had the courage at the end of that time in the depths of those moments to say, you know what, no matter how deep it goes, God goes deeper. Then, that woman lost everything. When she stood in that line with the other prisoners, they didn't care whether she went to high school, let alone a college or a graduate degree. They didn't care of the riches or what they had by way of a little clock shop and the sort of financial stability that she had, those day. They didn't care about her personal abilities [unintelligible] everything was taken away. See friends, I believe the major theme of the Book of Job is not suffering. That's a major part of it. But I believe the major theme of the Book of Job is, will we serve God for nothing, just because he's God? Will we worship him when we have nothing, just because he's the creator. And if you begin to weave that theme throughout scripture, that's what you see so clearly in the sense of going deep. And so, Ron, I thank you for the kind of theme of saying, let's go deep in the very love of God, the love of Jesus. Now friends, as we think about the fact, though, that God is love, can we be candid enough this morning to admit the fact that love is one of the most misunderstood words in our language? Love is one of the most confusing words in our entire culture. I mean, I could say to

you about, you know, I love mushroom pizza. And a few moments later say, you know what? I love my wife, Patricia. Now, I hope there's a difference in those two kind of loves.

[audience laughs]

But the very word itself doesn't tell you that. You know, I love Biola or, you know, love them Dodgers. Love them Angels. Not sure about the Padres. Sorry, San Diego. I'm rooting for 'em all right, but we're struggling. But to say somebody, you know what, I love you, versus I love raspberry sorbet, versus we've made love. It's also the same word. And so for us to, for us to go deep into the area of what it means to, to know Jesus' love, we got to say to ourself, what is that all about? Now, most of you, I assume, are familiar with the fact that in the Greek language, they have several different words for love. So they tried to be a little bit more definitive by the very word itself. There's a word in the New Testament, that might pronounce storge. And that means family love, sort of a love that you would have for the family in which you're born or adopted or sort of that, that home in which you grew up. Another love that we might call erotic love, eros and sort of a, a sexual love. It's another love that we would call phileo or Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love, a sort of a, a friendship love. And then there's agape, or agapao, that has the idea of a, of a relational kind of a love. So at least within the Greek language is a little bit more clarity. But we're to be really honest with ourselves and say that God is love, what does that mean? One of my very favorite books is by A.W. Tozer. It's called Knowledge of the Holy. If you've not read it, I just highly recommend it. It's one of the books that I read almost every year. Not every year, it's every other year. And every chapter is an attribute of God.

Every chapter just goes deep into what God has said to be true about himself. And in his chapter of the, on the love of God, listen to what he says in relationship to the very clear understanding of God's love and how we need to understand it, how we need to be able to clarify. Listen to this. The apostle John wrote, in First John four, God is love. And some have taken these words to be a definitive statement concerning the essential nature of God. But this is a great error. John, by those words, was stating a fact, but he was not offering a definition of God. Equating love with God is the major mistake, which has produced much unsound philosophy, and has brought forth a lot of vaporous poetry, completely out of accord with holy scripture. Had the apostle declared that love is what God is, we'd be forced to infer that God is what love is. If literally, God is love, then literally, love is God, and we will all be duty bound to worship love as the only God there is. If love is equal to God, then God is only equal to love, and God and love are identical. We would destroy the concept of the personality of God, and deny outright his attributes if we only substitute that one for God. Now listen to his explanation. But the words 'God is love' mean that love is an essential attribute of God. Love is something true of God, but it is not God. It expresses the way God in his unitary being, as do the words holiness, justice, faithfulness and truth, because God is immutable, he always acts like himself. And because he is a unity, he never suspends one of his attributes. From God's other known attributes, we learn much about his love.

We know, for instance, that because God is self existent, his love had no beginning. Because he's eternal, his love will have no end. Because he's infinite, his love has no limit. Because he's holy, it's the quintessence of all spotless purity. Because he's immense, is love is incomprehensible, vast and a bottomless shoreless sea from which we kneel in joyful silence, and we praise in incredible celebration. God is love. But for a moment today, because our theme is growing deep

in Jesus' love, growing deep in the very sense of what it means that God is love, we need to ask ourselves, what are some of love's realities? Let me read to you from a Dear Abby column that says to us in a very sensitive way, what love is not. Would you listen carefully? Dear Abby, after thirteen years of being with an abusive husband. I finally figured out what love isn't. Perhaps if other women will read this, they'll know they aren't alone, and that everything isn't their fault, which I was led to believe so many times. And then this woman writes, would you listen? Love isn't raising your hand with the intent to scare or harm someone. Love isn't making yourself absent when your spouse is sick. Love isn't coming home half drunk. Love isn't standing up your wife's on an important occasion, like the celebration dinner at the hospital for the birth of your child. Love isn't screaming, oh, you're fine, when you really feel sick or scared. Love isn't being nice when you want something, like sex. Love isn't calling your wife stupid, or ignorant, or a bitch. Love isn't saying, oh, you know, you always think you're right, when you'd asked for her opinion.

