

I. Introduction

- A. My topic today is Love, and my title is Ignite Your Love.
- B. I asked on Facebook for some help with a way to get into the topic. I want to talk about dysfunctional love — about messed up love. So I asked for a story or a scene about dysfunctional love. It had to be family friendly, it had to be familiar, and it had to be funny.
- C. Ninety three suggestions later... I'm overwhelmed... with weirdness. Thank you to everybody who replied.
- D. Depending on your decade, I had suggestions from Popeye and Olive Oyl, I Love Lucy, My Fair Lady, Friends, Seinfeld, You've Got Mail, Photo Album (where after the first date, the lady went home and started Photo shopping her face with the guy's face to see what their kids would look like), the Notebook, Kermit and Miss Piggy, Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia (ewww), What About Bob, War of the Roses, Frozen, and, a special thank you for that beautifully messy love relationship between Gollum and his Ring.
- E. We are talking about dysfunctional love.
- F. I was blown away by all the options. And don't forget all the dysfunctional love in pop music.
 1. So Bruno Mars sings that, in the name of love, he'd catch a grenade for her and take a bullet through the brain for her, because everybody knows, if it isn't co-dependence, it isn't real love.
 2. And Danny O-Donoghue sings about the pain of his breakup and then says, *"What am I supposed to do when the best part of me was always you?"* Can you say boundary issues? Identity issues?
 3. And who can forget REO Speedwagon's classic... *"And if I have to crawl upon the floor, come crashing through your door, baby... I can't fight this feeling anymore..."* #orderofprotection
 4. We can add pretty much anything by Lady Gaga.
 5. Messed up love in music is not a new thing... I love Dean Martin, but *"you're nobody till somebody loves you,"* is just plain wrong.
 6. And with the news and all, we can't leave out Frank Sinatra singing about a pair where the undecided one finally wanted in, but too late, so... *"Isn't it rich? Are we a pair? Me here at last on the ground and you in mid-air... so... Send in the clowns."*
- G. The Temptations sang of a love too good to be true...
 1. *When her arms enfold me. I hear a tender rhapsody. But in reality, she doesn't even know me. Cuz it was Just my 'magination... Running away with me.*
- H. I would also like to thank the wisely who suggested the dysfunctional love relationship between the Chicago Cubs and their long-suffering fans.
 1. Thank you.
- I. There's no end to sick and sad things people do in the name of love.
- J. Of all the commandments in the Bible, love is the greatest.
 1. *Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. "And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:29-31, NKJV).*

II. Love

- A. The great commandment of God is love. Love for God. Love for your family. Love for the people of God. Love for the world for whom Christ died... love for lost people.
- B. At Neighborhood, we have the Grace Pathway... God saves you, God blesses you, God grows you, God uses you... and when you walk along this pathway with God, the end result is that you love like Christ loved the world.
- C. But here's the thing... there are a few big ways that love gets derailed, and I want to talk about three of them. So we can see them and know them and avoid them in our lives.
- D. So the long title is: How to get trapped in a sappy, sick love song... and the Bible's wisdom to get out.

III. Three ways love gets messed up

- A. *Love from a grace-starved heart is dysfunctional love.*
 1. Grace isn't just comfort to make you feel good, grace is fuel to make you fly.
 2. Some Christians have never filled the gas tank.
 3. *Now the purpose of the commandment [all God's Word] is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, (1 Timothy 1:5, NKJV).*
 4. What does a grace-starved heart look like?
 - a) Martyrdom...
 - (1) Jesus at the home of Mary and Martha. How is Mary showing her love? By spending time with Jesus. How is Martha showing her love? By cooking in the kitchen.
 - (2) But there's a problem. Martha is getting all flustered and bothered because nobody is helping her. So she yells at Jesus... Don't you care about this situation?
 - (3) Professional victims have difficult relationships, and they make it this way. Question: who put Martha in the kitchen? Answer: Martha. It was her own choice. And now she's mad that Mary is having all the fun. So she lashes out. (Lacking the grace of self-worth, so you have to prove yourself by your deeds of self-sacrifice, which you resent.)
 - i) There's another form of a grace-starved heart.
 - b) Self-Punishment... to atone for sins of the past.
 - (1) Serving somebody, even God, out of guilt and shame, to atone for sins of the past.
 - (a) A dad that was absent.
 - (b) A mom that was mean.
 - (c) A kid that caused harm...

