

Covenant Relationships

This week I want to take a break from our series on the seven redemptive names of God and talk about the love of God and covenant relationships.

God is the source of love.

1 Corinthians 8:6 AMPC "Yet for us there is [only] one God, the Father, Who is the Source of all things and for Whom we [have life], and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through and by Whom are all things and through and by Whom we [ourselves exist]."

God is the perfect source, because with him love is not what he does, it's who he is.

The essence of God is love.

Essence: Formal existence; that which makes anything to be what it is; or rather, the peculiar nature of a thing; the very substance.

1 John 4:7-8 NKJV "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

I think it is important to go back to the beginning and understand God's design for man.

All of God's plans flow from his nature, and all of his promises are backed by his nature.

The reason that God created humanity was that his nature is love.

He did not create man because he needed to be loved or worshiped, God is self-sufficient.

God created man because he needed a way to express his unconditional love and love can only be expressed in the context of relationships.

What sets God's love apart from human love is that his love is not based on feelings but based on his unchanging nature.

Matthew 5:45 NKJV "He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

There is nothing you can do to make God love you less and there is nothing you can do to make God love you more.

Made in his image.

Romans 8:29 NKJV "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Jesus came to restore us back to the image and likeness of God.

Galatians 5:22-23 TPT “But the fruit produced by the Holy Spirit within you is divine love in all its varied expressions: joy that overflows, peace that subdues, patience that endures, kindness in action, a life full of virtue, faith that prevails, gentleness of heart, and strength of spirit. Never set the law above these qualities, for they are meant to be limitless.”

Neuroscientist Caroline Leaf says that our mind was only designed to receive and give the fruit of the spirit. Any of the opposite emotions did not come from God and are toxic to our minds.

Contract or Covenant?

We live in a culture that views relationships through the lens of a contract and not a covenant.

So what’s the difference?

A contract is self-centered. Your decisions are always based on what is best for you. Think about when you buy a car. If they want 15k you will try to get it for 14k. Never once have you said blue book is 16k so I will give you that.

A relationship based on a contract always sees the other person as your source of love and acceptance and it is always conditional based on performance. As long as they take care of you and do the things that you expect them to do life is good, but as soon as they don’t meet your expectation, the relationship is on the rocks.

In a covenant relationship you look to God as your source of love and acceptance, and it is always unconditional.

In a contract we: Protect our rights and limit our responsibilities.

In a covenant we: Give up our rights and take up our responsibilities.

Three things we give up:

1) Priority

Genesis 2:24a TPT “For this reason, a man leaves his father and his mother to be unselfishly attached to his wife.”

When God was talking about leaving your parents it was a bigger picture than most of us think. He was saying you must leave behind every person or thing that was a priority and make your spouse your number one earthly priority.

2) Ownership

Genesis 2:24b TPT “They become one flesh as a new family!

Becoming one flesh is saying, “I hold nothing back, everything I have is yours”.

3) Privacy

Genesis 2:25 TPT “The man and his wife felt no shame, unaware that they were both naked.”

Naked and unashamed is a picture of trust and transparency (I have no secrets).

Three things we take up:

1) Honor

1 Peter 3:7 “Husbands, you in turn must treat your wives with tenderness, viewing them as feminine partners who deserve to be honored, for they are co-heirs with you of the “divine grace of life,” so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”

This verse is talking specifically to husbands, but both husbands and wives need to learn to honor their spouses.

Honor means to dignify; to raise to distinction or notice; to elevate in rank or station; to exalt.

What if we had you over to our house and you noticed a vase you liked and Teresa said she bought it at Kirkland’s and she handed it to you. You would be careful with it. But what if she said that she inherited it and it was from 13th century China and it was worth 2 million dollars, would you handle it differently?

2) Unconditional love

Ephesians 5:25 “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.”

3) Mutual submission

Ephesians 5:21 “submitting to one another in the fear of God.”

The simplest definition of submission is to walk in step with.

For many years I only saw marriage as a covenant, now I realize that every relationship that you have is designed to be a covenant relationship.

Just think about how different your family would look if you consistently lived with unconditional love towards every member of your family.

Listen to the instructions that the apostle Paul gave to the church at Philippi.

Philippians 2:1-4 NKJV “Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

Focus on being like-minded (unity).

Be humble.

Consider the needs of others above your own.

This is the kind of church that everyone is looking for.