

How Do You Spell Love?

1/8/23

Trust in the Lord – Psalm 37:3-7

Sunday AM

Back in August when we kicked off the new school year, we also kicked off yr. 2 of our 6 yr. ***Aim Higher Dream Bigger*** vision. If you remember, in yr-1, our focus was to **Shine Brighter** at home/abroad b/c *the light that shines farthest shines the brightest at home*. And as you can see in our ministries and thru-out our campus, much has occurred to brighten the light.

Our yr-2 mandate has been to **Think Smaller** by becoming more laser-focused and intentional w/ our intimacy w/ God, our family, our church family, and our missional relationships. So, last fall, to focus on our intimacy w/ God, we looked at the core teachings of the SOTM. In addition, we launched a number of GROW groups that are meeting all over the city every week walking together in the faith. And if you're interested in joining a group go to the Welcome Desk and ask for Pastor Craig – and he'll set you up.

As we start 2023 – I want us to consider how we can **think smaller** in regard to our family relationships – husbands to wives and parents to kids

Let me begin w/ a question – **How do you spell love?** If you said L.O.V.E., then you're thinking too literally – for love might actually be spelled T.I.M.E. as **true love is an investment of focused time/attention.**

SEE – Nothing says I love/care for you more than when a person gives you their time and focus – ***and not just any time but their best time.***

Remind – A young boy who asked his dad how much he earned an hour. The busy dad said, “I don't know... \$100 an hour. Can we talk about this later – I've got work to do.” A few min. later, the boy returned to his dad w/ \$50 and asked, “Can I have 30 min. to play?”

OUCH! Yet if we're to make the most of our time, we need to clarify our priorities for the people who matter.

Consider – there are **168 hrs** in a week? Avg. person:

- **56 hrs** sleeping (8 hrs a day)
- **24 hrs** eating and personal hygiene
- **50 hrs** working or traveling to work
- Leaving **35 hrs** (5 hrs a day) for other things

QUESTION – What are you doing w/ your 35 hrs? How are you maximizing your 5 hrs a day?

Avg. on Social Media	2.5 hrs a day
Avg. on TV	3.0 hrs a day
Avg. on Surfing the Web	6.5 hrs a day
Avg. on Exercising	30 min a day
Avg. on Seeking God	7 min a day

Obviously – something's off and something has to give or our lives will just drift off into oblivion.

As I've studied Jesus' life, I'm continually amazed at how He never seemed to be in a hurry – even though He had the most urgent job in history. Not once do we see Him rushing anywhere, yet **He made time for the people and things that mattered.** He made time to consider the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. He found time to bless the children, heal the sick, and feed the 5000. He had time to speak w/ the woman at the well, the centurion whose daughter was dying, and even a man born blind. Why? It's b/c He understood that time was His friend/ally – not His adversary.

SEE – Jesus understood that **TIME** is the most essential commodity in life to be given generously to everyone beginning w/ those who are most important.

A friend once shared w/ me – *Live boldly enjoying your life – but never forget to invest yourself into the people who will show up and laugh/cry at your funeral – for they're the ones who really matter.*

This is why the Psalmist wrote – *Teach us to number our days and recognize how few they are; help us to spend them as we should.* Psalm 90:12

IOW – Ask God to help you to rightly value each/every day in every way – and never take even one second for granted. Instead, Ask Him to teach you to learn how to maximize each moment and every relationship to know how to best invest yourself in the people and things that really matter.

Time is a gift and resource that's nonrenewable and nontransferable. You can't store it up, slow it down, hold it up, divide it out, or give it away. You can't hoard it or save it up for a rainy day – for when it's lost, it's gone forever and can never be resurrected – which is what makes time so valuable.

This is why LOVE is spelled T.I.M.E. b/c time is arguably the most essential commodity in life – and b/c it's so precious, it should only be given to who or what is most important – to what we love. **AND** This brings us to the letter – T... for **TRUST** in the Lord.

Trust in the Lord and do good – and you will dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. **Take delight in the Lord** – and He will give you the desires of your heart. **Commit your way to the Lord;** trust in Him and He will do this: He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun. **Be still before the Lord** and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways – when they carry out their wicked schemes. Psalm 37:3-7

Look at the invitation/encouragement in this passage – (1) *trust in the Lord*, (2) *take delight in the Lord*, (3) *commit to the Lord*, and (4) *be still before the Lord*.

To **trust in the Lord and do good** refers to so believing in God and His Word you're willing to follow/obey its precepts. And His promise is that you'll be able to abide in His presence and prosper in His promises.

To **take delight in the Lord** means to make God and His will the focus/desire of your life (it is the driving ambition of your soul) – and His promise is that He will give you the desire of your heart – which will be the very desire He's placed in your heart.

To **commit your ways to Him** refers to not allowing the trials/challenges of life to knock you off course or lose your focus on God and His will – and He promises that your heart for Him will protect your integrity and life testimony before others.

To **be still and wait patiently** refers to trusting and relying on God both on the mountaintops and in the valleys – (or difficult days) of life to allow the Lord to work out His plan/purposes in our lives.