- i) Listen, we've all done bad stuff in our relationships. And when we feel guilty, we can use that guilt to steer ourselves back onto the right road, back onto the grace pathway.
- ii) But God does not want you to pay for your sins.
- iii) Jesus did that, and he's the only one who can.
 - (1) If you're defeated emotionally by dysfunctions that Christ has defeated spiritually, you need a fresh breakthrough into the grace of God and into Calvary Love.
- iv) Yes, you might need to make restitution. You might need to make amends.
- v) But self-punishment is never God's plan for you. You can't balance the scales of justice, and you should never try. Only Jesus can, and he did on Calvary's cross. You have to believe.
- vi) You need to apologize, repay what you damaged, make amends, and move on. Whether or not the person you hurt ever forgives you, that's between them and God.
 - (1) Don't let guilt and shame sit in the driver's seat of your love. (Lacking the grace of self-forgiveness, so you always trying to atone for sins of the past).
- c) Manipulation... you've heard of smother love. To control another person through dysfunctional love. Marie Barrone on Everybody Loves Raymond. (Lacking the grace of boundaries and self-awareness, so you have to find yourself by invading the space of another person)
 - (a) There's an important truth tucked into Genesis. After God made Adam and Eve, he conducted the world's first wedding ceremony.
 - i) *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:24, 25, NKJV).*
 - (1) Bill's translation
 - ii) *Therefore a man shall [physically and emotionally] leave his father and mother and be exclusively committed to his wife, and they shall become ONE flesh. And they were — the TWO of them — naked, physically and emotionally — and they did not shame themselves.*
 - (2) The pattern is like this. Here's you (one hand) and here's your spouse (or really close friendship)(the other hand). You press together, (hands pressed together), but you never enmesh (fingers laced). You never become the other person, and they never become you. Instead, you press together and honor each other's freedom, personality, style, and free will.
 - (3) I had a pastor friend, from a very big megachurch, who said that every time he and his wife went out somewhere, he instructed her on how to dress, and what to say, and what not to say, and how to behave with different people they would meet.
 - (a) He's no longer a pastor, and she's no longer his wife.
 - i) Smother love is not love.
- d) Love from a grace-starved heart is dysfunctional love.
- e) Only God's grace, wormed deeply into the heart, can heal the dysfunction of the heart, so that you can be truly free to love and be loved in return.

B. Love from an immature heart is narcissistic love.

- 1. If I told you to find the love chapter in your Bible, where would you go? 1 Corinthians 13.
- 2. What if I told you that love was the secondary idea, and something else was primary in that chapter? You would say, "prove it."
- 3. So here we go. After describing 15 qualities of love, you get to this verse:
 - a) *For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. (1 Corinthians 13:9, 10, NKJV).*
- 4. All kinds of books and articles have been written to identify the word "perfect" in this verse.
 - a) Some say it means when Jesus comes and the world is perfect.
 - b) Some say it meant the day when the writing of the Bible was finally perfect and complete.
- 5. I say they're both wrong.
- 6. You have the same Greek word in a couple of other places in Corinthians:
 - a) *However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature... (1 Corinthians 2:6, NKJV).*
 - b) *Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature. (1 Corinthians 14:20, NKJV).*
- 7. So let's stick in the word Mature and see how it works:
 - a) *For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when [spiritual maturity] has come, then that which is in part will be done away. (1 Corinthians 13:9, 10, NKJV).*
 - b) *For we know [from a place of spiritual immaturity] and we prophesy [from a place of spiritual immaturity]. But when [spiritual maturity] has come, then that which is [from a place of spiritual immaturity] will be done away. (1 Corinthians 13:9, 10, NKJV).*
- 8. So far it works... it's saying right in the middle of the love chapter that your love will never rise higher than your level of maturity as an individual.
- 9. Let's see if the context supports this. Here's the next verse:
 - a) *When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. (1 Corinthians 13:11, NKJV).*
- 10. Will you look at that. An apostolic plea to grow up.
 - a) Grow up as a man, as a woman of God... because if you don't, your love will be fragile, fickle, fleeting, and superficial.
- 11. You've heard me say this before:
 - a) There's the problem. And there's the problem behind the problem.

