Sacred Space

*If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.**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.*

*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. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*

*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.* **1 Corinthians 13:1–13**

*But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.* **John 14:26–27**

**Insight**

I have a built-in topic for this sermon series on “Picture-Perfect” families. I am called to write about dating and relationships.

Can you say *pressure*?

Aren’t people who write about relationships supposed to have counseling degrees? Supposed to be now married with 2.5 kids? In a relationship comprised of two perfect, smiling, sweater-clad Christians who live their lives perfectly *By the Book*? Whose relationship is the envy of any person in their circle?

I am supposed to have it all together. And so is my partner. I am supposed to be the bearer of all wisdom on how to have a perfectly healthy relationship, right? So us having legit struggles we are working through individually and together does not fit the equation.

Now of course, I am to do my best to live a life worthy of my calling and above reproach, and my partner, knowing my calling and being on board, should try to as well, but who told me that we’re EVER going to be perfect? Or that my dating writings are all about others following ME and MY wisdom? Or that a Christian relationship equals one devoid of pain, struggle, or, at times, intense growth?

*What does it really mean to be in a Christ-centered relationship?*

Neither me nor my partner are perfect, but our relationship started with The Rock. So time and time again, as we journey to heal from our individual hurts, habits, and hang-ups (hurting the other at times in the process), we return to Jesus. We pray, we talk to a person we trust, we don’t take too long to talk it out, we affirm our love, and we learn each other. We grow. We encourage each other and our calling.

We are each messy, imperfect people whom God uses to sharpen the other and spur him or her on but to also show the love of Christ, even in our unattractive moments. And because we are in many of the same communities and others know our lives and beginnings, others see us working through things, praying through things, surviving and growing. They see OUR MESS.

However, there is wisdom in what to share with others. There is sacred space within a relationship and also discernment in who to share one’s issues with. Even when you’re a relationship writer.

This hasn’t been the easiest relationship I’ve been in, but it’s the best relationship I’ve been in. And the more I release my expectations of what I thought a Christian relationship was *supposed* to look like, the more I am free to enjoy the gift of the one tailor-made for me at this season of my life and perhaps longer. One that seems to be growing me closer to Jesus, community, and calling. I can’t say any of my other relationships ever did that.

**Reflection**

Have you ever felt pressure in an area of your life to look like you have it all together? Do you think you might be extending this pressure to anyone else you’re in relationship with? Where is this pressure coming from?

**Prayer**

Father God, while your Word does provide instructions on times to receive godly counsel, it also says that when you ascended into heaven you would give us your Holy Spirit to “teach us all things” (John 14:26). Help us people-pleasers to learn how to live for your approval first. You will not lead us astray. Also help us to receive the Love that you want to give us, and teach us your ways that we may love others with a Christlike love that may look a bit different than that we see in this current culture. Amen.