Love isn't criticizing your wife in front of other people, or even worse, your children. Love isn't saying you're going to inflict physical harm because you don't like what she's saying. Love isn't ordering her to, will you stop crying, or insisting, that didn't really hurt. You exaggerate everything. That isn't love. Love isn't saying, well, you know, if you don't like it, you can leave. Love isn't shoving, hitting, or even pretending to do so. Wow. Dear Abby, responds, your description of your marriage is chilling. Fortunately, not all husbands are like the one you married. I want to set a tone for a moment this morning, and if you've got some notes you want to jot down, but the first thing I believe that we need to hang on to is the fact, men and women, love is a choice. Would you say it with me? Love is a choice. Just say it again. Love is a choice.

And you see, in one sense that may seem obvious to you. But you know what? Our culture and maybe how you grew up, there's sort of a, an, almost an unaware sense that's going through a massive, an, an insidious concept that sorta, love isn't a choice. I mean, think of one of the phrases that we use so often. Well, you know, I know what happened. I just sort of fell in love. You fell in love. Just sort of, you're walking along one day and so, you know, down and you're down, like falling in a pothole? That what it's like?

[audience laughs]

But we, but we, we use that over and over again as if suddenly it wasn't our choice, it just sort of happened to me. I just sort of fell in love. See, a popular misconception that runs contrary antithetical to God's word as God describes love, is that love is uncontrollable. That's not true. You know, I sort of feel weak in my knees. I must be in love. Well, maybe it's a muscle spasm, I don't know.

[audience laughs]

You see, if love is uncontrollable and you just sort of fell in, it just sort happened to you, that gives you a very unique release that you fall out of love. It wasn't your fault. You know, I thought I loved you, but I really did, and all of a sudden, there's that conditional dimension that takes place. See friends, love is a choice. Matter of fact, we won't turn to it this morning because of time, but jot down Colossians chapter three, where he talks about how we're to be identified as true followers of Jesus. And he says in Colossians chapter three in verse fourteen, put on love.

He says, clothe yourself with love. And the idea is you yourself need to do it. It's a choice that takes place within our lives. But a second area as we lay the foundation for us, is to realize that love is also both an attitude and an action. I mean, there is no question that there's feelings with love. There's no question that there's just a emotional dimension to love. But it also include actions. Matter of fact, First John three in verse eighteen says, let's not love with just words or from our tongue, but let's love in actions and truth. We love as both an attitude and an action. It's not just a feeling. No, it includes our feelings and it's a part of our emotions. But sometimes you know, hey, you know, when my head is swimming and, you know, I must be in love. Maybe it's vertigo. Maybe it's inner ear. Maybe it's motion sickness.

[audience laughs]

But be careful that you confuse love as, as just a feeling. It's not just that. It's also an action. You know, sort of this, this, this knot I have here, you know, kind of right here in my stomach, or one of the songs say there's sort of a, the quiver in my liver. You know, wow, watch out. You've sung the song, you know, I feel giddy, you know, I'm in love. It's more than just giddiness. It's more than just a feeling. There's an action that moves us that way. And so for a couple moments, I'd like us to focus on what I'd say would be the authentic standard of love, that which comes from God, our creator, because God is love. What does that mean to us? So if you'd open your Bibles this morning to one passage, I'd like to go to First John chapter four. We'll look at several passages there or several verses, but in First John chapter four, would you look with me, beginning in verse seven. You see from the slide that in both verse eight and verse sixteen, it distinctly says, God is love. And we'll look at that. But look with a beginning in verse seven,

First John four. Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, and here we are in verse eight, because God is love. This is how God showed His love among us. He sent his one and only son into the world, that we might live through him. This is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us, and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. Drop down to verse sixteen. And so we know and we rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Powerful. And again, you see that wonderful mixed dimension of what God has now begun to reveal that is true about himself and the fact that love is an attribute of God. But also, he says we're to love each other. Now, if I can help us with just some thoughts to begin to focus on that, the first thing I'd like you to think about by way of authentic love, is that true love, God's love, seeks the best interests of the other. See, lust is selfish. Lust wants for myself. True love cares about you, true love cares about the, the other person. And you see in verse nine, if you look back at the text, it says, this is how God showed his love among us. He sent his one and only son into the world, now notice, that we might live through him. Friends, God sent his son for us. God sent his son for our best interest. Now would you pause for a moment and just think about your life, without looking at anybody else. I know it's a large crowd and it's tough to be really intimate. But as you think about some of the closest relationships, whether it's a parent or a brother, sister, that family circle, whatever that might be, or maybe widen it to a friend or maybe a roommate. If I sat down with your mom or your dad, if they're still living or together, you know who they are, sat down with whoever might be that key parent or that parent figure in your life. And they know that you know Jesus, and they don't know Jesus. Would they say something

like this? Well, you know, I'm not real religious and I'm not kind of in this Jesus freak stuff and I'm not, you know, quite focused. But I want to tell you, my son, and they put your name, my daughter. They put your name.

