



*The #1 catalyst for spiritual growth is reading and reflecting on the Bible.
Use these questions for personal study or as part of a community group experience.*

WEEK 3

05/07/2017

Note to Leaders: In discussion with Pastor John this week, he jokingly commented that in 25 minutes he was going to “solve all marital problems.” While tongue-in-cheek, the core of this message sets the stage for understanding how all relationships thrive. God, working in us through his Holy Spirit, puts to death our selfishness, self-interest, and self-aggrandizing. These are identified, in the Greek, as *sarx* (σαρξ). The goal of this week, is to identify and confess our own selfishness that divides us from God and those we love. Then, commit yourself to a humble pursuit of God.

These questions provide a framework to prompt or foster discussion in your group. Don't feel you have to use all or any of these questions! Use the questions that best fit your group and let discussion flow.

Sermon Questions

1. What from Sunday's message challenges your previous view of marriage?
2. Why are the points from Sunday's message so important to healthy relationships?

Message Notes:

Love interrupts our self-centered lives

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” John 13:34

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.” John 12:24(NKJV)

“Without oxen a stable stays clean, but you need a strong ox for a large harvest.” Proverbs 14:4(NLT)

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. **4** Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. **5** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, **6** who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied himself...” Philippians 2:3-7(ESV)

Five things you should be doing for your husband or wife:

For Him

5). Say- you did a great job

For Her

5). Pull yourself out of a funk

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| 4). Say- <u>thank you</u> | 4). Put your arm around her in <u>public</u> |
| 3). Say- well done in <u>public</u> | 3). Send thoughtful <u>texts and emails</u> |
| 2). Say- I want to have <u>sex with you</u> | 2). Tell her how <u>beautiful she is</u> |
| 1). Say- you make me very <u>happy</u> | 1). Hold her <u>hand</u> |

3. What was most encouraging or challenging about this weekend's message?

4. Which scripture stood out to you most? Why?

Discussion Questions

1. John began the message talking about the irritation of interruptions. Where have you seen unexpected irritations negatively impact a relationship? Why do these often affect us?
2. What is the best remedy against our negative, and often hurtful, reactions to the unexpected in your relationships or marriage? (Consider Luke 6:43-45)
3. Learning to put the other person first is an act of service based on a decision to love. This means putting yourself second. Does serving your spouse mean you no longer get your needs met? How does this work, or at least, supposed to work?
4. How do you keep serving and loving your spouse in the proper perspective? (John 13:34; Philippians 2:1-5)
5. What reactions do you have to the "his and hers" list of 5 actions of love? Do they resonate with you?
6. There is some research that claims, being for your spouse what you want your spouse to be for you creates hope and change in your marriage. Have you seen this concept in action?

Where has it gone well and where have you seen its flaws? Why do you think it works in part or fails in part?

Extra Credit

7. There is something deep within us that gravitates toward self, what the bible calls "sarx"—"our flesh," "earthly desires," or "self-interest." This needs radical adjustment. It is not a matter of simply developing new habits, but these habits are a visible outcome of a renewed and transformed self. Colossians 3:1-17 gives a stark picture between our natural selves and the life renewed by the Spirit of God.

What things stand out in Colossians 3:1-17? Where might God be challenging you?

How could these changes provide hope and healing in our relationships?

How does this transformation begin to take place?

Background Comments

Colossians 3:1-17. Being united with Christ in his death and resurrection means, though we continue to live on earth, we have embarked on a new way of life—the life and interests of Jesus become our own. Verses 1-4 serve as the foundation of faith that makes the new life possible. The belief that in Jesus we encounter the presence of God through Jesus' life and death make it possible for transformation that reflects the life of Jesus, which is enumerated in verses 5-17. This is cast in language of putting off the “old” and putting on the “new”. The old practices are to be abandoned and the new way of life to be adopted. The old lifestyle, practices of the *sarx*, are listed from the practical outward expressions of our desires to the inner condition of the heart.

Colossians 3:6 warns that “on account of these the wrath of God is coming.” This statement hits the reader hard. Its message conveys, the impending reality that faces those who live a life devoted not to God but to self. The result is wrath, upon idolatry (3:5) and separation—from God—of those who follow self (which is idolatry). The punishment itself is an inevitable consequence incurred by those who choose a course of life that set's themselves at odds with God (cf. Romans 1:18-25). These things ultimately create division between God and others, since they reflect a “me-first” and “for-my-pleasure-first” mentality. Paul contrasts this with the renewal of the inner nature that increasingly reflects the image of Jesus and our Creator, God (2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:16).

In contrast to the “old life,” the life in the *sarx*, Paul reiterates Jesus' message to reflect God by putting on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bearing one another, forgiving the other, and choosing to love, which binds us together. Verse 13 gives a marriage-changing challenge to be mutually forgiving, mutually patient, and mutually gracious. Timothy Keller takes this verse and parallels it with Ephesians 5:21-33, arguing that only when each spouse is mutually serving, forgiving, and sacrificing for the other can true fulfillment be found, because in these things Christ is reflected greatest. Love, in response to Jesus and directed toward your spouse, therefore is the fulfillment of these and the driving force through which these are present. Love is the response to God that initiates this transformation. Paul concludes verse 15 with “And be thankful,” which portrays these habits as the response of gratitude to the grace of God.

Prayer Requests

Take a few minutes to go around the room and ask for prayers. Write these down as they are being shared. Additionally, challenge people to begin praying about the step of boldness God may be calling them to during this series. Finally, pray together. You can pray the prayer below or your own prayer that incorporates the requests represented in the group.

Closing Prayer

Father, you are patient, gracious, and forgiving. I thank you for reaching out to me and revealing yourself. Help me as I engage Scripture, to grasp the power of your love and the life that you call me to. May your word permeate my mind and your spirit transform my heart that I might reflect you in my relationships. Open my eyes to the change I need to pursue. Strengthen me to walk in new life, putting off the old habits, and to increasingly become more like you. In Jesus name, amen.