

How to Love

This was a class given by Kevin Schwartz to the men of the church on Valentine's Day this year.

When I was reviewing 2016 events with our Pastors I asked about a Valentine's Banquet since that is something we've done before. Unfortunately for those of you who are hungry right now, that didn't happen. The tables were turned upside down and Sis. Nancy and I were roped into teaching these classes.

A couple of weeks ago, I woke up with a basic outline and some additional thoughts on my mind. I was like, great, thanks God ... way to confirm these classes and ensure we don't get anything to eat!!

Anyway, I do feel like the Lord laid a few things on my heart for this and I hope you find some nuggets in here that will help you love more, love deeper, and love more consistently. Not asking a lot is He?

Valentine's is an obvious time to talk about love but we will expand the normal Valentine's love topic to be more inclusive. I think you'll find that the more you love the more inclusive you will be. I'm not saying that anything goes. I am saying that we are able, capable and commanded to love God and our neighbor. More about that neighbor bit shortly.

We're going to talk about several aspects of love

God

Yourself

Wife

Family

Friends

The World

God is in the Ownership & Presence

When I buy something or even receive it as a gift I'm protective of it. Whether it's my house, my car, my clothes, and it can even be our job (because guys are like that, they take ownership in a job that we care about). It could even be my wife – I do own her as much as she owns me.

Whatever it is ownership means something to us. Now if we relate that to God. I own the fact that I am a child of the King – He is mine and I am His.

I like the following series of quotes from a book called Love Does written by Bob Goff:

Something happens when you feel ownership. You no longer act like a spectator or consumer, because you're an owner. Faith is at its best when it's that way too. It's best lived when it's owned.

I reflect on God, who didn't choose someone else to express His creative presence to the world, who didn't tap the rock star or the popular kid to get things done. He chose you and me. We are the means, the method, the object, and the delivery vehicles. God can use anyone, for sure. ... You see, God usually chooses ordinary people like us to get things done.

Jesus is also called Immanuel – which means God with us. He is present with us. His very name gives us the example of how to love. Be present.

We can make love difficult by making it too hard, too complex, too burdensome.

The Israelites had a tough time being faithful to God. As you read in the Old Testament and see, in spite of the tremendous miracles He did for them, they would turn their back on Him. I call them stupid Israelites when they do that. I've also called myself that when I mess up and fail God.

The difference for the Israelites, as well as for me, is that when we turn back to Him and confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive them and restore us back unto Him. Every time. It's us who give up returning, not God. He knows we're human, that we're born to sin and He is loving, and ready to bring every lost son who has gone off to live his life his own way, back to full son-ship.

There's another quote from Bob Goff in his book Love Does:

It becomes clear that we need to stop plotting the course and instead just land the plane on our plans to make a difference by getting to the "do" part of faith. That's because love is never stationary. In the end, love doesn't just keep thinking about it or keep planning for it. Simply put: love does.

The kind of love that God created and demonstrated is a costly one because it involves sacrifice and presence. ... The brand of love Jesus offers is that it's more about presence than undertaking a project.

Own your relationship with God.

Own your Faith.

Be Present.

Don't stop believing.

Yourself

Psalm 139:13-15 ESV

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Ephesians 2:10 ESV

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

If you can't love you who can you love?

If you can't love you how can you love anyone else?

It's not narcissistic but healthy respect for how God created you. You will also have more respect for you when you respect the following.

Wife

Ephesians 5:21-28 ESV

Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

Ephesians 4:26 ESV

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger

Remember to listen. Yes, they do like to talk more than us. It's important to remember that it is important to them. What's important to her is important to your marriage.

Care more for her than your job. Bringing home the bacon and the need to supply for your family creates in us a workaholic, career obsessed mentality often times. Even if it's the need to work 'a few more hours so you have the money to buy whatever new 'thing' that you need. We can focus too much on the wrong priority.

We started our marriage making those commitments and in your honeymoon stage it's actually pretty easy. As time went on, I found myself investing more and more time into my career (my supplying for my family, my household, my things, my retirement, and even my church). None of that is bad unless you set the wrong priorities for why you're doing it.

God brought me back to the basics. After God, nothing else in this life is more important than her.

Another quote from Love Does

Being engaged is a way of doing life, a way of living and loving. It's about going to extremes and expressing the bright hope that life offers us, a hope that makes us brave and expels darkness with light. That's what I want my life to be all about-full of abandon, whimsy, and in love. I want to be engaged to live and with life.

