



# Life Together

From the Pastor's Desk....

## Christian Love is Costly, But Worth It

Loved Ones,

Loving people is risky and costly. As a fruit of the Spirit, love is always a gift of grace — but cultivating fruit can be hard work.

### The Difficulty of Love

I have a good, gospel-centered book called *Relationships: A Mess Worth Making*. In it, authors Paul Tripp and Tim Lane use an exercise we can all try right now.

First, stop and think about your most satisfying relationship — if you're having a hard time figuring out what that relationship might be, it's proof that loving relationships aren't easy! Now ask yourself these simple questions about that relationship:

- Have you ever felt misunderstood?
- Have you ever been hurt by what the other person said?
- Have you ever felt like you haven't been heard?
- Have you ever been betrayed?
- Have you ever had to work through a misunderstanding?
- Have you ever disagreed on a decision?
- Have you or the other person ever held a grudge?
- Have you ever experienced loneliness even when things were going well?
- Have you ever been let down?
- Have you ever doubted the other person's love?
- Has the other person ever doubted your commitment?
- Have you ever struggled to resolve a conflict?
- Have you ever wished you didn't have to give or serve?
- Have you ever felt used?

## Quote for the Week~

"There is an infinite distance and disproportion between God and man; yet he overcame all that to love man. What difficulty should I have, then, to place my affection on my equal at worst, and often better? ... Since infinite wrongs have not changed [God's love], shall poor, petty, and light offenses, hinder mine?"

"If all that was in me did not alienate His love from me, how should any thing in others estrange our love to them? If God be so kind to his enemies, and Christ so loving that he gives his life for his enemies to make them friends, what should we do to our enemies, what to our friends? This one example may make all created love blush and be ashamed. How narrow, how limited, how selfish it is!"

~From Hugh Binning, *A Treatise of Christian Love* (2004 reprint, Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth), pp. 30, 32.

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**To bring glory to God  
through Spirit-transformed lives  
by the beauty and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ**

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## Pastor's Desk continued.....

Most of us will find that even in the best of our relationships, we would have to answer YES to many of those questions. Why is that? It's because love is radically other centered, and we are naturally self-centered. Left to ourselves, we look at every relationship with selfish motives, and we blame every problem in the relationship on the other person. This is what the Bible teaches:

"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?" (James 4:1)

Whenever you find it difficult to love another person, there is an opportunity to learn something about your own heart, your own sin, your own need for grace — and to learn something glorious about your Savior!

**Why bother?**

You may be wondering right now if it is worth it to cultivate love. In marriage, maybe you're not opening up to one another anymore. At work, maybe you're shutting the door to your office and avoiding other people. At home, maybe you're often hiding-out in your room. At church, maybe you're resisting opportunities to go any deeper with people — you go through the formality of coming to the meetings, but you carefully protect yourself from anything that makes you feel vulnerable. In your neighborhood, maybe you're living side-by-side with people but not attempting to learn anything significant about them.

We're all tempted to isolate ourselves from the demands of love. It's risky to love sinful people in a broken world, and it's tempting to check out. But according to God's wisdom, it's selfish and it's foolish to do so: "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment" (Proverbs 18:1).

Loving people is risky and costly. Do you ever wonder, "Why bother?" Here's the best answer I've heard to that question: *Because God did.*

"God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

And he did not just love us at one point in history. Jesus is right now the lover of our souls. He is the friend who sticks closer than a brother. His is love beyond a brother's — costly, free, and knows no end. Jesus is the friend who loves at all times.

*Which of all our friends to save us, could or would have shed his blood? But our Jesus died to have us reconciled in him to God. This was boundless love indeed; Jesus is a friend in need.*

*Could we bear from one another what he daily bears from us? Yet this glorious Friend and Brother loves us though we treat him thus: though for good we render ill, he accounts us brethren still.*

-John Newton, 1779

This is how the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of love in our lives. He pours out God's love into our hearts. He fixes our gaze on Jesus, the One who calls us his friends. He strengthens us in our inner being so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith — so that we who have been "rooted and grounded in love may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge" (Eph. 3:17-19).

There are people in your life whom God is calling you to lavishly love today. Loving them will cost more than you have to give. But there is an unlimited credit line on Jesus' love. Look to your Savior, and the Holy Spirit will fill you with the love of Christ and make you, like him, a friend who loves at all times. "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Learning and longing to love like Jesus,

Pastor David Sunday

**Meet with an Elder**

On Sunday afternoon, February 20, elders will be available to meet personally with anyone who wishes. If you have questions about the church, need prayer, or have a word of encouragement about God's work in your life that you'd like to share with the elders, please feel free to reserve a slot by contacting Reba by the end of the week at [rgordon@newcbc.org](mailto:rgordon@newcbc.org)

**MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

All members are encouraged to attend a membership meeting on Sunday, February 27, at 6:00 p.m. following the evening service. The purpose of the meeting will be:

- a) To ratify the proposed Constitution, including the Statement of Faith.
- b) To approve the 2011 Annual Budget.
- c) To rejoice and give thanks for what God has done for our good and for his glory since the formation of NCBC.

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**Marriage Retreat**

If you signed up for the retreat and have not paid, please turn in your \$125 to the church office soon.