

Spiritual Health Check: What's Love Got to Do With It?

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[0 : 00] So we're continuing in our sermon series, Spiritual Health Check, this morning. And in this series, we're going to be reminded week by week of the importance of setting a baseline, right?

We talked about a healthy standard upon which we can measure things in the future. How do you know if you're healthy if you don't know what healthy looks like or what healthy feels like?

So as Christians, as followers of Jesus Christ, it's important for us to recognize that our spiritual health is actually even more important than our physical health.

And over the coming weeks in this series, we're going to take a closer look at some of the ways that we can assess our spiritual health. That we can identify things that we need to pay attention to.

Or as my English brain says, editing right away, to which we need to pay attention. Because you can't end with two, but there you go. So things that are important that we need to be aware of.

[1 : 01] So this morning, we're asking a question. I'm going to ask a question in the title of our sermon, which is, What's love got to do with it? And I hear some chuckles.

So I'm proud to declare that I'm a child of the 80s. Well, actually, I was produced in the 60s. So I'm a child of the 60s. But nurtured in the 80s.

And our adult children, Connor and Emily, have said, We deeply appreciate the 80s pop culture education we got from you and mom. So many of my formative years, as I said, happened in the 80s.

And to this day, I'm still a fan. And when I work out, the playlist that I listen to in my headphones is an 80s music playlist. Because that's what I like. So maybe when you hear that sermon title, a couple people chuckled, are you reminded of that 80s song by Tina Turner?

What's love got to do with it? I can sing. I'm not going to attempt Tina Turner. Not today. So by released in 1984, Tina Turner's song, What's Love Got to Do With It?

[2 : 09] Maybe you can hear it playing in your head now. It was huge. It won multiple Grammy Awards. And it's still, to this day, included in many top 10 song lists.

Top 100 song lists of all time. But this morning, with that title, we're going to consider what has love got to do with it? What does love have to do with our spiritual health?

Is it relevant at all? And so it's important for Christians to be people who love. And we recognize that, hopefully. Particularly love others.

But is that an essential quality? Is that something that's critical to being a Christian? To being a follower of Jesus Christ? Well, as we explore that together, we're going to consider three things. How important is the concept of love to the Christian life? That's one. Two, are you a loving person? And three, you know I love to give you practical suggestions.

[3 : 16] How can we become more loving? So our first point this morning then. How important is the concept of love? How important is it to be loving and show love?

How important is that to being a Christian? Well, my friends, I believe it is essential. And so essential, in fact, that I believe without it, without being loving towards other people, without showing love to other people, you may have actually missed the entire point of being a Christian.

At least to a fairly significant extent. So why did God create everything? Why did he create the universe, the planets, the stars, all living things?

Why did he create you? And why did he create me? Think God was bored and just needed something to occupy his time? No. Not at all.

God created, and we read this in the Bible over and over, God created out of love. He created out of a desire to share his love with all creation.

[4 : 31] And for creation to reflect that love back to him. So here's another perspective. Why did God save you?

Why does God continue to save you from your sin and welcome you back into relationship with him? Why does God want every man, woman, and child to hear the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Why? Love. Why did God the Father send his only son, Jesus Christ, to die for us, to pay the only price that had to be paid for humanity to redeem us for all time?

Love. Jesus declared the importance of love as the primary quality of his disciples in John chapter 13, verse 34 and 35, when he said, The command, love one another, appears 11 times in the Bible, all in the New Testament.

And Jesus himself said it three of those 11 times. Twice in John 13, verse 34, and once in John 13, verse 35.

[6 : 13] The expression or the phrase, love each other, appears four times in the Bible. Again, all in the New Testament. And Jesus said it twice. John 15, verse 12, and once in John 15, verse 17.

And so then this is reaffirmed in 1 John chapter 4, verses 7 to 12. Have a listen. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God.

And whoever has been born of God, whoever loves, pardon me, has been born of God and knows God. Hear this part. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

In this, the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love.

Not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation. There's a big theological word. Atonement, paying the price.

[7 : 27] For our sins. The propitiation, the payment for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought to love one another.

No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us.

So you've heard me suggest in the past, I believe when we've become conditioned to water down a lot of concepts, right? We don't have the capacity, the language for certain concepts that I believe are deeper and broader and more significant.

And I believe love may be one of them. And we've talked about this in the past. The Greek actually has several words that are all used to describe specific kinds, specific contexts for the word and the concept of love.

So I believe we may often tend to limit the idea of love to something that's merely a feeling or an emotion, right?

[8 : 36] I love pizza. I love that it's sunny outside. So yeah, that's all valid. But do you see how it can be quite superficial?

It can be very preferentially oriented or emotionally oriented. But there's so much more to it than that. Particularly when it comes to the idea of the love of God.

And how we should show that kind of love towards other people. I believe that the Father's love for us and the sacrificial love of Jesus shows that love is ultimately about, and we've considered this before, love is about service and it's about sacrifice.

