

# A Rose Among Thorns

## Loving the Women Around You

May 12, 2013

### DAY 1

Topic: Loving the Women Around You

Mother's Day approaches this Sunday. For most of us, there is a mother in our lives. She may be your birth mother, step-mother, mother of your children, or a woman at your work who is a mother. On Mother's Day, men and children go out of their way to make it a special day, as they should. But I often wonder what kind of trade off a mother makes: A special day, and 364 days of what????

My own mother died twelve years ago. The main "mother" in my life is my wife Mindy, the mother of our children. Though I'd like Sunday to be a special day for her, I also hope to use this week and "the day" as a reminder to me of the kind of love a mother could use.

The kind of love that's needed, doesn't come naturally to us men. If I have any hope of loving my wife, the mother of our children well, it's going to *require* a relationship with God, strong enough to overcome my "natural" proclivities of how I think, speak, act and react. For the last thirty-four years, I have been getting an overhaul in God's garage. That's what we'll look at this week. What is love, anyway?

When I was a young man, love was present when there was a strong feeling, a compelling attraction to beauty. "Infatuation" was that feeling, but *you* were not "simply" infatuated. You were in "love." "Infatuation" was what *others* had. You had the real thing!

Thus love was something you "fell into" and could "fall out of." When the feelings diminished you asked yourself, "Am I really in love? Maybe I'm not." If you found yourself strongly attracted to someone else, it caused great confusion and some consternation.

In contrast, the scriptures gives a much fuller and richer view of love. That's what we'll look at this week...

*Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.*

1. To love well means to mimic Someone else who loved exceedingly well. Who are we to emulate?

2. What is the "gold-standard" of love, here in Eph. 5:25?

3. Is it possible that a woman feels loved through *sacrifice* on our part? How does that strike you?

4. What kinds of things might you be called upon to sacrifice in order to love?

## DAY 2

*Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.*

The most prolific flowering bushes we've ever had are bougainvillea and roses. In both our front and back yards, we have deep red bougainvillea and prolific white roses. The explosion of blooms and color doesn't just happen. It takes a lot of effort and work. Some of that work is inconvenient. The results don't show up for many months.

Significant pruning is required in late January. The poor rose bush is cut back to 18" stalks. It looks like nothing can ever grow on them again. As the rose bush rebounds from the drastic pruning, more pruning is needed as some stalks that grow in the wrong direction need to be lopped off! Fertilizer and soil additive are needed. Bugs, "rust," "mold" and a few other rose enemies have to be fought.

But the most "painful" part of gardening roses and bougainvillea is the battle with thorns!!! Forget pruning these bushes with bare hands! You have no chance. I tried gloves made out of cloth. What a joke! ONLY leather gloves will do, and even then you have no guarantee that those strong and sharp thorns won't dig into your flesh.

1. How does this gardening illustration relate to love, in Eph. 5:25?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. When you think of "love" does your mind move more toward how you want to feel and what you'll receive, or how you want her to feel and what you can give her?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Look back at Eph. 5:25. What did Jesus Christ have to give up in order to love?  
What did He have to give up:
  - a. In heaven, in coming to earth?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. From people?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What did it cost Jesus in order to love fallen human beings?
  - a. Reputation?
  - b. Honor?
  - c. Privilege?
  - d. Satisfaction?
  - e. Attention?

### DAY 3

*Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.*

1. Have you ever tried to stuff rose prunings into plastic Glad bags? You poke holes through the plastic bags and your fingers!

2. Have you ever tried to do something for someone and had it "backfire?" Have you experienced the pain of unrequited love? Describe it...

3. Paul gives a second picture of what it means to love a woman.

*Ephesians 5:28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.*

4. What are some ways you care for your own body? Give yourself a grade (A-F) based on how diligent you are with the following:

- \_\_\_ Eating when you are hungry
- \_\_\_ Getting water when you're thirsty
- \_\_\_ Getting sleep when you're tired
- \_\_\_ Getting some entertainment and some "off" time
- \_\_\_ Personal hygiene before you show up for work

5. That is the standard Paul appeals to. You make sure you get all those needs met! How diligent are you with the needs of the woman in your life? What Paul is high-lighting is not the needs I mentioned in the last question. It is to apply the same care, intention and attention to her as you already apply to yourself! What do you need to do to express love, better?

6. What's likely to be exposed is our self-centeredness and a strong measure of irresponsibility. There are times when to love requires pain on your part.

7. What is your takeaway from today's study?

## DAY 4

1. When we get married, we "naturally" think of what we gain. What we are slow to the party about is what we give up. If I am to love well, it will come at a price and sacrifice.

*Matthew 24:12 And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold.*

2. How does Jesus say love grows cold?

3. "Wickedness" simply means, "living for my needs." Knowing that, how does that make you think about whether or not love grows "hot" or "cold?"

4. Earlier in the week we began to consider what Christ gave up in order to love. Let's look at that in a little more depth. Place a checkmark by any of the following you think He had to give up in order to love us?

- Reputation
- Ease
- Become a servant
- Washing the feet of the disciples
- Loss of honor
- Attention to His needs
- Approval
- Loss of appreciation and praise
- Experience of rejection
- Being misunderstood
- Taken advantage of...

4. Which of these do you relate to?

5. How is God forming the character of Christ in you?

## DAY 5

Neil Young wrote a song years ago with the following lyrics...

*Love is a rose but you better not pick it,  
Only grows when it's on the vine  
Handful of thorns and you know you've missed it  
Lose your love when you say the word, "Mine."*

- Neil Young

1. Though we don't study Neil Young like we do the bible (understatement!!!), verse one of his song makes a similar point to the scripture we've looked at this week. There is one kind of rose you give your wife or mother on Mother's Day.

But in his song, picking a rose for your own benefit does something to the rose? What happens to a picked rose?

2. What happens if the rose bud is allowed to stay on the vine?

3. What does Young say happens to love when you make it about you, when you say, "Mine?"

4. If you're going to say, "Mine!" let it be for things like:

\_\_\_ My responsibility

\_\_\_ My service

\_\_\_ My sacrifice

\_\_\_ My extension of forgiveness or grace

\_\_\_ My love to demonstrate

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is your biggest take away from the week? What does it mean to "love?"