For you husbands, remember when you were planning your engagement? It had to be perfect. You planned and strategized and saved and thought about it and wanted to be sure you did everything just right so she would say yes, right? You were young (most of you were anyway). You were audacious – confident, daring, bold, adventurous, and even reckless. You wanted her to marry you and you needed to be bold so you wouldn't chicken out and run for the hills!

Our love should always be young, audacious and all out love. Again Jesus shows us the example, He went all out. He came to earth as a man. He suffered childhood here! He lived and breathed among us and He loved. He went on to the cross. He shed tears and blood prior to the cross, not because He was afraid to die on the cross. He was about to take all our crap, all our sins. He hates sin! He took it anyway. He died on that cross and conquered death so that we can live ... so that we can love.

So, let's talk about young audacious, all out love.

One last quote from Bob Goff in Love Does:

The sad thing is, for many there is no "next time" because passing on the chance to cross over is an overall attitude toward life rather than a single decision. They need a change of attitude, not more opportunities.

I didn't take several attempts to ask Kinah to marry me, most people don't. Use our own example and use the most of the moment (even by changing our attitude, because isn't

that what usually keeps us from loving – our attitude). You may not have another opportunity, there may not be another chance. Just do it, just love!

But remember. If you do miss an opportunity, don't give up. Just as God is faithful, be faithful and go back out and try again.

Family

It's not hard to love your babies except when you think they steal your time to do your own thing. As much as we love them though, it gets more difficult as they grow up and develop their own independent nature and become more like a stupid Israelite.

Ephesians 6:1-4 ESV

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

It says, kids obey, dads provoke not, rather help them grow, develop and succeed; advise and encourage them in the Lord.

We have such dreams for our kids but as they drift from our dreams to their own, it can take a toll on us. We cannot live their lives. We can help them fulfill their dreams. Even when it seems stupid to us, help them love all out also. You still offer advice but give more focus on helping them love and live like they are about to get engaged!

The more we get excited about their lives, the more we show them they are loved, the more we accept them for who they are becoming – the more they can learn to love themselves and to love others.

It may not be easy but. Are they worth it? When it's tough fall back on ...

Ephesians 6:10 ESV

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Friends

John 15:12-15 ESV

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

Wow, did He just say go out and die for your friend!? This is not a figure of speech. If we are going to live our lives all out, if we're going to love audaciously, then yes – we have to prepare ourselves to die for our friends. And the way this world is going, that could be a reality.

How do I prepare myself to die for a friend though? How do I expand my love to encompass such a huge task?

You've heard the saying practice makes perfect. It's true here, the more you love, the more you can love. You will find loving others easier and easier the more you practice loving all out.

Philippians 4:8-9 ESV

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

The World

John 13:34-35 ESV

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

How do we love one another? The best answer I have is to, one more time, follow Christ's example...

1 John 4:19

We love him, because he first loved us.

Ephesians 5:1-2

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savior.

New Living Translation reads:

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us.

Ephesians 4:32

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

I Timothy 1:5:

But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

Galatians 2:20

It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

In Matthew 28 we find the Great Commission, which brings us to the ultimate love you can have for others by showing them the path to Jesus' perfect love. Share the Good News of the Gospel. We are all called to fulfill the Great Commission.

Wrap Up

So love encompasses ...

God

Yourself

Wife

Family

Friends

The World

That's a lot of love.

Let's pull it all together now.

Matt 13:44 ESV

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Let me rephrase this. You're walking through a field and stumble upon a huge treasure, riches beyond your dreams. You hide the treasure and go into town to purchase the field from the owner. You sell everything you have, your family is horrified, your friends think you've lost it, and the rest of the town is literally rolling on the floor laughing because you are losing everything in order to buy that stupid field outside of town. But you do it, you raise enough money to buy the field. You also gave up all that you had. But you did all this to have an even greater fortune and treasure.

That's what we are doing now. We are selling off our old selves; the greed, and hate, the selfishness, and despair, all we have so that we may have a fortune and treasure beyond compare laid up in heaven. We have to forget the current cost to us because there will come a day when we meet Jesus and He will say, well done thou good and faithful servant.

So love. Love young, love audacious and love all out! Love like it counts, because it does.



The Church at Asheville
Love God. Love People.