Truth – these principles run counter-intuitive to the world and to our flesh – and consequently, they don't always make good earthly sense – and yet these truths are the essential secrets to following Jesus.

Solomon basically said the same in **Proverbs 3:5-6** – *Trust the Lord w/ all of your heart, leaning not on your own understanding, but in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your steps.*

IOW – everything in life begins w/ settling who or what we're going to allow to sit on the throne of our lives and in whom we're going to place our trust.

trust (*batach*) to lie face down helpless. As it pertains to God, it means to willingly stretch out face down before God in total dependence – yielded to His will.

Yet this is not our natural, flesh inclination – so, in Proverbs 3:5-6, God offers a spiritual math equation that makes no earthly sense but perfect heavenly sense.

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{Choose to Trust God} \\ - \text{Don't Rely on Yourself} \\ + \text{Put God First in Everything} \\ \hline = \text{He Will Direct Your Steps} \end{array}$$

SEE – our trust in God not only influences our eternal lives but also our earthly lives impacting every relationship in our lives beginning w/in the home. So, when mom/dad walk w/ God, it impacts every dimension of family life.

This is at the heart of Paul's teachings on the family in Ephesians 5-6 | Colossians 3. His point – **every detail w/in the home begins w/ trusting/walking w/ God.**

In **Ephesians 5**, he wrote – *husbands love your wives as Christ loves His church, and wives align under your husbands as you align under Jesus* (6) *Children honor your parents, and parents don't exasperate your kids.*

DYK – all (3) of these commands are IMPOSSIBLE – unless one is living under the influence of the H.S.

No husband can (*agape*) love (as Jesus loves) unless he's walking w/ God. Instead, he'll always default to loving his wife in his human ability/ingenuity that's more concerned w/ loving himself.

But to live submitted to God under the H.S., enables him to love his wife (and kids) as God loves him.

It's no different for the wife. God's command for her to align beside/under her husband, is impossible unless she's willing to abide in the Spirit too.

DYK – the instruction to wives finds its origin in Genesis 3 and God's curse on Eve for her defiance.

*The Lord said to Eve, "I will increase your pain in childbirth, and you will **desire** your husband's authority, but he will rule over you." 3:16*

SEE – Before the fall, Eve lived under Adam's responsibility, but after the fall she was cursed w/ a desire for Adam's position under God.

desire (*t'shuqa*) to seek control over or to compel.

The curse on Eve was that a woman's desire from this day forth would be to usurp the headship of man and that he'd resist her desire and would try to keep her in her place under his rule. The origin of misogyny.

W/ children – they're called to **honor** their parents – yet again, this isn't a natural inclination but a supernatural response to a child who walks w/ God.

honor – to respect, obey, and submit to authority.

This is more than compliance – but a genuine desire to bless, esteem, and show favor to one's parents.

Yet, this isn't the natural inclination of a child. From the womb, even though a child is utterly dependent on their parents, they'll still strive to exert their will to get their wants/way – and sadly, this ambition can oftentimes continue long into adulthood.

POINT – the only way a husband will *agape-love* his wife (and kids) the way God *agape* loves them, and the only way a wife will align her husband (and kids) the way God wants her to is if they both know/follow Christ. And the same is true for the kids. Otherwise, all of them are just operating from their flesh.

Meaning – the key to having a home that works is having a husband/wife and kids who make TIME to know, trust, and walk w/ God – according to His truth.

Trusting in the Lord is the centerpiece of our families and making them work. Honestly, marriage/family are hard enough w/ God; I can't imagine trying to do it w/out Him – and yet, this is what most couples and families attempt. *Why is this so important?*

Consider the following isolated facts and tell me what you think they all have in common:

- 1,000 unwed teenage girls will become mothers.
- 1,106 teenage girls get abortions
- 4,219 teenagers will contract an STD
- 500 teenagers will begin using drugs
- 1,000 adolescents will begin drinking alcohol
- 135,000 will bring gun/weapon to school
- 3,610 teens will be assaulted; 80 will be raped
- 2,200 teenagers will drop out of school
- 6 teenagers will commit suicide

What do all of these facts have in common? They're occurring every day in America – AND they're no longer just happening to "their" children – more and more it's happening to "our" children.

Socrates astutely said – Could I climb the highest place in Athens, I'd lift my voice and proclaim. Fellow citizens, why do you turn and scrap every stone to gather wealth, and take so little care of your children, to whom one day you must relinquish it all?

God said something even more detailed to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 – known as the Shema

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one. Love the Lord your God w/ all your heart and w/ all your soul and w/ all your strength. These commands I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Notice in this instruction the intentionality and time needed to make the family work. Notice the personal responsibility required to make this work.

- I have to love God w/ my heart, mind, soul, strength
- I have to be engaged in modeling/teaching this to my children/grandchildren
- I have to prioritize making/taking the time to talk about these truths w/ my family

DEAL – If we want/hope for our spouse, children, and grandchildren to trust in the Lord – it begins w/ US.

But you're thinking – I can't do this or it's too late... Well then, I have some really **good news** – it's never too late to begin trusting in Him.