



NEWSLETTER

VALENTINE'S DAY & THE BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF LOVE

This month many cards, roses, and boxes of chocolate will be given and received in the name of love. In light of Valentine's Day, this edition of our newsletter is devoted to love and relationships. In the first article we'll look at how Valentine's Day got started, cultural definitions of love, and the biblical view of love. In the

next two articles we'll listen to some wise words from another pastor on other important issues related to love and relationships.

History of Valentine's Day

It is not known for certain who Saint Valentine's Day (called "Valentine's Day" for short) is named after. We do know, however, that it's named after a Christian martyr (or martyrs) with the last name Valentine. Contrary to what you might have thought, the Hallmark greeting card company did not invent this holiday to make money on Valentine cards (though I'm sure they enjoy the fact that the holiday brings them so much business). The day began to be observed in the year 500, when Pope Gelasius I established it as a religious observance commemorating the saint for which it is named. It took on romantic overtones in the Middle Ages.

How Culture Defines Love

Valentine's Day is a celebration of love. This is a good thing as long as what we're celebrating is a properly defined idea of what love is. The problem,



of course, is that our culture often does not have a biblical definition of love. This time of year, you'll hear a lot about "falling in love," about "love at first sight," about people who once were "in love" but have "fallen out of love," etc. But we must beware not simply to adopt these cultural definitions of love. So

how *should* we understand what love really is?

How the Bible Defines Love

Paul describes love this way: "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor. 13:4-7). Jesus said it this way: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Again, Paul wrote this: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5:22).

One of the key ingredients in the biblical definition of love (and the one ingredient that's often lacking in worldly definitions) is self-sacrifice. True love—whether we're talking about our love for God, for other Christians, or our spouse—sacrifices for the good of the other person. This is how Christ has loved us. This is how we must love others. May God help us display this kind of love in our lives.



USING SINGLENESS FOR GOD'S GLORY

Helpful Thoughts from Pastor John Piper

Valentine's Day is usually a time when couples celebrate their love for one another. In light of this, it might be easy for folks who are single to get discouraged. The Bible, however, says that singleness can be a great thing if used for the Lord. In this article, I've included some wise words on singleness from Pastor John Piper of Bethlehem Baptist Church, in Minneapolis, MN. The words are taken from an audio interview. Before you read his comments, take time to read 1 Corinthians 7 (especially verses 32-35). The single among us need to be reminded that God wants to use them and their singleness (for however long that is) for his glory. Piper's words begin now:



No, it's probably almost the reverse. Many people are afraid of commitments and relationships, and many people are eager to stretch their wings and do their own thing. And then maybe later, when they've traveled the world and done lots of things that satisfied them, then maybe they will lock in to somebody . . . maybe.

So there's a lot of the independence and a lot of desire to satisfy their own immediate desires, which has nothing to do with what Paul was talking about, namely, increased devotion to the Lord.

How should singleness be different for Christians?

I don't think that a lot of the singleness that we see happening today is designed to increase devotedness to the Lord. That's what Paul said it should be. He said that the problem with marriage in crisis situations that he found himself in was that it would distract a person from full devotion to the Lord.

Well, when I look around at the kind of secular singleness we see today, that's the last thing on many singles' minds. "I'm keeping myself free from the entanglements of marriage in order that there might be a more radical focus on and devotion to Jesus Christ"—that kind of thinking is *not* what is dictating the change of statistics in our culture.

How would you challenge a Christian who has these selfish desires?

I would say that singleness is a gift for as long as you have it. Some people God means to have it for a lifetime, and some people God means to have it for a season. But while you have it, consult the Scriptures to see how you can maximize the freedoms of singleness for the glory of Christ, because there are advantages to being married, and there are advantages to singleness when it comes to serving Jesus.

And I would just encourage Christian single people to ask, "For this chapter in my life, while I am single, what is it about my singleness that could make me especially fruitful for Christ?" And then I would encourage them to give themselves to that.



