

Group Resource

**Sermon Notes – Sunday, March 9, 2014**

**Love, Sex + Godly Relationships**

**Message:** Receiving God's Love

**Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 4:

- I. In this series, we have examined the questions, (1) **“What is real love?”** and (2) **“How do we accept and live in God’s perfect and real love?”**
- II. In part (3), we address **how to reflect God’s love in our actions towards others?**
  - a. Love is something given to us through God’s divine nature. This means that we are responsible to GOD for how we share that love with others. We are called to be good stewards of our love.
  - b. Stewardship is neither a call to restrain our love nor a call to blindly give everything everyone desires, but a call to give an account.
  - c. There is a difference between selfishness and stewardship. Author Henry Cloud describes “Selfishness as a fixation on our own wishes and desires, to the exclusion of our responsibility to love others.”
- III. Unselfish love does not mean undiscerning love
  - a. Real + perfect love that forces us to discern the difference between giving what someone wants and giving what is in their best interest. True love forces us to make distinctions.
  - b. <sup>1 COR 13:6</sup> *Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*
    - i. True love must discern between truth and error in order to rejoice with the truth. True love must understand what is dangerous in order to protect. True love must understand what is good so that trust can be build. True love must find the correct places to put ones hope.
  - c. As our example, Jesus loved unselfishly but still made distinctions
    - i. Peter, James, and John were the only disciples allowed to accompany Jesus when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead (Mark 5:37).
    - ii. In the Garden of Gethsemane, not long before his arrest and eventual execution, the Lord selected only Peter, James, and John to accompany him to a solitary place for prayer (Mark 14:32-35)
- IV. What type of love are we called to share with others?
  - a. The ancient Greeks had four words to express different kinds of “love”: (1) *eros* for “sexual passion,” (2) *storge* for “family devotion,” (3) *phileo* for “friendship,” and (4) *agape* for “loving-kindness.”
  - b. What is phileo or philadelphia type of love?
    - i. Philadelphia originated from the concept of love that belongs to a family by birth. In the New Testament, the meaning was expanded to refer to the special love Christians have for one another because they are members of the same family and have the same Father.
    - ii. Holman’s commentary describes phileo as “affection marked by strong action.”
  - c. In a letter to the church in Thessalonica, the Apostle Paul shares this exhortation:
    - i. <sup>1 THESSALONIANS 4:9</sup> *Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. <sup>10</sup> And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.*
  - d. Paul both affirmed the church’s faithful demonstration of love to date and introduced an exhortation to grow in love even more. Learning to love is a never-ending discipline.
- V. What does it mean to love others more and more?
  - a. I – We recognize our need to receive Christ’s affirming love and to continually give that same love to others
    - i. Our ability to love others will always be in proportion to the love that we receive from God.
    - ii. In banking terms, we have an automated withdrawal to give ourselves towards loving others. If God does not deposit love in our lives, we will constantly try to make withdrawals from a negative account. (Romans 13:8)

- b. II – We recognize the way in which God expects us to demonstrate love towards others.
- i. *Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*
  - ii. We have an obligation to love (phileo) and to do good to ALL people. This means our enemies, our friends, our neighbors, our co-workers.
    1. If we sow Godly love to others, we will receive Godly love. If we sow selfish love to others, we will receive selfish love. Verse 9 admonishes us that in the process of loving others, we shouldn't become weary. We will reap a harvest if we do not give up.
  - iii. Loving others becomes difficult when we associate loving everyone as preferring everyone in the same way. True love means that there are distinctions in the expressions of love but wholehearted commitment to sacrificially pursue the best interests of another. The Godly way of distinguishing expressions of love is not based on personal preference but faithful stewardship of our love.
  - iv. The beginning of Galatians chapter six gives us instructions on how to make a Godly distinction.
  - v. *Galatians 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3 If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. 4 Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, 5 for each one should carry their own load.*
    1. From a casual reading of this passage, it seems that Paul is affirming two contradictory things.
    2. If you love someone, you have to carry their burden, or  
If you love someone, you have to make them carry their own load
    3. However, reading the passage in its original language helps us to understand that Paul indeed was not contradicting himself, but teaching us how to love in a dynamic tension.
  - vi. Two types of loads
    1. The Greek word for burden means "excess burdens," or burdens that are so heavy that they weigh us down. We are not called to carry boulders by ourselves!
    2. In contrast, the Greek word for load means "cargo," or "the burden of daily toil." It portrays the idea of a knapsack or a daily backpack that carries essential tools and supplies.
    3. Author Henry Cloud says in the book Boundaries, "Problems arise when people act as if their "boulders" are daily loads, and refuse help, or as if their "daily loads" are boulders they shouldn't have to carry. The results of these two instances are either perpetual pain or irresponsibility."
    4. Cloud continues, "We are to love one another, not be one another. I can't feel your feelings for you. I can't think for you. I can't behave for you. I can't work through the disappointment that limits bring for you. In short, I can't grow for you; only you can. Likewise, you can't grow for me."
  - vii. The love that we show towards others can either help carry someone else's burden or help them to mature to be able to carry their own load. How do we differentiate between the two types of weights?
    1. *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*
    2. Unselfish love is not advocating a love that teaches us to forsake personal responsibility but a love that balances justice with grace. Even in salvation, each of us must make a personal decision to accept God's perfect love that He has given to us.
    3. "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil. 2:12–13).

- viii. What belongs in each of our knapsacks? Or our daily load?
  - 1. We are each responsible for our own feelings, actions, and behaviors. Love doesn't take away this responsibility.
- ix. What boulders do we help others to carry?
  - 1. Denying ourselves to do for others what they cannot do for themselves is showing the sacrificial love of Christ. This is what Christ did for us. He did what we could not do for ourselves; he saved us.
- VI. Our prayer should be what the Apostle Paul prayed over the church in Thessalonica: <sup>12</sup> May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. <sup>13</sup> May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. <sup>1</sup>Thessalonians 3:12-13

## Group Resource

# Let's Talk Notes – Sunday, March 9, 2014

### Love, Sex + Godly Relationships

**Message:** To Love More and More

**Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10

- 1) Bring a purse, knapsack or backpack with 2-3 items that represent things you “carry” (deal with) on a daily basis. As a group, identify which things are burdens that others can help you to bear, which things are your own responsibility, and which, if any, are unnecessary weights?
- 2) 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?
- 3) Give an example of how your family has shown love to you? Have you received that same type of love in church? Why? or Why Not? What does a church look like that practices agape – phileo love towards one another?
- 4) Have you ever struggled with how to show unselfish love towards others? How did Jesus model unselfish love with distinctions in the expressions of that love?
- 5) Think over your past week. How has your ability to love others been affected by the love that you receive from God? What are practical ways that we can receive love from God on a continual basis?
- 6) **Read** Romans 15:1-2. Summarize its meaning. The Scriptures distinguish between our responsibility to love others by carrying each other’s burdens rather than by carrying each other’s load. What is the difference between burdens and loads? Why does this distinction make a difference in how we love others more and more?
- 7) In what ways can setting relationship boundaries be difficult? How can we set appropriate relationship boundaries without neglecting our responsibility to love others more and more? What do we put at risk when we don't set appropriate relationship boundaries?