

With...

Being With Someone for the Rest of Your Life
It Will Take All You've Got
Philippians 2:1-8
February 19, 2017

Last week we opened this series of messages about our relationships by changing the definition of the word love from a "noun" to a "verb." We stated that love is what you? – right, it's something you do, love is not a place. Love is not something you fall in and out of like a chair - it's not a noun. Love is a verb and we are called to love – verb - one another. And the problem with much of our thinking about relationships is that when we don't feel the love we begin thinking that we have geographically moved from where love is because our culture tells us that love is a noun. But, Jesus did not say to his disciples – I want you to go and fall in love with one another. Listen – I'm going to say that again because I think it's pretty profound. Jesus did not tell his disciples or us for that matter to go and fall in love...he told them to go do things that show love. He actually told his disciples that the world you live in will know you belong to me by how you love – verb.

So, according to Jesus, repeat after me...**love is a (what) verb.** Right! Okay, so, we can all pretty much agree with that statement right. I mean, if Jesus says that love is not a place it's an action then who's going to argue with Jesus. But, the question we ask next is...how do we make love (pause) a verb. No, it's not going to be that kind of sermon today...stay with me. Here's the thing, we have been so conditioned by the culture we live in and the relationship stories that we've heard in our families and from our friends that we are comfortable with the idea that you can fall in and out of love like it's a noun. Most of us have heard at least one person say something like "the love is gone" or "I just don't love him anymore" or "she's not the same person I fell in love with." So, how do we turn love from a noun to a verb?

Turn with me to **Philippians 2:3-8**. This is one of the many letters this guy named Paul, who is a Jesus follower and what we might call an evangelist, has written to the churches that he helped to get started all over what we know as Asia Minor or modern day Greece and Turkey and Lebanon. Paul has this amazing conversion in his life that seeing him leaving Judaism and becoming a Christian. And then God calls him to a life of traveling from town to town starting these communities of believers who will in turn become churches in those communities. And when he gets to one town he checks his email and gets reports from some of those churches that he's started, and this is one of his letters back to one of those churches. So, the believers in Philippi are struggling with the same things we struggle with today, they thought love was a noun back then. Paul knows better so he is going to offer a corrective.

Paul believed in what Jesus said about love so much that he says that if love is going to be a verb for you then it's going to mean that you will need to learn how to submit to each other. It means that you are going to need to figure out how you can see another person as more important than yourself. Because when we submit to one another we are saying to the other person that you are more important than I am. **Love means saying the other person is more important than I am.**

And the other person is saying the same thing back to us, that we're more important than they are. And in this kind of a relationship, whether it's a close friend, whether its two-people getting to know each other, an engaged couple, or a married couple, this kind of submission is important if love is going to be a verb... if it's going to be something we do.

As a matter of fact, look at what it says in **verse 3**, we are to: ***Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.*** (NLT) We are to treat others as if they are more important than we are. We have all been somewhere where someone in the room was more important than you were. Have you ever been to a

wedding...and the bride walked in and it was obvious in that moment that no one in the room was there to see you...they were all there to see the bride, right. Maybe you were at some place where someone was speaking or giving a presentation and maybe they were a really important person and you realized that no one in the room was there to see you. At that moment, the right thing to do was to value that person. The right thing to do was to say that this time is about that important person, and not about me! As hard as that is to say because most of us want it, whatever it is, to be about us. It's nice when the party, or the gathering, or the event is about us and we like that.

But, God is saying that if we are going **to make love a verb**, then **we** are going to **need to learn how to value others above ourselves**.

That's how we are supposed to treat those we love, those we care about, those we are in a special relationship with, that's how we are to treat our husbands or our wives. We are to treat them as if they are the most important person in the room. Now, remember, the other person is supposed to be treating you that way too. But, that's not why you do it. As a matter of fact, we are to love even if we think it may not be returned. We are to love even if we think it might be taken for granted, even if we think we might be taken advantage of.

