

ONWARD

from the desk of Chris Greer



Mornin' . It's Chris here. ☐☐

Do you typically think of love as a feeling or as an action? And do the holidays make it easier or harder to love?

Both my friend's and his wife's parents are divorced and remarried. That means they feel the pull and pressure from *four* parental relationships who want their time and attention during the holidays (and they don't even have children yet!).

Add to that their folks' difficult personalities and their annual Christmas wish is to skip the holidays altogether! ☐

Plenty of folks (hopefully you!) *don't* have their problem: You look forward to celebrating Thanksgiving and Christmas with family and friends.

But if you're someone for whom Thanksgiving and Christmas present particular relational challenges, there's an important way to prepare for the fray and move onward with Jesus.

It's called a "race to the bottom", and as difficult as it can be, it helps us get unstuck – and stay unstuck (in the holiday season or ANY season).

quote of the week

"Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance."

– 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NLT

In September, I was privileged to officiate the wedding of two friends who chose 1 Corinthians 13, a beautiful and classic wedding passage.

While meditating on the passage and preparing for their ceremony, one word captured my attention: Purpose.

“Purpose” is not the central theme of most marriage ceremonies or holiday celebrations, but it’s a word that perfectly characterizes the true nature of love. In fact, the biblical definition of love (see 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 above) is *packed* with the language of purpose, intention, and will.

I’m curious...Have you ever met anyone who was patient and kind *accidentally*? Of course not. Nobody says, “Y’all please forgive me! I’m not usually this patient and kind!”

Ever met anyone who fought injustice *accidentally*? I highly doubt it. Nobody says, “Please excuse my humble pursuit of justice: I must have woken up on the right side of the bed this morning!”

Godly love, if pursued at all, is pursued intentionally.

God loves us — and he designed us to love one another — with purpose, on purpose.

One great lie told in our contemporary culture is that love is *primarily* something you *feel*. But the great truth of God is that love is something you *do*. On purpose, with purpose.

Before I met my wife, Kerry, I knew a couple who enjoyed a particularly happy and healthy marriage. I asked the husband, *What makes your marriage so good?* His answer surprised and stuck with me: He said, *“It’s a competition. We’re always trying to out-serve one another. Our marriage is a race...to the bottom.”*

20 years later, I’ve learned he’s right: the healthiest, happiest, and longest marriages are marked by service, selflessness, and sacrifice.

This is more than just a life hack, a counselor’s good advice, or a catchy phrase from a random couple you don’t know. And it’s not just for married couples. Loving on purpose, with purpose — the race to the bottom — is the very nature of God, proven in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

You see, Jesus is how God raced to the bottom.

It’s what we celebrate each Christmas and every Easter after it: God raced to the bottom to love us on purpose, with purpose.

And loving one another the way he loved us is the most difficult and most rewarding, most personally humbling and most God-glorifying act we can participate in this Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Maybe the way God wants you to love your difficult family or push through a sad season is to look beyond yourself and love others well.

Maybe it’s...

- A phone call you don’t want to make.
- Making a meal you don’t want to cook.
- Buying a gift you don’t want to buy.
- Arriving earlier and staying later than you really want to.
- Getting creative with how you celebrate so you’re not alone and someone else isn’t either.
- Working hard to say kind things and not say unkind things.
- Planning ahead to listen carefully even when you disagree or are bored with the conversation.

- Praying specifically for those you don't feel like loving, or who you don't feel like they love you.

Maybe it's walking into every holiday scenario with this question [*"How can I love these people on purpose?"*] and this prayer [*"Lord, how can I love like you right now?"*] at the front of your mind.

My great prayer for us this holiday season is two-fold: I pray we have a spectacular Thanksgiving and Christmas that's low on drama and high on joy!

And, I pray that when that's not the case, we'll love others well by racing to the bottom to love on purpose, with purpose.

For his glory, others' good, and our joy.

Happy Thanksgiving, friends. ☺ ☺☺

Onward,

Chris

dad joke of the week

How does a turkey travel?

By gravy train.

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