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Extreme Home Makeover: Relationship Edition

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John 13:34

Burns & Allen Youtube Clip <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NW6GWEi3g3U>

One of the best lines I've ever heard was delivered by Gracie Allen to her husband George Burns, when she said "That's okay. I'd much rather be your wife than amount to anything."

Every once in awhile, we have to talk about God's design for marriage. Let me also say that I understand not everyone here is currently in a married relationship. If you are not, I trust that you can take the principles we look at today and apply them to your life, whether God can help you understand your married friends, or your parents, or just how to get along with the people in *your* life. But marriages are challenging. Even the best marriages take hard work. So first, there are a few general rules. First, apart from abuse, "**My spouse is not the enemy.**" No matter how frustrated you might be, your spouse is never the enemy. Second, **Relationships, like life, experience a variety of seasons.** Some years ago the University of Chicago conducted an interesting marital study of couples who said they were "unhappily married." 5 years down the road they interviewed them again. Now here's the interesting part: 5 years later, 80% considered themselves now "happily married...TO THE SAME PEOPLE! There are seasons in relationships.

One more general rule: **What you need to fall in love: A pulse.** That's fine. But you may be here today asking "Can my relationships ever amount to anything?" Let me talk about falling in love. I can do it in 10 seconds. That's all it takes. All you need is a pulse. 1,500 organizations will give you a profile to help you connect with other people if you give them their money. It's never been easier to fall in love... **But it's never been more difficult to STAY in love.** But that's what we want. We keep looking around. Because there's something in you and something in me that doesn't just want to survive, but to be in love. Well, one of the best things about this church is it's multi-generational. Those of us who are newer in the relationship thing can see folks who have been married for a long time. Harold & Ethel are celebrating 60 years! ☺ Some of us have been surrounded with failed and strained marriages, and you're asking the question: In spite of all the junk in my life, is it possible? You're still holding out a glimmer of hope that says "Some day..." And I don't think that's just wishful thinking. I think that's the image of God in you...and me.

Add to that one more assumption: **There are no perfect husbands. There are no perfect wives. There are no perfect relationships!** Very few people have ever been around many healthy, love-filled relationships, with your parents on the same page, with your extended family getting it, or other friends living it. Throw in the media's influence based on their writers ideas of what love is, and you see the trouble we may be having makes sense.

So, the models for us, the rules for us, aren't even healthy to begin with. But that's what we go with, for whatever reasons. And we blunder into relationships, and through relationships, and into new relationships; maybe with, maybe without these few rules for relationships, like "*Do unto others what you would have them do unto you.*" But that *usually* gets turned into "Do unto others..."

- ...as your mood would have it."
- ...so as to get them to see your way."
- ...until you wear them down so you can *get* your own way."
- ...until you leave." Until all any of us sees are people just surviving.

We're ill-equipped. Many of us grew up with conditional love, and we come into adulthood needing someone who will give us X, Y, & Z. So we meet someone, and we ask "Are you going to give me X, Y, & Z, or are you just cute? And what begins as a hug around the neck, becomes a strangle hold. "Give me what I need!" And you're going to squeeze it out of me, and I'm going to squeeze it out of you. Because we've been starved of it for so long! And we

Our culture has a really low threshold of relational pain. The message today is that if you're unhappy in your relationship it's because you're with the wrong person. You chose poorly. You need to rechoose. To reboot. To start over. Because you just chose poorly. You just keep looking. You just keep moving from relationship to relationship. And eventually, if you just keep trying people out, some day, you'll finally meet the right person. Let's burst the bubble: Choosing the right person is part of it. **But learning to become the right person is the other part of it**, and it's the part that we get no help for, from culture and from the world around us.

HERE'S the thing: Into that chaos, Jesus speaks. He gives us the foundation for enduring love relationships, romantic, in love, love relationships. It's so simple, so counter intuitive... (You're like...Come on! I've got my spouse here, and he didn't want to come! Give it to him! Give it to her. I think she's really listening. Let her have it! C'mon! We're hanging by a thread—)

- Okay. It's SO simple. SO powerful. SO rare. SO accessible, SO available...
- It's found in John 13:34 Jesus said "A new command I give you. Love one another" You're unimpressed. But that's it: *Love one another*. You're like "Oh brother. Is that it?!" But Jesus takes a word we usually use as a noun, and makes it a verb. "Go and love one another." Not "Go look for love." Jesus says "I'm making it a verb."
- Jesus wouldn't have been a very good marriage counselor. The couple comes in. The man says "We lost the love in our relationship." Jesus says "Are you *loving* her? I want you to love each other." "But we don't love each other!" "But you ought to. You're married! You're trying to get the *feeling* back, like when you go meet a new person. That takes a pulse. If you want to maintain it, you gotta quit treating love like a noun and treat it like a verb. Love one another.

BOTTOM LINE: (Let me see your eyes). The foundation of staying together is to **make love...a verb**. Make love a verb. [SLIDE NOW] It's *not* to recapture the feeling. The feeling is the caboose. (But, the more you make love a verb...☺) I want you to learn how to actively love one another. But Jesus doesn't stop there...

John 13:34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." As I have loved you, so you must love one another." Don't take your cue from culture. Or from your parents. Or from others. Take your cue from Jesus. Love has to be a verb.

Later on, Paul uses a word that's so offensive it gets us in trouble. But it's an extraordinarily powerful word. But it's a BAD word in our minds: "*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*" Eph. 5:21 Blech. Here's what it means. Paul talks about it... he says the bottom line is **MUTUAL submission**. In our relationship, *you're* the priority. NO... *you're* the priority. No, **YOU'RE** the priority. That's mutual submission. I don't know if you've ever seen that, but when you see it, it's powerful. When 2 people get that going on, love is alive and well in that relationship. But it's so rare, very few of us has ever seen it. THAT'S what Jesus was talking about: **YOU FIRST**.

That's the beginning. It's a choice you make. It's a decision you make. I am choosing to place myself under you, while you are choosing to place yourself under me. That's the foundation for staying in love. LOVE ONE ANOTHER...as I have loved you. SUBMIT to one another for Christ's sake. I want you to learn to love, to submit, to take your cue from me.

What's awesome about this profession is to see a man who grew up in a dysfunctional home, and woman who grows up in a home that's never seen what we're talking about today...and they become Christ-followers. They place their faith in Christ. And they surrender *their* will to the will of God, and they say "God I want what *you* want for me more than I want what I want for me." and they learn to accept and adopt Jesus' way of thinking about love. And they learn the follow *that* example, to experience the love of Christ and the forgiveness of Christ, and they have a complete mental shift in terms of love, and they begin to see

themselves in a completely different way. And all the stuff on that list that they didn't get from mom and dad or their grandparents emotionally begins to be healed. They begin to understand that GOD accepts them, and *God* has compassion for them, and *God* gives them security. And they meet. And they come together with all this junk in their backgrounds, but with a completely different view of relationships. And they get married, and their marriage in no way reflects the baggage they saw. They've learned to love each other, not the way they saw it modeled, but in the way that God in Christ loves us. We're taking our cue from our Heavenly Father, who gave His Son to die for the whole world. We take our submission cues from our Savior who gave His life for our behalf, in love.

I think it really can happen: Not by some necessarily great beginning, but with staying power by making love a verb. By loving one another.

- By taking your cue from the One who loves you the most.
- Every single day you decide. "Today, he's first. Today she's first." Every single day.
- Whatever your situation, your pain, your problems, your frustrations know this: because of Jesus Christ, it can get BETTER. Because of Jesus Christ, your past does not have to equal your future. Won't you be ruled by that kind of love?