

With...
Being *With* Someone for the Rest of Your Life
Love Is A Verb
John 13:34
February 12, 2017

This morning we are kicking off a series of messages that are going to affect every relationship you are in from this moment on for the rest of your life. We want the relationships you have to be the best you can have because we believe God wants your relationships to be the best they can be. So, we're going to talk about what it looks like to be in a relationship *with* someone. Now, these messages are not going to focus primarily on the marriage relationship but, if you're married, you are going to get a lot of out these messages that will be meant to help your marriage relationship get even better. (Elbow the person you're with right now). And if you're not married, never been married, divorced, widow or widower you are going to get so much out of these messages over these three weeks. They will encourage you and give the tools you are going to need for the next serious relationship you get into. And for all of us, we are going to learn some core things about love and about relationships that we all need because relationships are so important to us and so very important to God.

Okay, let's get started with today because we all need to hear what we're going to talk about. Because we all have a nagging question about relationships that sounds something like this: *is it possible to have a great relationship, is it possible to be with someone for the rest of my life, is it possible to be truly in love, does "happily ever after" really happen to anyone, ever?* Now, maybe that's not the exact wording for the way you've asked the question but, we've all asked questions about relationships that have sounded like these right. And maybe you've asked that question of the current relationship you're in, or maybe you've asked questions like these right after a really bad break up, or maybe, just maybe you are new to a relationship and it's feeling really good and you're wondering...can this last, is this person mr/mrs right. You may have asked these kinds of questions while processing out loud to a friend – maybe at a bar or at dinner or at a coffee shop.

We ask these questions because **we are relational at the core of who we are** as people created by God. I know that is a loaded, theological statement so, let me unpack that for just a moment because I believe it's important to the rest of this series of messages. What I mean by that is that we are built by a God who loves to be in relationships with the people He has created. Look at one of the most quoted passages in all of scripture, John 3:16, For God so – what? – loved the world that he sent his one and only Son... God created us because God loves and is love and so, God wants to be with those He loves. That's why we like being with those we love...because we have been created in the image of God...it's who we are, it's a part of our makeup. That's what it says way back in Genesis, that God created us in His image and God is all about relationships. It says that God walked around in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve and had this great relationship. And God's desire is to restore that relationship with us and Bible says that if we believe, that one day we will be hanging out with God for all eternity in heaven, because God wants to hang out with us, God wants to hang out with you, because God loves you and is relational to the core – and so are we.

Look at what Jesus says to those in his day who were paying attention to what he was saying: **[READ PASSAGE] ³⁴ So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.** John 13:34 NLT It's obvious from this passage that Jesus is all about relationships, right.

And because we are created by a God who loves relationships and calls us to love each other – relationships are important to us. That’s why we ask these really hard questions about relationships like: is it possible for two people to stay happy together for the rest of their lives. We want to know if the relationship hole that we feel inside ourselves can be filled. And we look around and we see relationships that have crashed and burned. We look around and we see people substituting fake things for the real relationship thing. We look at some of the things in our own past or maybe in our own current reality and we wonder if it’s possible for two people to be happy and with each other for life. We wonder if it’s possible or are we just kidding ourselves?

Not long ago we celebrated the life of Bob Gingrich who was a long-time member of CrossPoint Church. Bob died the day after Christmas. Bob and his wife Fern, who passed away earlier in 2016, were married for 67 years. And we applaud that, right. And because of people like Bob and Fern, and in spite of all that we’ve seen, and in spite of what has happened in the past in our own lives and in our own relationships, if we’re honest we believe it’s possible for two people to love each other for the rest of their lives – we hope it is possible, we even think it might be possible for us but, will it happen, we’re not sure...we hope so, right.

There are currently 1500 organizations who will help you find the person of your dreams, who will match your personality and your likes and dislikes with another person with similar likes and dislikes and who they think you just might be able to fall in love with. And it might be true that you can fall in love with that person, I mean think about it, it really only takes a pulse to fall in love doesn’t it. But, we want more because we are relational being created by a relational God. And we want to know if it’s possible to fall in love and stay in love forever, to grow old with someone, to be together for the rest of our lives, and maybe make 67 years, right? And we just don’t see enough of those good, healthy, long term relationships to give us the confidence we need and so we believe it’s possible, because it does happen once in a while – Bob and Fern are evidence – but, we’re not sure it’s probable. We believe it’s possible but, we’re not sure it’s probable. It’s what we want and it believe we can have it...but it’s scary.

It's scary because so much is riding on our relationships. Our mental health, our emotional health, our spiritual health all ride our relationship waves. Look at this, a study was done that says that we all need 10 things out of our relationships to be healthy, just 10. Here they are, you ready: **respect, encouragement, comfort, security, support, acceptance, approval, appreciation, attention, and affection.** Let me read it again, (repeat list). We can all sit here and kind of nod our heads in agreement can’t we. We all would love to have these things in our relationships. But, the reality is that we come into our relationships with a deficit of these things and we’re looking for someone who is going to supply these 10 things we need in our lives. But the person we’re looking across the crowded room at, or across the dinner table at or across the coffee shop table at is bringing the same need for those same ten things with the same level of deficit that you have, hopefully. And we fall in love with that cute person who makes us feel all giddy and warm and wonderful and then we do this...we demand these 10 things and being cute just doesn’t make that work does it. Cute, it turns out, is not enough.