For the sake of others. Love is about service and sacrifice for the sake of others. So when you consider the world's view of love, can you recognize that it's very, can be very selfish?

It's often not really about someone else at all. Love in the world's eyes, I believe, is more about making ourselves feel good or important.

[9 : 53] It's more about that than about considering other people at all often. Consider, have you thought of that? The fact that love is really about, do I feel comfortable?

Am I within my comfort zone and doing what I want to do? That's love, right? So I believe that we've come to recognize that love, a godly concept of love that puts others first, is essential to having a healthy spiritual life.

It's absolutely essential. Our second point this morning, and here comes some potential conviction. In light of recognizing the importance of seeking to put others first and pursue that kind of love, are you a more loving person because of your relationship with God?

I'm not saying that you need to hug people more, necessarily, or tell them that you love them, although those things may be appropriate for some folks, for sure.

What I'm asking is, are you reflecting the love that God has shown you outwards, towards other people?

[11:13] No matter how cranky or annoying or selfish or entitled someone else may act towards you, are you able to show them love?

Are your first words to someone words of encouragement and comfort, or are they words of criticism or negativity? Friends, if it's the latter, if you're unable to see others the way God sees them, and with his deep love for them, spend some time with God in prayer.

Talk to him, or talk to someone else you trust about that. Get an external filter. Because if your default switch is set to criticize versus encourage, that's not really showing love.

So if your defaults are, as I said a moment ago, criticism and negativity versus encouragement and comfort, those are signs of concern.

For sure they are. And signs of spiritual health at risk. So becoming someone who is naturally and unconditionally more loving towards others is really a sign that you are spiritually healthy.

[12:37] That you are loving others with the love of God in you. This is not about you somehow mustering love for someone that you can't stand.

This is about you letting God love them in the way he loves them through you. Does that make sense? Are you a more loving person because of what Jesus has done for you?

File that away in the things to think about. So our third point this morning. How can we, how can you specifically, become more loving?

Well maybe you're familiar with this passage of scripture that I'm going to share with you. It's very popular at weddings. We actually used part of it in ours, believe it or not. If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and knowledge and I have a faith that can move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing.

[13:58] If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Here's the really popular chunk. Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast. It is not proud. It does not dishonor others. It is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects. Always trusts.

Always hopes. Always perseveres. Love never fails. 1 Corinthians 13, 1-8.

[14:59] There it is. And as I said, it's often quoted in wedding ceremonies and you can see it in there, right? It's definitely appropriate there. But can you recognize in this passage that message of love is so much more than that?

It's so much more than I now pronounce you kind of context. It's about the Christian life. It's about what it looks like to be loving with the love of God focused on others.

As we've learned, love is the foundation of our calling and our identity as Christians. This passage is the key to helping us recognize that if we are truly loving others, we need to be loving them in the selfless way that Jesus did.

So, another few questions for you this morning. Do you seek to love everyone or just the people you like? Your friends, your family, people that you already have a relationship with.

The easy ones. Because if that's the case, if you can recognize it, that's not actually Christian love.

[16:22] In fact, it's the epitome of worldly love. Jesus said in Luke 6, verse 32, If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you?

For even sinners love those who love them. Christians aren't characterized by how well they love the people in their life that they deem to be worthy.

but who God calls them to love. Can you see that? Do you love other people expecting it to be reciprocated or without conditions?

Do you intentionally seek to love the people that others or society may deem to be unlovable?

That's a tough one.

Are you patient with other people? or do you find yourself just generally tolerating them? Is your life shaped by envy, pride, or selfishness?

[17:32] Or are you someone who is at peace, humble, satisfied by what they have, and then seeking to improve the lives and circumstances of others who may need that?

My friends, ask God to guide you to the people he most wants you to love and ask him to fill you to overflowing with his love for those people and not your own.

Scripture tells us again and again that love is the very nature of who God is. When we explored the character of God, we spent time reflecting on the fact that God is love.

So by seeking to love other people with God's love, we'll be drawing closer to him. We'll be becoming more like his son. My friends, this is my challenge for each of us as we begin to close this morning.

Seek to identify the relationships in your life where you most need to grow in love. Ask God to help you identify those.

[18 : 46] Perhaps you need to show love to a family member or a co-worker or a neighbor or even someone at church. I want you to seek to target specific people, this sounds weird, but target specific people in your life who could benefit from God's love shining through you.

And I bet you for each one of us, take that long to think of somebody. So once you have someone or a few someones perhaps in mind, take the initiative in showing love to them.

And especially where you have little or no expectation of receiving anything in return. In showing God's unconditional love to others, particularly those we may find difficulty loving through our own power, we'll be taking proactive steps, proactive steps, to ensure our spiritual health, our loving nature is on track.

Amen? Amen. Amen.