

LL03-Loving Relationships Expand Our Hearts

Hi I'm Doug Weiss, and I'm Alvean Lyons and this is love life.

You know I don't know about you, Alvean, but I've been to lots of weddings. A few of my own and I think I was there, and I you know counted.

You know, one of the most frequently used pieces of verse from Scripture that folks use as part of their wedding vows is first Corinthians. It's the piece where Paul talks about love.

Love is kind, love is patient, love is charitable, this long list of adjectives about love, and I'm always struck by this as kind of bizarre, because Paul, as you probably know, was a Pharisee. He was in essence a kind of blend of lawyer and scholar and the guy who was persecuting people for believing in Christianity

And a man who actually stood there and watched another man be stoned to death for his beliefs and left just fine.

Yeah, so here he is writing about love, which seems weird on the face of it, and he has very definitive ideas about love because he's a man who is both celibate and thinks everybody else should be. In fact he even says, well if you absolutely can't be like me, you can't be the paragon of virtue that I am, then you know go get married because we don't want you to be promiscuous or anything like that.

And he also has some kind of really interesting ideas about who is allowed to be with who, which is where a lot of the frank injustice that you often see cited about what's correct and what isn't correct in relationships comes from. It's not from anything that Jesus ever said or God ever said, it's strictly what comes from Paul. So Paul has set himself up once again as the arbiter of what is correct, but that's another topic for another time, because people would argue that it was God speaking to Paul.

But we're not here to bash Paul, not at all, we're here to actually talk about this quest to know what is love, how do we define love and how does that experience change us? How does it expand our hearts ?.

Everyone loves a lover, every lover loves everyone, right, how does that happen?

Well what's so interesting about that question is... and you and I talk about it all the time, the way that people process so many things just in terms of romantic love and that romantic love must be sexual in some kind of nature. It's the person we're dating, the person that we're coupled with, someone who we are married to, but when I think about love that has expanded my life, the love that simply honestly I think about is the relationship I have with my one of my closest friends who is also my business partner. Because we were college roommates and we hated each other. People who meet us now cannot even imagine that that could possibly be true but when I say we hated each other, I mean like if she was on fire I probably would not have spit on her like that's how bad.

But we were really good roommates, and so and I know that might sound strange, but for people who are very capable of compartmentalizing, you know, that we work together but we're not necessarily friends. We lived together, we were very respectful of each other's things, being prompt in terms of paying bills, following household rules, we were great roommates but we were not good friends, and then several years later we really started to grow into our friendship and I can quickly say that God was very much at the center of that and was responsible for it.

After she moved away, when we finished graduate school, we started to really develop a different kind of relationship because we weren't in each other's space anymore and a respect grew into a love, and when we really became friends I learned so much about myself through the way that she loved me, in spite of so many of the things and missteps that had taken place. Because love should not be about what the other person did, love should really be about what piece do I own in this process and when I started to evaluate the pieces that I own never mind anything that she had done when we were roommates, I really began to realize that I was creating an atmosphere that did not lend itself to any kind of expansion... and if you think about it in terms of marital relationships, for instance, I tell people all the time that there are conditions in environments that we create. If you're fighting over your spouse

walking in the door five minutes late for dinner, believe me the fight is really not about the dinner, the fight is about something else.. in that the condition of the relationship has become like dry grass which means the slightest spark starts a fire..... when our goal in love is to always have wet grass because we're always going to make mistakes.

We're always going to do something unintentionally to one another, but when the conditions are good in a relationship it's like a match falling on wet grass it just fizzles out, it's not nurtured by anything, so her love for me made me start to evaluate myself as a friend... what kind of friend I am, no matter what kind of friend somebody else is to me. I can't control what somebody else does, but I completely control how I respond to it. I didn't originally... I didn't own those things and in the lack of personal ownership I was closing the door to the potential of what that relationship could have been. And, having watched her, used her model of love to examine myself it really expanded the way that I see friendshipwhat it means to show up for someone, what it means to be there for someone, what it means.. what unconditional love really is about.

