

## **Finding the Good Life Series Slide**

Spiritual Connection  
Deep Relationships  
Transcendent Purpose

Next 6 weeks- Deep relationships.

### **Moment of Silence**

1997-

Story of Keva saying “I love you” and me finding the note in the trash can- piecing it together. I told her what I did after we were engaged.

There’s an episode of Seinfeld where George decide to say “I love you” to his girlfriend. His friend, Jerry responds with a warning.

**“Welp- thats a big move Georgie boy- are you confident in the “I love you” return? Cuz if you don’t get that return- thats a pretty big Matzah ball hanging out there.”**

When George finally says “I Love you”  
His girlfriends reply is- “Im hungry- lets get something to eat.”

**“I’m never saying I love you again- until someone else says it first.”- George Costanza**

And this is the attitude of a lot of people. They take a risk relationally. their vulnerability is not reciprocated- or its cynically mocked and laughed at- and so they vow to never take a risk with love again.

## **Back to Good Life Slide**

There are six phrases that are the earmarks and foundation of Deep Relationships.

Over the next 6 weeks- I’m going to show you what they are, why they are so powerful...and prayerfully- God is going to transform your relationships through them.

### **The DR Six**

- 1- I love you.**
- 2- I’m proud of you.**
- 3- I’m sorry.**
- 4- I forgive you.**
- 5- Thank you!**
- 6- What do you think?**

Now-here's the catch. You use these to manipulate...they don't work. You use them cheaply- without the heart and action that go with them...they don't work. Words come easy- change requires some faith and sweat.

### **Title Slide- "I Love You: The Power & Practice of 3 Little Words"- John 15:9-17**

Today- we're starting with "I Love You"

Of the DR6- Its the foundation....Its the ace of the pitching staff. Its the quarterback. Its first chair in the orchestra. Its the lead singer.

Without "I love you" and the actions behind it- the rest of these will be hollow or shallow.

Parents-

Just hearing the words "I love you" shape the architecture of your child's brain.

When you say it-

You're strengthening the roots of who the child will become.

Their brain is learning:

"I am safe."

"I am wanted."

"I matter."

"I belong somewhere."

And practicing that truth often looks like a child relaxing in a parents arms, melting down after a hard moment, (ever see a child hold their cry in until they get to their parent and then lose it?)- that's what 'I love you' builds.

Kids will light up when they hear your voice,

or become calmer when you gently hold their face in anxious moment and speak those three words calmly.

According to attachment neuroscience, hearing consistent loving words activates the parasympathetic nervous system, lowering cortisol (stress chemical), stabilizing heart rate, and soothing emotional distress

The child who hears "I love you" today  
is the adult who will one day:

form healthier relationships,

and bounce back quickly and resiliently from hardship

and understand love as safety, not fear.

Your words become the scaffolding for their soul.

Saying “I Love You” isn’t extra. Its basic. Its forming. Foundational.

And that doesn’t stop with childhood. While the brain doesn’t have nearly the elasticity in adulthood as it does in early childhood- hearing and saying “I love you” has similar effects on dopamine and cortisol in adults...its one of the phrases that you need to say and hear to be a non—anxious presence and to experience a joyful flourishing life.

So if its that powerful.-Why are we so careful and protective with it?

...Like my wife and George Costanza showed us.

Its because we all know- If you say it- and the other person doesn’t say it back- well- thats a big Matzah ball hanging out there. Its vulnerable.

Maybe you’re sitting out there this morning thinking, “I’m not married, and I don’t have any kids” -so I don’t know if this really applies to me.

Well, actually- it does. Because one of the most basic and foundational relationships of human beings is friendship. And friends need to say and hear “I love you”.

We are in as loneliness epidemic in this country.

The majority of adult men in America have zero friends. ...and the ladies don’t fare much better.

Jesus’ greatest miracle was somehow being a single man in his 30s with 12 close friends.

Look- saying I love you could be difficult for some of you because people who said it to you, said it..but also hurt you deeply.

A parent left you.

A boyfriend or girlfriend or spouse said it to you but mistreated you.