So, we fall in love with each other because the other person looks good or is cute, or has a good job, or whatever and in the long run what drew us together will not sustain the relationship you got into...whatever that relationship is. If it’s a friendship it will simply, one day, just drift apart. If it’s a marriage, it will begin to feel like the love is gone because we can only sustain cute for so long, right. And what the other person is looking for are those 10 things from you and what you need are those ten things that God wants a life partner to provide for us. And when cute is not so cute any more

you start demanding those 10 things and when the other person cries foul, because that wasn't a part of the relationship back then and now the rules have changed and they're wondering what happened, you start feeling like the love is gone. And in a culture that has a low threshold for relational pain and relational tension, we say to ourselves, it's just easier to move on.

Aren't you glad we're not closing our Bibles and sending you home with that? Instead, it is into this chaos of love and relationships that Jesus has something amazing to say to us. Because it's that moment when a friendship and it's that moment when a marriage hits the critical mass, the make or break moment, that you have to decide what love really is. Is love something you can fall in and out of like a chair or maybe like one of the bronco bulls or is love more than that? You see, according to Jesus – go back to this passage in John with me – **according to Jesus, love is something more than what we can fall into and out of.** Jesus is telling the people around him and he's telling all of us down through the ages to today, that I am going to tell you something new. I am going to give you a new commandment it says. And this new command is, I'm going to give it away, the new command is this: love. Listen: ³⁴ ***So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.*** John 13:34 NLT

Now there are ten commandments, and there are 614 other Jewish laws in those days that the people he's talking to are required to obey. And he's saying I'm going to give you a new one...here it is...love one another. Now, don't miss this because it's easy to miss this. Jesus takes a word that for many of us is a noun and makes it a verb. It's an imperative, a command...I want you to love one another. Love, back then, like it is for so many people today, was a noun – by definition, a person place or thing. God is love, right, a noun. But, Jesus is saying that if you want to be like God - love must become something you do. God is love because it is the very character and nature of who God is. God is love not because love is a noun but, because God is all loving and everything God does is done out of love. And God is asking us to be loving too. **Jesus is saying I want you to love one another.** There are some of us in this room who need to go home and love one another because you've been treating your relationship, you've been treating your marriage like a noun, like a place. And you were visiting this place for a while but, you're thinking that the place is getting old, you're thinking that the place is getting complicated, you're thinking that the kids have made the place all cluttered and it feels a lot less like love than it used to. But, all those things have happened because you were thinking it's a place. That's why affairs are so easy for so many people...because they leave the house and they think that love is a place so, I'm not in that place anymore so I can do what I like.

But, if we are going to reignite our relationships, if we're going to get the feeling of love back, if we want to blow on the flame, and set a foundation for staying in love – then we need to make love (pause) a verb. Got it? The foundation for a great marriage is to move love from a place or a feeling and make it a verb that will end up evoking feelings. The feelings come from the actions, not the other way around. Let me just say this...the more you make love a verb, the more you'll make love. When two people treat love like a verb they start re-kindling their relationship. Some of you are ready to go home, hold on, Jesus isn't done yet.

Jesus goes on to **tell us** that I want my followers, I want those who say they know me, **to love each other like I love you.** He is saying I don't want you model love according to the culture we live in – which has a really interesting understanding of love, or from your parents – as good as their marriage may have been, or from friends who seems to be getting it right because they seem happy. I want you to love each other the way I love you. And if you follow me, Jesus says, I will teach you how to stay in love by making love a verb. Throughout his ministry on earth Jesus gave to others, he

emptied himself over and over again, he healed and taught and cared for, and embraced people every day. And Jesus will ultimately give his very life for those he loves. And he says, that's what love looks like.

Okay, so, how are we going to do this, how are we going to make this work? Years later the Apostle Paul is going to take this very same idea and he is going to use a word most of us don't like. I have had weddings where especially the bride says to me, I'll say just about anything but, don't make me use that word. And this word smacks us in the face when we hear it because it is something we don't do well but, and it's like a bad word. This is how the Apostle Paul said the same thing that Jesus was saying, in Ephesians 5:21 he says: ***And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*** Ephesians 5:21 NLT. There it is. Submit to one another. **Jesus is saying that I want you to submit to one another...as we would to God.** I want you to love each other at such an extreme level that the other person becomes the priority. A godly relationship is where two people are striving to submit to each other and make the other person their priority. It's one person saying you're more important and the other person says no, you're more important. It is a constant submissive love that keeps putting the other person first.

When two people make love a verb at this level, mutual submission, that couple has a foundation that supports all the other things that couples go through. It is a bed rock that makes all the other things in life able to be handled. If you want to make love a verb the Bible is saying that submission is the way that love becomes a verb because God is love and if you want God to guide your marriage and all your relationships, then we all need to submit to the will of God who is...love. This is Jesus who the Bible says was willing to submit to the will of the Father and he's saying to all of us is that this is way to do it...by loving and by submitting. Will you begin to love one another, will you submit to one another. This is beyond falling in love, this is about staying in love. And if I can tell you something that some of you need to hear this today it's this: it can even get better when you make love a verb. Make love a verb by making the other person first and watch what happens.

Amen?