

Group Resource

Sermon Notes – Sunday, March 2, 2014

Love, Sex + Godly Relationships

Message: Receiving God's Love

Scripture: Hosea 3:1-2

- I. In Part I of the series, we examined the question, **“What is real love?”**
 - a. “Perfect Love is the unselfish and benevolent commitment to seek and sacrificially pursue the best interests of another, regardless of how we feel towards them” (Pastor Joseph)
- II. God created us with an innate need to be loved and to share that love with others. The only way that we can have the capacity to love others and to genuinely receive love from others is only when we **FIRST** experience the overwhelming love of God in our lives.
- III. We continue Part II by asking the question, **“How do we accept and live in God's perfect and real love?”**
- IV. The book of Hosea recounts the life story of a prophet called by God. Early in Hosea's ministry, the Lord said to him, **“Go and marry a prostitute.”** This was to represent how Israel acted like a prostitute by turning against the Lord and worshiping other gods. Yes, God was still walking in covenant with them.
 - a. After Hosea married Gomer, she became pregnant and gave Hosea a son: Jezreel. After some time Gomer abandoned him for other lovers and conceived two additional children: **Lo-ruhamah**—‘Not loved’ and **Lo-ammi**—‘Not my people.’ After abandoning her husband, Gomer fell into destitution.
 - b. In Hosea 3:1 The LORD said to Hosea, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.”
 - c. In Hosea 11, the Lord recounts that even though his people are determined to turn from Him, He will come in compassion and love them with an everlasting love. “For I am God, and not man— the Holy One among you. I will not come in wrath.” (Hosea 11:9)
- V. Hosea's love to Gomer is a reflection of God's real + perfect love towards us. The Greek language includes several words that are commonly translated as love. *Agape love* represents the highest and noblest form of love which sees something infinitely precious in the object of its love. Agape represents absolute, unselfish, and brutal sacrifice. Its central meaning is derived from Jesus' death on the cross: “For God so loved (*agapao*) the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3:16)
- VI. Much like Gomer, even when God loves us with an everlasting love, we easily fall into the trap of walking away from his love and seeking real + perfect love in all of the wrong places. We have to choose whether to accept or reject God's agape love.
- VII. What are some the reasons why we reject the love of God?
 - a. Unawareness of the real + perfect love that is given to us
 - i. Ephesians 3:17-19 *And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,¹⁸ may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*
 - ii. Sometimes, we don't accept real + perfect love because we let other people's failures determine the capacity of others to faithfully love us. Psalms 136 reminds us that God's love is greater than anyone can ever love us because “His faithful love endures forever.”
 - b. We give unwarranted power to guilt and shame
 - i. Both Hosea and Gomer had to deal with their guilt and shame. Hosea had to accept that he was a prophet of God who was called by the Lord to marry a prostitute and love her despite her wayward ways. Hosea also had to accept the shame that came because his wife was unfaithful to him and be

willing to humble himself to redeem her at her lowest point. Gomer had to deal with the guilt and shame that came from living in a lifestyle that didn't honor God, herself or her husband. She had children that were born out of adultery.

- ii. There are no perfect human beings or anyone who is without brokenness in their life. We can choose to either hide our guilt and shame or give those areas to God.
 - iii. *JOHN 3:19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."*
 - iv. Receiving God's love means to 'come into the light' and to receive healing for our areas of brokenness.
- c. We have either Indifference or pride in accepting God's love
 - i. Indifference says we don't need the love that God gives us. Pride says that we can find a better love.
 - ii. We can become indifferent to the love of God as an attempt to prevent ourselves from being hurt. We would rather seek a comfortable feeling of love rather than an authentic expression of agape love. In reality, our indifference will cause us more harm than the responsibility of accepting God's love.
 - d. We are afraid of what love may require from us
 - i. Real + perfect love will always require sacrifice. Jesus demonstrated this type of sacrificial love by sending his Son to die on the cross for our sins. Artificial expressions of love seem to be less demanding or not require anything from us. Yet, in reality, giving ourselves to artificial expressions of love diminishes the great worth that God has placed on us.
 - ii. We must beware of expressions of love that don't require commitment.
 - 1. Jesus says in John 14:15 - "If you love me, keep my commands."
 - 2. The second time that Hosea took Gomer to be his wife, he declared that because of his love for her, she had a covenant responsibility: *you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you.* (HOSEA 3:3)

VIII. Consequences of rejecting God's Love

- a. The failure to love others with real + perfect love stems from our inability to accept and walk in God's love. When we reject God's love, it impacts every area of our life.
- b. 1 - **We expect others to replace God.** Rejecting God's love means that we have to find that same type of real + perfect love from some other source. We may turn to people, addictions, things, or feelings, but none of them will ever be able to fill God's role.
- c. 2 - **We never deal with our shame.** The blessing of accepting and walking in God's love is that we experience the transformational power of God's love that includes forgiveness. The good news of the gospel is that we don't have to hide the sins that cause our guilt and shame. We can bring our brokenness to God and receive His healing. When we reject God's love, we still have to deal with our brokenness. We try to hide our guilt and shame, deny its existence or make it more tolerable. The true antidote to guilt and shame is not ignoring the offense but accepting God's forgiveness
- d. 3 - **We struggle to find Love that we can give to others.** Rejecting God's love means that we spend more time trying to gain love rather than sharing the love that God has already given to us. Often, those who reject God's love are in constant search of ways to feel accepted but those feelings quickly wear out or still leave its recipients with emptiness.

IX. Making the choice to accept and live in God's perfect and real love

- a. Since God created us with free-will, we have a choice of whether to accept or reject God's love. When we consider the impact of rejecting God's love, the stakes are too high to gamble with artificial love. The blessing in choosing to accept and walk in God's love is that His faithful love endures forever!

Group Resource

Let's Talk Notes – Sunday, March 2, 2014

Love, Sex + Godly Relationships

Message: Receiving God's Love

Scripture: Hosea 3:1-2

- 1) As you reflect back on last weekend's sermon, what one principle or insight stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful or difficult to grasp? Were you challenged in any area of your personal walk with God?
- 2) In your own words, describe the story of Hosea and Gomer. What stands out to you about each of their lives? In what ways can you identify with Hosea? In what ways can you identify with Gomer?
- 3) What differentiates agape love from all other types of love? How does God represent the purest form of agape love? Give a specific example of how God has shown agape love towards you.
- 4) **Read** John 3:16-21. Receiving God's love means to 'come into the light' and to receive healing for our areas of brokenness. How can our unwillingness to be vulnerable before God hinder us from receiving true love?
- 5) Pastor Joseph mentioned in the sermon that our failure to love others with real + perfect love stems from our inability to accept and walk in God's love. When we reject God's love, it impacts every area of our life. How was Gomer affected when she rejected Hosea's love? Have you experienced any of the 3 consequences of rejecting God's love?
- 6) Think back to a time when you played a real.life version of "Let's Make a Deal." With the knowledge of God's real + perfect love would your decision be different now given the same set of choices? Would you stick with the choice you made before?
- 7) What are some practical ways that you can mirror God's real + perfect love to others this week?