Someone said it and made promises to you they never kept- always manipulating you back into a relationship with that phrase.

So the weight has been drained out of it.

Thats why its extremely important that we learn what the practice are- the actions- the life that back up those 3 little words and gives them power...because you can do a lot of damage by saying those words..and not living them out.

Nobody better to show us how to love your friends than Jesus.

**John 15:9-17**

**9 “As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. Remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.**

**11 “I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.**

**12 “This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 I do not call you servants anymore, because a servant doesn’t know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you.**

**17 “This is what I command you: Love one another.**

Transition:

From this passage- there are four things that Jesus brings out about the nature of love- how to live out those 3 little words I Love you.

**1) “I Love You” means commitment to another’s joy.**

We tend to be ‘me-centered’ with a lot of our relationships. Often we evaluate a friendship on how it benefits ME.

Do I enjoy this person? Are they bringing some value to my life?

Ok- there is a place for those questions in the bigger picture of your relationship map for sure. However- that’s not what is at the heart of friendship...gathering up people around you that complete your life.

Take a look at what Jesus says about his friends.

**v 10-11**

In v 10 he says something really strange. Something that doesn’t exactly fit our understanding of a good friendship.

He says- multiple times in this passage- If you love me- you’ll do what I command. If you’re truly my friend- you’ll do what I tell you to do.

I mean- doesn't this sound like a playground bully or a mobster? HEY KID- If you want to friends- do what I say.

its like Jesus walks up to Simon Peter on his boat and says "Dis is a nice little fishing business you got. I'd hate to see anything happen to it."

It sounds a little like Big Brother from 1984- doesn't it? LOVE BIG BROTHER.

But notice- at the core of all of this- he is wanting to share something with them. He is not asking to get something as much as he is sharing his joy with them.

At the core of this friendship is Jesus wanting to see his friends JOY made whole- complete. That is that idea of flourishing.

Of course- Jesus being God himself- has a different position than you and I have with our relationships- we aren't asking our friends for the allegiance to a KING- which Jesus is...but we are called to commit ourselves to our friends FOR THEIR JOY.

Jesus is highlighting here that friends have a responsibility to one another. In this case- the disciples have commands to obey. He is committed to their joy- and that is going to come from them not just SAYING I LOVE YOU- but actually following through with what they promise.

### **Back to 1)**

All deep relationships need some level of making and keeping promises for the other persons good. That is commitment.

You know "I love you" has weight when your friend, or parent, or spouse makes a promise and you can trust them to keep it.

And that promise is not me-centered- rather- the promise is given for the others joy.

I know that's scary. Its scary to de-center yourself and put someone else's joy first. Because they might take advantage of that. Yes. They might.

But like Jesus' love to his disciples- committed love- especially to someone who might be rejecting you...can be absolutely transformative for the other person- and bring joy into their life.

**You were there for me when I was acting selfish  
And you prayed for me when I was out of faith  
You believed in me when ain't nobody else did  
Its a miracle you didn't run away**

**Sometimes, I don't know why you love me**  
**Sometimes, I don't know why you care**  
**Take me, with the good and the ugly**  
**Say "I'm not going anywhere"**

**-Justin Bieber "As I Am"**

**Back to 1)**

The most powerful transformations in people's lives happen when a person that says "I love you" is committed to their joy....and shows up and keeps their promises even when the other person is failing them.

TRANSITION: The best stories come from those who take seriously their responsibility in a relationship to fight to complete the another's joy...and that takes sacrifice....

**2) "I Love You" means overflowing sacrifice.**

**v 9, 12-13**

There is a pattern in what Jesus says about love here.

Notice- he starts with "As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you".

And he carries it all the way through to "As I have loved you, love one another"

This is overflow. Jesus is loved by his heavenly Father, and then he passes that love along to you, and now he wants you to pass it along to someone else.

Think about a cascading waterfall.

FILLS UP ONE POOL- it OVERFLOWS CREATES ANOTHER WATERFALL.

and then he says the most profound and impactful way to do this...is laying down your life.

