



It's Complicated – week 1

Why is having a lasting relationship so difficult?

- We have _____.
- We are not _____ in ourselves.
- We are not _____.
- We have a _____ for relational pain.

“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other....”

John 13:34 (NLT)

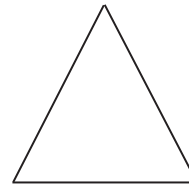
- The foundation for staying in love is to make love a _____.

“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.”

John 13:34 (NLT)

...submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Ephesians 5:21 (NLT)

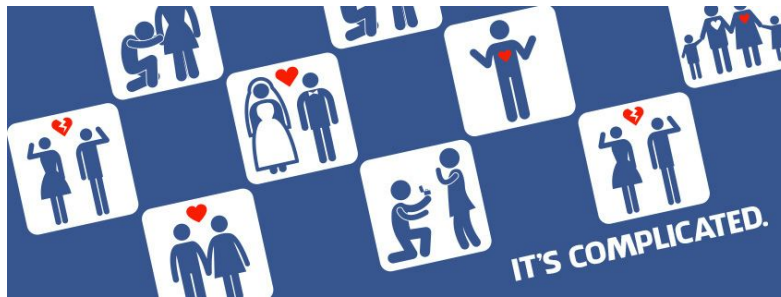


“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then all these things will be given to you too.”

Matthew 6:33 (VOICE)

Recommended Resources

- *The New Rules for Love, Sex and Dating*, by Andy Stanley
- *The Sacred Search*, by Gary Thomas
- *From This Day Forward*, by Craig & Amy Groeschel



It's Complicated Week One

Opening Prayer: God, thank you for creating us to need each other. We invite you to be a part of our discussion as we look at the significant relationships in our lives.

Talk It Over: We see from the beginning of the creation story that God did not create us to be alone. His desire was that we would have fulfilling, life giving, significant relationships. In today's culture, obtaining and staying in a healthy relationship can be challenging. There are many mixed messages. We are often ill equipped when we head into our relationships, as well as when we hit each significant stage of development within the relationship. This series is all about acknowledging how complicated relationships can be and trying to bring some simple steps that might help your relationships grow in love.

- Looking at your current season of life, who are the people you are most connected to? This can be a spouse, friends, kids, family, coworkers, and so on.

Read Jeremiah 29:11 (NCV)

Our family of origin plays a huge part in forming who we are and how we handle relationships as adults. In Jeremiah, God tells us he has a plan for us and that plan is for us to thrive. God is for you and for your relationships. This is great news!

- Take a minute to reflect on how the idea that God is for you lands with you. In what ways do you know that he is for you rather than against you?
- For better or worse, are there any key ways you can see that your upbringing has played a role in your relationships? If it feels safe to share a small part of that with your group, do so.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (The Message)

Simply knowing God is for us isn't necessarily enough for us to become whole and healthy, although it's a helpful place to start. God invites each of us into a journey of healing that will help us to become more whole. This often-individual work has profound effects on our relationships.

- Have you experienced a time where God invited you to explore old wounds in search of healing and freedom?
- How have you seen your own personal healing or work and time set aside in God's presence affect the way you live and love others? How does dealing with your own wounds, problems, and hang ups affect your relationships or marriage?

Read Psalm 1:1-3 (NCV)

- Share a fun story of something you weren't prepared for and how that turned out.
- In whatever stage you are in, brainstorm some ideas of how we can better prepare for your relationships. Are you currently doing any of those things?

- Reflect for a minute and decide on one practical way you can better prepare yourself for relationships more. That may be reading a book, attending church every week during the relationship series, or talking to someone who has navigated the relationship challenge you are facing.

Read 1 Peter 5:10 (The Voice)

As humans in 2016 we like quick fixes. We do not like to stay in seasons of pain or suffering any longer than absolutely necessary. When we think back to some of the messages we have had over the past several months, we see a pattern of God showing us as a church that it is often in those times of discomfort that we grow.

Guest speaker Dave Gibbons introduced the concept of rewiring our brain pathways away from the negative and Danielle Strickland challenged us to pray that God would have us a little discombobulated. Transformation, both personally and in relationship, takes a willingness to fully enter suffering, acknowledge our part in that suffering, and to be willing to do the work required to come out of it with a new perspective that leads to different actions and behaviors.

- What feelings do you have when reflecting on the following words: suffering, pain, uncomfortable, difficult, discipline, or discombobulated.
- Have you had the chance to see someone work through difficult pain and come out more whole as a result? If that is you and you feel comfortable sharing some of that story, do so.

Read John 13:34 (NLT)

The foundation for staying in love is to make love a verb. Jesus was all about love in action.

- Spend a few minutes brainstorming what you might do to practice love this week.

Closing Prayer: God, thank you for your promise to stay by our side and guide us as we learn about your plan for our relationships. Help us to uncomplicate things a little this week with actions of love. Speak to us as we seek you and guide those actions to bear fruit in our lives.