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Building Your Life on Values That Empower
“Building Your Life with Loving Relationships”
(Part 4)

Intro: (Video) Can you relate? Loneliness was never something God intended us to live with, yet we experience it so often. God has a plan to remove loneliness from our lives. It is the last value He wants us to build our lives with. Loving Relationships. God wants to move our lives from the weakness of loneliness to the power of loving relationships. HOW?

- 3 keys to building your life with loving relationships.

I. We Must Understand the Significance Of This Value

- I am convinced that the majority of people who claim to follow Christ simply don't understand just how significant this value really is! If we blow this value, we end up wasting our lives! This is how significant it is!
 - A. Loving relationships fulfill the greatest commandment
Mark 12:29-31 “Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this:...you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.”
 1. The 1st and 2nd commandments are a package deal. They are inseparable. Even though Jesus calls them #1 and #2, we can't experience one without the other. For years believers have tried to justify this separation.
 2. Years ago, I remember sitting on church board meetings and I would bring up the fact of how some leaders in the church were acting (gossip / slander / controlling / manipulating / intimidating) The response: “Oh Dale, these people love the Lord you know.” WHAT?
I John 4:20 “If someone says, “I love God,” but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see?” (NLT) See! They are connected!
 3. Our horizontal relationships are an indicator of our vertical relationship. Our vertical relationship with God affects our horizontal relationships with each other.
 4. The only way for us to fulfill the greatest command is to get very serious about not only our relationship with God, but also our relationships with each other. We can't

compartmentalize these commands.

B. Loving relationships fulfill the great commission

- After the resurrection, Jesus charged His disciples with a task / a job / a priority. It is commonly called “The Great Commission”

Matt. 28:18-20 “Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.” (NLT)

1. We are charged with the job of “making disciples”. This is the job of the church.

Unfortunately, the church has often failed to realize that this great commission is a relational command. Disciples are made as we love people not condemn them.

- This is why I don’t agree with the “in your face” approach to evangelism. (Years ago I used to go to Pioneer Courthouse Square and talk to street kids. There would also be a guy shouting to the people there. – explain)

2. We forget to realize it is our love for each other and those we are trying to reach that is a testimony to them. Our love authenticates the message.

John 13:34-35 “So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” (NLT) How does condemning people show love?

3. The proof of our message is not in our arguments but in our relationships. It is our loving relationships that make the Gospel attractive to people. Why would I want to listen to a message about God’s love from a bunch of people who don’t get along?

4. This is one of the biggest complaints from unchurched people is that the so-called Christians are always fighting among themselves. Without love, the great commission becomes the great omission. It just doesn’t happen.

C. Loving relationships fulfill the greatest virtue

I Cor. 13:13 “Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.”

1. The greatest virtue you can commit to developing in your life according to God’s word is the ability to love others. To become a loving person is even more important than having more faith! How can that be possible?

Col. 3:14 “And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” (NIV) Here’s our answer.

2. Love is the context where all the other virtues should be experienced in. Love is the glue that holds them all together. Love is the power behind everything else we do.

3. In the preceding verses, it talks about tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and forgiveness. All of these qualities / virtues should happen in the context of love.

4. Love is like the hub of a wagon wheel. The spokes are all the other virtues that find

their origin in love. What is kindness without love? Humility? Forgiveness?

Without love we just go through the motions. It's not real / genuine / authentic.

Do you see the significance of love? We can blow a lot of things in this life and be OK. BUT, if we blow this, we truly waste our lives. You can be the most successful person in the world, but without love, your life will amount to nothing.

II. We Must Commit To The Application Of This Value

- How do we apply this to our lives? How do we commit to developing this quality?

A. We must commit to honesty in our relationships

Rom. 12:9 "Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them..." (NLT)

1. Being dishonest and fake is not a very loving thing. Putting on a false front / a fake impression to look good / pretending to be interested and concerned when you're really not, is how the world lives NOT followers of Christ.
2. If we are going to apply this value we're going to have to stop pretending and start having a commitment to get real. There is power in authenticity / relational honesty.
3. I understand that there is great pressure to pretend. (I even feel it.) You come in here for one of the services and you're dying on the inside, and yet you paste that plastic smile on your face. You tell everyone you're doing fine.

Eph. 4:25 "So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body." (NLT)

4. How can we work at having loving relationships if we're constantly pretending and being relationally dishonest with each other? I can't get close to people who never share their struggles. Everything is always "fine".
 5. Think about those who are closest to you. How honest are you really? There is such power in relationships that are transparent. Where there is nothing to hide. It is our commitment to love each other that promotes this type of honesty.
 6. For some of you, the greatest thing you fear is being rejected; not being loved for who you are. BUT, the thing you crave the most won't happen until you choose to be honest. May we be the place where people can be this honest and be loved!
- It is in this type of relational environment where people's lives really change.

B. We must commit to forgiveness in our relationships

Col. 3:13 "Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others." (NLT)

1. How can we say we love people if we are unwilling to forgive them? If we are going to build our lives with loving relationships, we're going to have to forgive those who have disappointed and wounded us.
2. Col 3 tells us to "make allowances for each other's faults". What does this mean? It simply means you don't expect people to be perfect. Part of experiencing loving relationships is having a built in understanding that people will disappoint you.

Therefore, you make allowances for this fact.