- b) The problem is the problem.
- c) But the problem behind the problem is the immaturity with which you approach the problem.
 - (1) And if you have relational problems, over and over, and if you hurt your marriage, and hurt your relationships at work or school, then maybe you have some growing to do.
 - (a) Just make sure you're on a pathway of growth. Because there's this awesomely misunderstood verse coming next:
- d) *For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. (1 Corinthians 13:12, NKJV).*
- 12. Let me break it down by sentence structure:
 - a) For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face.
 - b) Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.
 - c) The "now" part is talking about you when you are immature. This is what your love looks like when you are still at life's kiddie table. The "but then" part means you've grown up. Scripture here is pleading with you to grow up so you can love well.
- 13. Let's look at them:
 - a) For now we see in a mirror, dimly. What's that about? It's about a person who is all "grewed" up on the outside, but stuck in the past on the inside. What is immature love like for that person?
- 14. Question... when you are looking in a mirror, who are you looking at?
- 15. Answer... yourself.
 - a) There's your narcissism. I, me, my all the time. You're sharing your struggle, and all of a sudden, the other person turns it to his struggle, her struggle.
 - b) Immature love is a magnet that attracts attention to itself. And love suffers.
 - (1) There's half the pop music love songs being played today. And most of the movies, TV shows, and books.
 - c) But when you move to spiritual maturity, what do you get? "But then face to face."
- 16. Now who are you looking at? The other person. Their needs. Their story. Their worth. Their beauty. Their sacredness to God and their importance to you. It's not just the love chapter, it's the MATURE CHAMPION OF GRACE LOVE CHAPTER.
 - a) And you have to move beyond childish things to experience it.
- 17. For now I know in part... what's that? That's shallow relationships. Superficial. Nobody gets close to you. Your shields are up, and you're in a crowd, but nobody knows you. That's you in an immature state.
- 18. And when you move into spiritual maturity... "then I shall know just as also I am known." There's closeness. There's healthy self-disclosure that isn't weird or imbalanced. You are so secure in grace that you don't let your secrets keep you sick any longer. There's the real you, the Christ-filled, grace-fueled YOU shining forth... in a way that gives love and receives love and it's beautiful and strong and tender and mature.
- C. *Love from a complacent heart is a narrow love.*
 - 1. Listen to this profile and see if it fits you.
 - a) You've grown in grace, or your growing in it. You are on the Grace Pathway, and you're working the steps.
 - b) You have a decent marriage, or you're good marrying material, or your good with your single status. If you have kids, you are a responsible, loving, faithful, parent.
 - c) You're pretty mature as an individual... and you're making progress in this.
 - d) You have healthy relationships. Solid friendships. You care about people and they care about you.
 - e) You love God, but even better, you're more and more convinced that he loves you.
 - (1) So get that profile?
 - f) Great, great, great. You are growing in grace, and Christ's love is growing in you.
 - 2. But wait... here's a huge question.
 - a) WHAT PERSON HAVE YOU WELCOMED INTO YOUR CIRCLE OF FRIENDS IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS? Let's be generous... in the last year?
 - (1) Might I lovingly suggest to you that if your happy little circle of friends is the same happy little circle of friends, it is a clique?
 - (a) Dictionary app: a small group of people, with shared interests or other features in common, who spend time together and do not readily allow others to join them.
 - i) The word clique comes from an old French word that meant to bolt a door shut.
 - 3. Love from a complacent heart is a narrow love.
 - a) For God so loved the world... the Bible says. And he's reproducing that love in your own heart. Who are the outsiders you've welcomed in? Who are the rookies that you've taken under your wing? What about people new to your school? New to Shasta County? New to your job? New to Neighborhood Church?
 - 4. When people bounce off the cell wall of your circle of friends, you've sacrificed your mission for your pleasure.
 - 5. I told you this series is in your face series. If we believe in grace, and we do, then we have to believe in a grace that makes a difference in how we love our neighbors...
 - a) Love from a complacent heart is a narrow love.
 - b) People are hurting.
 - c) People are lonely.
 - d) People are searching.
 - (1) And they hardly ever look like it. They look professional. Put together. Successful. They don't look bad, smell bad, or act bad.
 - (2) But they still need love.