The next verse actually says, ***Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.*** (Phil. 2:4 NLT) We are to show love, we are to love each other, that's how it gets better and richer and more powerful. When I choose to love Julie by telling her that her interests are more important than mine I'm saying that what I want is going to take a back seat to what she wants. When you are working hard to make sure that other person knows you love them by putting them first, by putting their interests first, it's hard to fall out of love because it's something you're doing, not a place your resting your head. When two people do this it's absolutely unbelievable. But, it's hard. Because – let's be honest, I'm interested in the things that interest me. I'm not interested in the things that don't interest me. I am interested in those things that I find interesting. And most of us are the same way. And the problem surfaces when we have to pay attention to something that we're not interested in because the other person is interested in what we're not interested in, did you follow that?

There are dating sites that specialize in helping people find other people who have the same interests because this is so hard that we just would rather not do it. So many relationships fall apart, or marriages failed because we didn't understand love this way...we just figure we were incompatible, right. It felt great in the beginning because we'll do whatever it takes to win someone in the beginning, right. We'll go hiking, we'll go for a run, we'll go fishing, we'll sit and watch a chick flick or a football game, whatever. But, doing whatever it takes to *keep* someone – that's a foreign concept for a lot of us. It's so hard because most of us are just more than a little selfish – you feel like the love is gone.

Julie is much better at this than me. I don't want to go too far down this path because it's embarrassing but, Julie is much better at putting my interest above her interests. She does this so well that for the longest time I wasn't sure she even had any interests because she was allowing my interests to lead the way. And at one point in our marriage we had this long conversation that lasted out over a few years about how I could do better at valuing her interests over and above my interests. And let me just say this, I'm still not that great at it. Some of that is because I'm a strong personality. I tend to dominate. And I also tend to have a bunch of things I'm interested in. So, I tend to get my way. That means I need to stop myself and ask, what do you want to do, where do you want to go, what do you want to watch.

So, if you want to stay in love, we need to know how to express an interest in the things that interest the people we're in love with. We need to have an interest in their stuff at least at the level we love our stuff.

Here's the example set out in front of us when it comes to making love a verb and showing the other person in our life that we value them. It says in verse 5 that we are to have the same attitude as Jesus. Now, you're thinking that is impossible, I'm not Jesus, right. And the other person in my life isn't Jesus either, let me tell you. But, obviously, it must be possible to have the same attitude as Jesus. Notice, it does not say do all the

stuff Jesus did...it says, have the same attitude that Jesus had that made him do things that he didn't have to do, that made him give up things he didn't have to give up. You see, Jesus was willing to give up, surrender, sacrifice, submit...all things we don't like to do...in order for us to know how much God loves us...this is the bar. If you want to show someone how much you love them, if you want to do the things that will keep you with someone for a lifetime, if you want to make love – a verb...then this is the attitude you need to have.

Making love a verb means having the attitude of Jesus.

Jesus thought so much of you that he was willing to give up everything we would think is valuable so that you would know just how much God loves you, because love is a verb and submission and sacrifice are a part of the deal. And all Jesus is asking of us, he not asking us to give up a seat on the throne, he's not asking us to surrender equality with God, what Jesus is asking us to do is to love one another like he loves us...to have the same attitude as he has about love.

And the question we have to ask is, am I willing to put my relationships ahead of all of things I want, all the things I believe I deserve? God has made it clear that relationships are worth it. That submitting and surrendering for the sake of a relationship is what love is all about. God is not about religion but about relationships. Are you ever going to be perfect at it...no.

Maybe you've tried to have it some other way. You tried to get all you wanted and it didn't work. Maybe you tried to live with someone who wanted everything their way. And maybe you've been hurt or exhausted or crushed because you tried it your way, you tried to get everything you want instead of making the other person feel like they are the sole focus of your heart and your love and your life. You can try it some other way but, don't think that if you do, you will have a life spent with that one person for the rest of your life.

You can try to live like Elvis and Frank Sinatra...I did it my way but, that is going to blow up at some point. Or, you can decide to live like Jesus and decide to make sure that the people that you are in relationship with, the friends, the close relationships, the special life long relationship of marriage – that all those people know they are loved because they feel it when you are in their presence. So, will you decide today to make love a verb, and put others before yourself? We make that decision every day and it makes all the difference.