

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Gospel Fluency
TITLE: Marriage
SCRIPTURE: John 13:34-35; Ephesians 5:21-33
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The word *gospel* simply means good news. When we read the word gospel in the Bible and in most other places, we know that it is referring to the good news about Jesus. The idea of fluency is used most often in relation to being able to speak two or more languages. Yet the word fluent means to be able to express oneself easily and articulately not necessarily just in foreign languages. Meaning when we talk about Gospel Fluency this summer, we are talking about being able to express and communicate the good news about Jesus easily and articulately to yourself and others.

Is it possible to two people to stay in love for a lifetime? If you have a pulse, you can fall in love. It's never been easier to fall in love, but it's never been more difficult to stay in love. But that is what we want, isn't it?

There are several reasons why it's difficult to stay in love for life.

First, it's difficult to stay in love because of what we saw or didn't see modeled for us when we were growing up. Very few people today grew up in a home where they saw a healthy marriage relationship modeled for them. And unknowingly, we've absorbed a lot of wrongheaded, unwritten rules for relationships that have become ingrained functional beliefs—do unto others *like* they do to you; do unto others *before* they do to you; do unto others *when you feel like it*; do unto others *to get them to see things your way*; do unto others *until you wear them down to get your way*. These functional beliefs short circuit staying in love.

Second, it's difficult to stay in love because of what we felt or didn't feel growing up. Very few people today grew up in a home where they felt the kind of love and acceptance needed to lay the foundation for a healthy, marriage relationship. No matter how good the home was you grew up in, all families are made up of broken people trying to get their needs met, and consequently, none of us can give and receive love 100% of the way God intends—we all come up short. If you read the "experts," they say, for a child to grow to adulthood, fully equipped to engage in a long-term, healthy relationship this is what it takes—massive doses of—respect, encouragement, comfort, security, support, acceptance, approval, appreciation, attention, and affection—that's all you need! And since, none of us grow up with our loving cups full of those things, we enter marriage expecting our spouses to fill up the deficit.

And these two things lead to something else that makes staying in love so difficult.

We all enter marriage with desires—many of them good and legitimate desires—but when desires become expectations the relationship instantly changes. When desires turn into expectations and your expectations turn into demands, you move from an unconditional covenant relationship into a contract relationship. And the language of a contract relationship is not "I love you;" it's "you owe me." A contract relationship is a

debt/debtor relationship. As long as a debt/debt relationship exists in your marriage, it will squeeze out the possibility of giving or receiving unconditional love.

So, how does the Gospel speak into all this? How does the Gospel speak into these issues that can derail our marriages?

In John 13:34—Jesus gives a new commandment: Love one another, just as I have loved you.

The foundation for staying in love is making love a _____.

In Ephesians 5:21, the apostle Paul restates Jesus' new commandment by using a different word to express what active love actually looks like when it's lived out. It's an offensive word to some people. Paul says the bottom line for two people to actively love one another is mutual submission. Mutual submission simply means, I put your interests above my own and you put my interests above your own. It means I make what's important to you, important to me and vice versa (cf. Phil 2:4-5).

To stay in love, you have to make love a verb, and what that looks like in practice, is learning to submit to one another by putting your spouse's interests above your own because that's how Jesus loved us.

In Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul applies this new kind of love and submission to marriage. In marriage, you have two equal partners, with two different roles, expressing love and submission in different ways..

Wives are to submit to their husbands *as to the Lord*—meaning, wives are to put their husband's interests above their own, by coming under their husbands to support him. Why? Because the husband is the "head" of the wife. "Head" doesn't mean your husband is in any way superior to you. "Head" is not a matter of rank, but of responsibility/accountability—meaning—husbands are held accountable by God for how they lead their families. So, wives are to respect that accountability by coming under their husbands to help them lead well—that's how you submit/support/love/respect your husband.

Husbands are to love their wives *as Christ loved the church*—meaning—husbands are to actively love their wives by submitting/sacrificing their interests and desires for the good of their wives, just as Christ gave self-interest for our good. Husbands, you are to be Jesus to your wife!

Application: For a wife, making love a verb means submitting to and supporting your husband. For a husband, making love a verb means sacrificing for and cherishing your wife. Both mean, making the other the priority in the relationship and in so doing, you experience what God calls a "great mystery"—something unlike anything this world can experience or understand.

For Discussion —

1. What was your biggest "aha" or "take away" from this message?
2. What's the difference between a covenant marriage and a contract marriage? How does a covenant marriage become a contract marriage?
3. What makes Jesus' "new" commandment "new?" (John 13:34)
4. Ephesians 5:21—What does it mean to "submit to one another?" How does "submitting to one another" relate to Jesus' new commandment? What keeps us from submitting to one another? What should be the motivation be to submit to one another?
5. What does making love a verb look like for a wife? What does making love a verb look like for a husband?
6. So, how would you tell a friend going through a difficult time in their marriage, how the Gospel says it's possible to stay in love in the middle of the crisis in their marriage?