6. Your job is to open the circle. When God's love is ignited in your heart, you will open the circle.
7. Here is the mind-blowing truth...
 - a) *That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:3, NKJV).*
8. You're standing in a circle of friends. People you know. People you're comfortable with. You're talking about stuff you like to talk about. You're having fun. Over there is a person who's new. Who's circulating, but doesn't know anybody.
9. Your job is to open the circle. Your job is to make space, I mean literal, physical space, AND emotional space for them, and welcome them in.
 - a) People who don't have family. .
 - b) People who have a tough time making friends.
 - c) People who don't fit in easily.
 - d) People who seem so successful but are so painfully alone.
10. And here's where that comes from. Picture God... Father, Son, Holy Spirit. The Father loves the Son, who loves the Spirit, who loves the Father. If we could see God, we would be blown away with the intense affection and care that each person of the Trinity has for each other person. There is a love there beyond description and beyond compare. A friendship. A companionship. A perfect, beautiful fellowship.
11. And then God saw you, out on the fringes, along the wall, all by yourself and awkward.
12. And God opened that circle and brought you into that fellowship. "And truly our Fellowship is with the Father and with the Son."
13. It blows my mind to think of it. Fellowship with God. Friendship. Relationship. God opened the circle.
14. And now it's our turn. It's your turn. It's mine.
15. Every day, right here in Shasta County... there are thousands of people who don't know Christ who need a loving word, a loving smile, a loving hand of help. And there are thousands of born again Christians who are too complacent in their own relationships to make the effort to care.
16. There, I said it. Glad you came to church today?
17. I'm trying to light a fire. I'm trying to shake you up. I'm trying to mobilize our church to love lost people and new people and all people.
18. There should be a flow of new people in your circle of friends, or you're just a clique, I don't care how much you pray and love Jesus. Bless your heart.
- D. *Love from a grace-filled heart is revolutionary love.*
 1. Here I want to get really down to earth. I have homework for you, and then I have our Ignite Basic Training verse.
 2. If you're married or dating:
 - a) Treat kindly
 - b) Be the best you can be physically
 - (1) exercise, eat right, dress nicely, do the most with what you have
 - (a) Care for yourself is a gift to people you love.
 - c) Be the best you can be emotionally
 - (1) get help if you need it, get counseling if you need it, stop being victim, stop complaining, stop nagging. Help.
 - d) Speak the other person's love language. Receive the other person's love language.
 3. If you're single
 - a) If being single is your plan, then that's great, and the Bible calls it a time of "undistracted devotion to the Lord."
 - b) If it's not your plan, or if you can't exercise sexual self control, then put yourself on a healthy path to get married.
 - c) Deal with your issues.
 - d) Pursue what you want.
 - e) Don't let fear control you.
 - f) Don't be picky and self-righteous. Go for character and heart for God, and financial maturity.
 - g) Trust God, but take action. I saw on FB that somebody was saying that they were trusting God to bring them a spouse. They had been waiting 28 years. Okay, I applaud that. But if I were you, I'd go on a campaign to find a spouse, and then choose wisely. You gotta get yourself out there, and it's a numbers game.
 4. Homework
 - a) Send a note, card, or email that's encouraging.
 - b) Post something on FB that brings true honor to another person.
 - c) Verbally say something nice.
 - d) Send flowers or a small gift with a nice note.
 - e) Do something kind and unexpected with a nice note and an acknowledgement.
 - f) Invite another couple or family (who isn't well connected) into your circle of friends. Have them over to watch the Cubs or football or something.
 - (1) If you're a student, invite someone to have lunch with you who normally doesn't have lunch with anybody else. Or who isn't normally part of your circle of friends. Open the circle.

IV. Ignite Wake Up Call

- A. *"But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. (Luke 6:32-36, NKJV).*