

**A BETTER WAY OF LOVING**  
**Luke 5:1-5**

**Relationship Message Series**  
**February 3, 2013**  
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So I have a question for you: who taught you to tie your shoe laces? Do you even remember? Was it your mother, your father, your brother or sister, your grandparent, a friend? Were you one who learned pretty quickly, or did you need to practice a lot?

The interesting thing is that tying one's shoe isn't all that complicated once you know how. But figuring it out on your own is nearly impossible. Once you know how to make these loops, wind them around and pull them tight, you can do it without looking. But without someone initially teaching you, it is nearly impossible.

This is true, of course, with a lot of things in life. Programming your smart phone, learning new things on your computer/I-pad, replacing a light fixture, even meeting new people or being part of an interview—all of these are easier if someone demonstrates the steps for you—if you learn from someone who knows how.

And the reality is that nowhere in life is this truer than in learning how to really love people. The problem is that in most families no one ever sat us down and said, “Here are the fundamentals of how to love others.” No one helped us practice until we learned how to do it right.

For many of us we learned how to love by watching, imitating and experimenting. And yet the reality is that for some of us this method may not have worked very well. As a result, we've hurt some people we didn't mean to. We may have damaged some relationships and we may have some regrets about others.

I have often said that it is interesting how most of us in our careers needed to go to extra schooling, needed to be an apprentice or do an internship, needed to be held accountable with regular evaluations and goal setting. And most of us are mandated to get continuing education.

And yet somehow we are expected to have great love in our marriages, be loving parents or friends to others, with no training, no goal setting, no continuing education at all. In fact, some people even resist reading a book on marriage or talking to someone who can help. That's why the Relationship Workshop is so great—it is a non-threatening way we all can learn together.

Without continual learning, mentoring and learning from positive people how can anyone have a successful marriage, or even friendship for that matter? How can two completely different people, different genders, different backgrounds, have wonderful romantic and blissful love on their own? Needless to say, it rarely happens.

For the past four Sundays we've been focusing on how to strengthen your marriage and how to better love your neighbors, and friends. On this Sunday before the Relationship Workshop and before Alicia preaches next Sunday, I will teach you some fundamentals of a better way of loving. And to do that I will show you some ways Jesus loved people.

Please look up on the projection screens at the Bible reading from Luke 5:1-5. Now this story takes place early in Jesus' ministry. Jesus, in his way of relating to Peter and to the crowd, loves them in a better way than you might suspect. (Read vss. 1-5).

Now before I show some examples from this passage I will remind you of the three words for love in the New Testament. Eros love is that sensual love. Its focus is, "What can I get out of this?" Philia is that relational, brotherly/sisterly love that asks, "What can we get out of this?"

Agape, of course, is unconditional, God-like love. It is the deepest kind of love. It asks, "What can you get out of this?" Another way to think of this is: Eros loves when... Philia loves because... Agape loves in spite of... Three different forms of love.

Now in Luke 5 Jesus is teaching beside the Sea of Galilee. While he is teaching a crowd starts to gather. For an ideal teaching spot Jesus picks the seashore. There is a natural slope so everyone can sit, see and hear well. So he starts to preach.

But as he teaches more and more people begin arriving. Pretty soon the little beach is full of people. Jesus tries to make room but ends up standing in the water. Finally, seeing Peter's boat nearby Jesus asks him to take him a few yards out in the water.

As Peter complies Jesus then teaches from the front of the boat. Doing this frees up the maximum space along the seashore, allows everyone to see and the natural amplification of the water allows everyone to hear. It is a win-win situation.

And then when the sermon is over Jesus says to Peter, "*Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.*" After some arguing Peter finally does what Jesus says. And he and his partners catch so many fish their boats nearly sink.

Now you may wonder what this story has to say about the meaning of love? Well believe it or not this is a great story to demonstrate the choices Jesus had in how to love these people. In other words, he could have used eros, philia, or agape love.

With the crowd if he had used eros love Jesus could have said, "You know I just love it when the crowds come to adore me. It makes me feel so good and loved on the inside." And yet if the crowd made him uncomfortable he could have said, "When things get chaotic, I'm out of here."

If Jesus had used philia love he could have said, "This is so great to have everyone here together. Let's hold hands and sing Kum-ba-ya together." Jesus would have organized them into small groups and tried to help them all be friends. Friendship would be more important than teaching.

And yet Jesus didn't employ either of these kinds of love. When the crowds began to grow instead of thinking of himself or the group—of me or we—Jesus thought of "them" and "you." Jesus thought, "What can I do to serve these people better?" That's real love—"you" love.

And this love of Jesus, of course, carried over with Peter. If Jesus after teaching had used eros love he could have said, "Wow, didn't the people love me? I'm so tired now I want to simply rest in the glory of the moment. Peter, would you get me a nice cool drink to savor?"

If Jesus had used philia love he could have said, "Wow, I think I achieved some great interpersonal goals and bonding today. It's great when everyone has a good time, isn't it?" And

yet Jesus did not do this. Rather, instead of thinking of himself or everyone else, he focuses on Peter. Jesus didn't need to—but he loved Peter.

So here are a few principles of a better way of loving. First of all, better love thinks about others more than self. And second, better love makes the first move. It is amazing the power there is in love if you think about your spouse or about others first, and if you don't wait for others to love you first. Always make the first move.

I often tell couples in their pre-marital counseling that their individual marriage vows, and commitment, needs to be to put the other person first. Their focus needs to be that you want your spouse to be the best they can be; that you keep remembering to focus on their needs first; that you serve them with all your heart.

I remember hearing Pastor Tony Campolo say many years ago that there is nothing in the Bible about husbands and wives, or any person, being served or lording over another. Rather, Jesus' example is always one of service, humility, putting others first. To do this is amazing.

A third principle of better love is that it takes risks. You may remember the stories of how Jesus cared for the poor and needy. He didn't just stay at a distance and say nice things to people. No, Jesus took risks, he went and touched the sick and faced his captors with non-violence.

It is amazing today how easily we talk about how loving we are, but how often we avoid risky or uncomfortable situations. Love is great when it makes me feel good, but don't ask me to love that difficult person. Don't ask me to go and help the poor and needy—to get my hands dirty.

And the really sad thing is all the husbands, wives and friends who won't take any risks in trying to heal their relationships. Yes, counseling may be risky and scary. Yes, fully participating and focusing together on negative attitudes, mistakes that have been made or on seeking forgiveness can be very painful and challenging.

And yet if you want to be a loving person, if you want a better kind of love then your love needs to take risks. It takes putting the other first, taking the first step and being willing to step out in faith. Love is not always easy or happy—it often needs to take risks.

The fourth and final principle is that better love goes the last 10%. You know, my friends, in love it is so easy to just do enough to get by. It is easy to half-heartedly do that home project to get my wife off my back. It is easy to act like we are affectionate or that we are loving, but not put our all or our best into it.

And when communicating with a spouse or friend, it is easy to not be honest with them, to not share the truth, to withhold the 10% that is causing the problem. And in the same way it is easy to withhold that compliment, those words of appreciation. It is the last 10% we often neglect.

If you're doing a project it means completing the task. It means not just clearing the table but washing the dishes. It means putting aside that book, turning off the TV, cancelling that sport's activity to listen and spend time together. This 10% means going the extra mile, doing more than what is expected, giving the very best of your love.

My friends, our world needs a better way of loving. Our friends need a better way of loving. Our families need a better way of loving. Our marriages need a better way of loving. And Jesus shows us the way. It is agape, God-like love that thinks of you first.