Sacrifice.

Once again. Love decanters ME to give MYSELF away.

Ok, here's the scary thing about sacrifice. You stand to lose Right? Laying down your life means you could lose your life.

If you sacrifice your time to help a friend- you don't get that time back.

If you sacrifice by giving your friend some money in a time of need- you don't get that money back.

If you sacrifice a job, so a spouse can pursue a different calling- you might not ever get that job back.

This is why the concept of OVERFLOW is SO IMPORTANT to love.

Ok- if you only make sacrifices hoping to get recognition, or thanks, or honor, or sex, or a return on investment, or a favor down the road...you aren't really sacrificing.

And when you don't get the return- you'll live with contempt. Contempt is the opposite of Overflowing Sacrifice. Contempt is when you deeply resent a person you've sacrificed for them...or you have sacrificed MORE than they have....and yet you haven't received anything back.

So you develop this deep underlying hate for them. Because you were never really sacrificing. You were hoping to extract something from them.

You didn't sacrificially love your children- you wanted to build an identity on being a great parent. You wanted people to notice you. To complement your parenting. That High School graduation wasn't about your kids hard work- it was a moment for people to tell you what an awesome job you did.

## **Back to 2)**

We look for that, because we aren't getting it from a better source.

You aren't made to go chasing the "I love you" return. You are made to receive love from your heavenly father....and pass that along to others.

See- if you are standing under a waterfall of love- and you give it away for someone else to drink it in...and they don't return it back- yes- its hurtful...but you don't have to live in contempt. Because you weren't dependent on that other person's "I love you" return in the first place. You were giving away without expectation of return.

And once again- the most beautiful acts of love in the world- happen when a person lays their life down so others can live.

## **ILLUS**

Spock in Star Trek II- Goes into nuclear reactor that runs the ship...knowing it will kill him.

Captain Kirk tries to stop him. But its too late.

Separated by a thick glass panel Spock as he dies says, **“I have been- and always shall be- your friend. Live Long and Prosper.”**

And the thing about Spock- is he’s a vulcan- they have no emotion. So how does he understand the concept of friendship- He was shown it by captain Kirk. And then Spock’s love- his sacrifice overflows to save the whole crew of the USS Enterprise.

Transition: Next...

### **3) “I Love You” means risky intimacy.**

Listen- Love has to have an element of mutual trust. There has to be continuing vulnerability there. And that’s scary.

Because all of us are broken. All of us sin. We all react to the brokenness of our lives and our world in ways where we can hurt each other.

Broken things have sharp edges. And whenever you get close to sharp edges- you can get hurt.

Take a look at this risky intimacy on Jesus’ part.

#### **v 15**

Jesus says, “Listen- I’m not just here to boss you around. You are not my servants. You are my friends...and that’s why I’m letting you in on this mission. I’m including you on these intimate conversations I’ve had with my father.”

You could say that Friends when they love- “Let each other in...but don’t let each other down”

and anytime you let someone in...its a risk.

You could be rejected. you could say “I love you” and get back “I’m hungry. Wanna get something to eat?”

#### **Back to 3)**

Think about when you invite someone over to your house... what do we usually do?

“ALRIGHT CLEAN THIS PLACE UP SO IT LOOKS NOTHING LIKE WHAT IT NORMALLY DOES!”

And you stuff all the clutter into one room, or one closet....knowing soon after they leave its all gonna get drug back out.

Imagine taking your guest back to the room or the closet..and opening the door. “this... this is how I really live”

Some of you are doing that in your relationships right now. You might be superman or superwoman to someone else- Sacrificing- overflowing- keeping commitments...but you've got a closet full of fear. A room full of ongoing sin. A junk drawer that will barely closed full of undealt with hurt....and you have sworn NOBODY is gonna see this. i'll deal with it myself.

Its not love- if you aren't willing to share that burden. To invite someone else into your mess.