There's just [audio skips] relationship with God 'cause you know what, I just sense how much he or she cares for me, how much they put others at priority. See, authentic true love seeks the best interests of the other. Would your roommates say that of you? [unintelligible] Your interest when you come in and what the lights are on or what you eat, what you lay around, you know, what you leave around, what goes on, it's kind of more yours. I mean, you got a heavy project due, you got a major exam to study for? I mean, you're in an intense situation right now. You don't care about anybody else. It's your priorities, [unintelligible] priorities to be on a schedule, issues of arrangement and see, and situations that take place. But the issue is, is there an underlying dimension that you care more about yourself? You know, if you really love me. Wow. Talk about loaded conditional words. After all I've done for you. Man, I know you've heard that like I have in some of the most inappropriate places with people. That's not love. It's not grace. True love seeks the best interest of the other person. And thinking about that interest at times it may be a tough lov. There may be a need for you to sit down with somebody and go through some kind of intervention, some kind of very honest confrontation. See, we're told to speak the truth in love. We're not told not to talk. that'll be our theme for the electives this uh. These afternoons as I talk about communication. But, you know, Proverbs says so clearly, a soft answer turns away wrath.

He doesn't say a soft nothing. He doesn't say a soft nonanswer. And we get so confused and thinking all of a sudden, well, you know, if I say something, I'm gonna get in more trouble, just won't say anything. He doesn't say shut up. He didn't say clam up. He doesn't say [unintelligible], but he says a soft answer. That idea of soft it of, nothing to be effeminate or childish,, it isn't some Big Bird answer, you know, [in high-pitched voice] hi, [unintelligible], some Barny kind of a thing, you know, soft means respectful. An answer in which you're valued by somebody else. Hey, you know when somebody is patronizing you. You know when what they're saying and how they glance with their eyes and sudden, all of a sudden they're not paying attention. They're glazed over the, you know, they're not really caring about you even though they may be standing there. See there's a sense of our communication that God wants it to be really whole and to have value. And he says to us we're to speak the truth in love. There's some of you, you know, speak the truth. And well, you asked me what I thought. I mean, didn't you want to hear the truth, and, I mean, you asked my opinion, as if somehow harshness or rudeness is accompanied with truth. You'll never find that in scripture. Speak the truth in love. I ask you this morning as you think about your relationship with God, the fact that he so loved you, he so loves us, that he sent his son to die for us. Is there a sense in which because you know that, and that it's begun to so overwhelm your life, and you've asked God's spirit to give control, the people begin to see within your life, you're loving others? And one dimension of that loving is that we seek the best interest of the other.

A second area for me to measure, is my love like God's, is my love authentic, is my love genuine? Is it true love, God's love, takes the initiative. Would you look back at the texts for a moment? In verse ten it says, this is love, now look at this. Not that we love God, but he loved

us, and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Not that we loved him. See, God doesn't say, hey, clean up your life, get your act together, and then I'll think on whether or not I want to be a part of this relation, no no, he says, hey, come to me. I've taken the initiative to pay for your sins. I've taken the initiative for you to be cleansed of all unrighteousness. I've taken the initiative for you to become a, a child of God. Look at verse nineteen, would you please? He says so dramatically, we love because he first loved us. Wow. See he took the initiative. I'm the, have the special privilege of having two children. I have an adult daughter who's twenty-one. Her name is Christina and she was due on December twenty-fifth, and because we're Scandinavian background, we open our presents on Christmas Eve, and so she was born on Christmas Eve, not wanting to miss any of the festivities. She was always five years ahead of her time, that typical first born, you know, strong willed, wonderful, wonderful gal. She's now twenty-one and works full time. I have a son, Jonathan, who's sixteen, who was born premature. So two opposite spectrums. One due the twenty fifth and born on the twenty-fourth, Jonathan was due in March and my wife went in the hospital in December and uh, her water began to leak. And there was a thought that she would all of a sudden begin to give birth at that time. And so we rushed to the emergency area and they began to do all sorts of procedures to try to help his lungs and to try to get him breathing on his own.

And God was gracious, has allowed my wife to continue to, to uh, carry Jonathan for another month all the way through December and he wasn't born until January third, but he wasn't due till March. He was born three pounds and two ounces. And some of you been through that kind of experience and maybe even more crisis than we have done. But as you know, at birth, they usually lose weight. And he dropped below even three pounds. And he was in the neonatal

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intensive care unit and really struggled. I was teaching here at Biola at that time. And I remember it was a inner term class or a winter term class, i was teaching and had to miss a couple of.