As we've mentioned in previous talks it's about the knowingness that this person is already worthy they don't need to be fixed by you they need to be loved by you.

There's another theme to that which is about consistency. I was in a relationship for many years with someone, a wonderful person but someone who I want to say was inconsistent. When I came home each night I was never sure who was going to greet me at the door and sometimes it could be wonderful and sometimes it could be a little cool and aloof, and sometimes there was some simmering something under the surface and of course you get that answer, the answer that all men live in absolute fear of receiving which is, when you ask what's wrong, the answer is nothing. Well of course the answer is not nothing, right, and maybe it's an unconscious game, but it is a game that people play with each other. I'm not going to tell you, I want you to dig. I want you to discover, read my mind, because if you really loved me you would know.

And you know I'm not that smart. I mean I'm not psychic I can't read your mind and maybe I'm dense maybe obtuse I'm not picking up on the signals and didn't see your reaction to something but.....I'm sorry I need a little help here. Tell me what it is so we can use this as a moment.. not to grow further apart, but to come closer.

That requires both of us being willing to be vulnerable, both of us being willing to hear each other and listen carefully and see through each other's eyes what may have caused this change in circumstances, but it also requires at the same time, not to exonerate here, but it also requires at the same time that we are not conditional... that we're looking at this through the eyes of the other person in an honest way and seeing how we would feel if that had happened the other way, had happened to me. I'm not you, so maybe the way I react is not the way you react.

If you cut that person some slack, give them some space and allow them to have their emotional reaction so that it's not always about you..... You can't be obsessed with being right, you know sometimes we will choose right over Relationship, and it's not worth it to sacrifice the whole relationship just to be able to win the moment .

If we're going to do relationship long term, I used to always say that the mission has to be greater than the moment. The mission of marriage, the mission of connection the mission of intimacy, the mission of us, has to be greater than the moment we may be in right now and sometimes we're playing to an audience.

So do you say well what's the score, a perfect ten on that argument... I drove that point right home, you know, and that's why it's so hard...that it can become that in a relationship. It's like we're keeping score about who did what and who won which point and all to the detriment of intimacy, because if I'm keeping score that means one of us has to win and one of us has to lose and this is the beginning of the erosion of a trust relationship.

Absolutely, and vulnerability is impossible if you don't trust right so whether it's coming home and not knowing who's going to be there and has a way that you violate trust or it's the necessity to win at all costs you know the scorched earth right ...really toxic relationships which we hope none of us have.

All of those things which are constantly violating that very delicate balance of trust between two people that allow them to feel invested in one another and you know, that investment can go south very quickly, faster than the stock market..... I mean you can really unwind ten years of something good over one really bad decision, one really bad

reaction to something which is why we have to be mindful of where we are when we're going into a moment because you can't let your stuff get in the way of what this is supposed to be. If I love you that love has to be bigger than me making my point and that guides how I make my point because you may have a legitimate point but how I make my point when it's wrapped in love is very different than when I make that point in order to ensure that I won.

Yeah, so when you talk about the idea of the expansion of love and what that requires of us, there's a level of personal ownership and personal honesty. If you're going to lie to anybody don't lie to yourself about where you are

Absolutely, this is about a level of respect for a person to say that this is where I'm at and I love you enough to want you to succeed at us so I will not hide from you information that will help us win in this relationship and I think the way best to express that is to say I love you. I love you today, I'm going to love you tomorrow. There's nothing that you can do that's ever going to change how I love you whatever happens to us I will always love you.

Again, the way God loves us. But for human beings to be that way with one another to say I love you no matter what that's so powerful. Maybe you've had that experience, maybe you know what it's like to be loved that way or that's the way you love. If so why not tell us about it. Tell us your story, we want to know.

You can write to us at doug@lovelife.digital or alvean@lovelife.digital and we'll be back next week.