WISDOM ON TEENAGERS & DATING

Another very important issue when it comes to love and relationships is the issue of teenagers and dating. Should teenagers date? If so, at what age? What should “dating” (if you want to call it that) involve for, say, high school students. Again, Pastor Piper gives us some wise advice in this area. His words, taken from another audio interview, begin now:

How should teenagers handle relationships with the opposite sex?

I think that it is good to postpone dating and pairing off as long as possible. Meaning, postpone it until it's ready to mean what it was designed to mean.

Pairing off is a powerful thing. If the relationship here means groups of 4, 8, or 20 people doing stuff together without the dynamic of “she and I are a thing,” that's great. But this question is talking about pairing off.

Pairing off is hormonally charged, psychologically charged, physically charged, spiritually charged, and it is meant to be! It's meant to lead somewhere! And it's beautiful where it is meant to lead.

Therefore my counsel is that as the electric charge begins to happen between two seventeen-year-olds, they better think really clearly about how to manage that. And if they don't intend to get married in the next year or so, they better not pair off but keep it in groups and step back from it.

To Talitha, my daughter, I say, “Through high school, keep it at groups. And then when the guy shows up, tell him to call me”—that's one way to manage it—“and we'll talk about what it should look like.”

Long engagements are hard and dangerous. And so I think we should probably marry earlier, if we prepare our children well, or postpone dating till later. Because these long pairs aren't healthy for any of us.

Upcoming Events

February 11

The youth group will be hanging out in the youth room this Friday night as they eat and watch a movie together. It starts at 6:30.

February 13

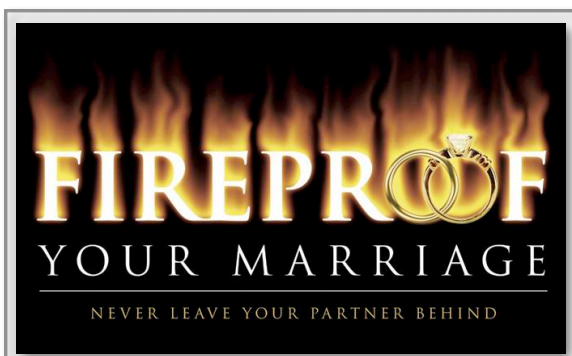
Sunday night at 6:00 pm, we'll be having a church-wide “movie night.” We'll enjoy light refreshments and watch the movie “Fireproof,” an excellent Christian film on marriage.

February 26

Our youth group will be going to play laser tag on this Saturday. See Pastor Josh for details.

MARRIAGE EVENT

The Movie “Fireproof”



In keeping with our focus on love and relationships this month, we'll be having a “movie night” at our church Sunday, February 13 at 6:00. We'll enjoy some light refreshments and watch the Christian film “Fireproof.” This movie is full of great biblical truth about marriage. It tells the story of a couple having marital problems and how, through biblical instruction, they are able to work things out and save their marriage. You won't want to miss it. Invite a friend!



PEOPLE WHO'D LOVE TO RECEIVE MAIL



This month, let's send a note to our snow-bird members down in Florida. They are a central part of our church, and we miss them, so let's let them know!

Here are some names and addresses:

Bill & Mary Roberts

556 Pleasant Grove Dr
Winterspring, FL 32708

Jim & Neila Barron

Lake Saunders RV Resort
1175 Bay Rd #77
Mt. Dora, FL 32757

Marjorie Brown

1201 8th Ave West E-38
Palmetto, FL 34221

Lewis & Ruth Rucker

1201 8th Ave West F-31
Palmetto, FL 34221

Areas of Service

Deacon of the Month

Garry Jessup (427-2464)

Church Cleaning

Lea Ann and Vicki

Nursery Workers

Feb. 6 — Ingrid Peters

Feb. 13 — Volunteer Welcome

Feb. 20 — Melisa Gaines

Feb. 27 — Rosemary Jessup

Nursing Home Visitation

Feb. 27 — meet at the church at 1:45pm.