**“You can be impressive or you can be known. But you can't be both.”- Ray Ortlund**

### **Back to 3)**

Not only that- you need to share your dreams, your calling, your aspirations with those you love. God may be bringing them into your life to play a role in fulfilling that. ITs scary to say those things out loud sometimes because what if they don't pan out? Or what if your friend laughs at you and says “YOU? Want to be a writer? or Singer? or start your own non-profit?”

Well- 2 things while I hope they don't laugh- you never want to be the American Idol contestant who never had a friend tell them they cant sing. “You guys didn't stop me before I went on National TV?”

so- just because they don't affirm your dreams- doesn't mean they dont love you.

Second- don't think so highly of yourself that you think you can just grind out all your goals without other people's support. You aren't made for that.

Give your friends a chance to love you by letting them in on your sin, your fear, your goals and callings.

Its risky- but that is the only kind of intimacy there is.

Jesus- lets his friends in on his mission. He trusts them with it. He asks for their support. And he's the Son of God. Don't try to be more independent than Jesus.

**“The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hadn't, nor the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship. It is the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when you discover that someone else believes in you and is willing to trust you.”- Ralph Waldo Emerson**

SO what do you do with that intimacy...when someone lets you in- you have been entrusted with something holy- something beautiful- you have been entrusted with seeing something that that person might not see God wants to do with them. And that mean when you say...

#### **4) "I Love You" means Supported Sending.**

Aristotles- the Greek philosopher- said there are 3 levels of friendship.

#### **Aristotle's Friendship Ladder**

**Utility- Deal Friends**

**Pleasure- Meal Friends**

**Virtue- Real Friends**

Saying I LOVE YOU is helping the person you love become the greatness you see in them. What God is calling them to. Thats how you commit to making them better.

#### **John 15:16**

He chose them-

And let me tell you- when he chooses these guys-they aren't all stars

Matthew

Simon Peter

James and John...can we sit on right and left

Judas- of course.

Notice too- he sends them with mission- fruit of your calling given to others.  
ask the father IN MY NAME- and you'll have it

#### **Hebrews 10:24- And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works**

Good Will Hunting- Ben Affleck to Matt Damon "If you're here in 20 years I'll kill you"

#### **Back to 4)**

What you SEE IN THEM- YOU SEND THEM TO DO AND SUPPORT THEM AS THEY GO.

Gospel Goodbyes

Old man bible study meeting at hardees til they die

Community groups

church planting

Gospel goodbyes not just for the sake of taking the gospel- when you say gospel goodbyes- they are always temporary. You get them all back. Love is eternal. Even Spock knew it.

I WILL ALWAYS BE YOUR FRIEND.

GOSPEL

**1 John 4:9-10 & 19**

**God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him. 10 Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.**

**We love because he first loved us.**

You an overflow...and you don't have to go first with the I love you. Jesus did.

How- Go through each one..

Jesus loves in every meaning of the word that I've mentioned tonight.

- Commitment - God was so committed to us in Christ he was willing to do what was necessary to
  - Promises
    - Restored Relationships
    - Wisdom
    - Mercy
    - Eternal life
    - Rest
    - To always be with us
- Sacrifice - He gave up his life by dying a gruesome death taking our place for our sin on the cross in our place, so we can have life.
- Intimacy- He let people in even though he knew he was going to get betrayed by all of them. It wasn't a risk of getting hurt. He knew it would happen.
- Sending- Jesus's last words were sending his followers out. Go to the world...and I'll be with you always.

I have been...and always shall be...your friend.

You can say I love you and mean it deeply because Christ loved you he meant it deeply.

But you first have to experience his love in a relationship with him.

You might be here tonight and I love you is barely said in your relationships or there isn't any love left in your relationships. You need to acknowledge your commitment, let them in on how you feel, and begin

You might be here and you aren't sure if God loves you, look to Jesus. See what he is willing to sacrifice for you. Everything. See him on the cross as how much he wants you know him and his love for you.

**“The world often tells us to Use people, Love things, worship ourselves. But to the truth is to find real happiness we must use things, love people, and worship God.”- Arthur Brooks**

Transformation starts with prayer and letting someone in. All of our prayer counselors today are ready to say I love you!

**PRAYER COUNSELORS**