3. This isn't about excusing wrong behavior, it's about forgiving wrong behavior. Forgiveness is just part of the relational package. This is what God did for us and constantly does for us. This is the model.
4. Unforgiveness closes off your heart from God's love being poured into your life. If you wonder why you struggle loving someone, it may be a forgiveness issue.

Illustrate with large pitcher of sand – try pouring into a jar with lid – remove lid and then pour.)

5. Unforgiveness not only cuts you off from God's resources it closes off your heart from others. It doesn't just impact the offender. Unforgiveness hinders all our relationships.
- Who do you need to forgive? Remember, forgiveness is a choice and a process. If we make the choice and commit to the process, God will give us the ability.

C. We must commit to endure in our relationships

1 Cor. 13:7 "Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance." (NLT)

- In our culture, relationship and people are disposable; but NOT in God's Kingdom!
 1. To build our lives with loving relationships, we are going to have to commit to endurance. We can't just dispose of our friendships / marriages / people simply because we're struggling and we're not getting along / or we don't like something they did / or they're just starting to get on my nerves. Love never gives up!
 2. We don't value endurance in our culture. Everyone is looking for an easy path / painless process / relationships without any discomfort. Because people avoid these things, they end up with weak, short-lived relationships.
 3. Endurance is how we grow strong / how we learn new lessons and skills / how we see the fulfillment of all God has promised. Endurance is how we become the people God wants us to be.
 4. Often it is in those relationships that are more work where God uses them to mold and perfect our lives the most. Do you have people in your life that are difficult for you to endure loving them?
- Being in the ministry for 24 years, I have run into a few people that were very difficult for me to endure loving. (share) God put them in my life on purpose!
 5. What relationships are you ready to throw away? Instead of discarding these people, can you hear God asking you to endure? It is in this choice where you and your relationships are transformed. We learn to have enduring love.
- How is all this possible? The only way to live this way is through Christ. We can't love like this in our own strength. If we are willing to give ourselves to Him and our relationships, He will empower us to live this way.

III. We Must Live In The Rewards Of This Value

- It is important that there is tangible evidence of changed relationships. If we live this value, there will be a host of amazing results. Here's three.
- A. We enjoy relational security rather than insecurity
1. Secure relationships are empowered relationships. Because people are not committed to this value, they live insecure - fearful lives. They are insecure in their friendships / marriages / co-workers / as parents / at church
 2. We must have relationships that are not based upon our performance or behavior but on a commitment to love each other regardless.
1 Cor. 13:4-7 "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance." (NLT)
 3. When you know you are loved like this, you become a very secure person. All the masquerading has stopped and you are free to be completely yourself. You enjoy such relational security because of love that it liberates you. Liberating love!
 4. I have a relationship like this here at the church. Pastor Dave and I have a loving relationship with each other that secure beyond words. (explain) His love for me liberates me My love for him liberates him /. We both have been in places where this wasn't true.
 5. Our love for one another needs to be so profound that we liberate each other to all that God intended. This is the environment God wants in all our relationships and in His church. I want to be known as the church that liberates people!
- B. We enjoy relational unity rather than divisiveness
1. Unified relationships are empowered relationships. Divisiveness will always make your relationships weak. It makes your marriage weak / family / business / church.
Ps. 133: 1,3 "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!... For there the LORD bestows his blessing,..." (NIV)
 2. Choosing to love each other and live in unity produces a blessing from God. God blesses loving unity. Obedience = blessing!
 3. I understand this first hand. I have lived on both sides of this principal. I have seen the blessing of unity and the devastation of divisiveness. Before my days of starting Foothills, I lived through 3 church splits. I have witnesses enough relational pain and wounding in church to last me a lifetime.
 4. This is why I am so passionate about our relationships with each other. This is why I am so sensitive to anything divisive at Foothills. It is one of the most destructive things I have ever experienced. This is why we don't tolerate it here. (explain)
 5. BUT, where there is unity, there is the blessing of God. Look at what God is doing in this church because of unity. The more we are committed to loving people, the more unity we'll experience and the more blessing God will pour out. That's power!

C. We enjoy relational power rather than weakness

- Story of Moses / Aaron and Hur – Ex. 17
Heb. 10:24 “Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.” (NLT) Let’s be committed to holding up each other’s arms!
 1. There are relationships that will empower you to be the person God called you to be, and there are relationships that will keep you from becoming the person God called you to be. Which type of relationship do you have?
 2. We all need people around us who are committed to our success. (Aaron and Hur) BUT, we also need to be committed to the success of others not just to ourselves? We need to be lifting up the arms of others around us.
 3. When we truly love people we become their arm lifters / their edifiers / their cheerleaders. When we love each other like this, there is great power experienced just like Moses with Aaron and Hur. Sometimes others help lift your arms. At other times, you are the one lifting theirs.
 4. Some of the greatest joys in my life is helping someone else succeed. (explain) There is such power experienced in the church when we love each other like this.
 5. We all need people in our life who refuse to let us fail! When we get discouraged / weary / and want to quit / they just refuse to let us. That’s the kind of love you want to build your life with.
- Are you building your life with loving relationships? Do you understand how significant this value is? Do you see how God may want you to apply this? Do you want the rewards that come with living this way? Therefore, what changes need to take place?