

How to Have Excellent Relationships

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

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So I hit the scan button, and it came to a song. I said, "Hey, that kind of sounds like something from the 1980s." But I didn't know the song, so I paused and listened. Then I asked, "Who is this? How is it possible that I, a child of the '80s, do not know this song?"

I kept listening, and there was this line she kept singing: "*Heartbreak is the national anthem.*" I thought, *This has got to be a 1980s song.* So finally, I listened to the end, and the DJ said, "That was [whatever it was called] from Taylor Swift."

I said, "Wow." I looked it up and found out that on that album, she was intentionally trying to sound like a singer from the 1980s. I thought, *Well done, Miss Swift.* I still won't listen to you much, but that does sound like a 1980s song.

When you think about pop music—which is what she would probably be classified as—it always seems to follow the same patterns. A lot of times, two themes stand out: falling in love and the breakup of a romance. This pattern goes all the way back to the early days of rock and roll.

Think about Elvis. There were songs like *Who Wrote the Book of Love?*—chapter four, you break up and then give it just one more chance. Then you've got *Heartbreak Hotel*. Moving into the '70s, Elvis sang *We Can't Go On Together with Suspicious Minds*. By the time you get to the '80s, you've got *Take These Broken Wings and Learn to Fly Again*. Now, don't worry, I'm not going to sing it—that's as close as I'll get to singing in front of you guys!

When you think about it, pop music strikes a nerve. We all know the feeling of falling in love, but we also know the pain of *Heartbreak Hotel*. So maybe heartbreak really is the national anthem.

But it's not just about romance. There was a song that came out in the 1990s that my friend Rich really liked. I thought it was just okay. It was called *The End of the Innocence*. The reason it didn't resonate with me was that I grew up in what I like to call a *Leave It to Beaver* house—just with a little more yelling. My dad was a blue-collar guy, not a suit-wearer. Life at the Kitanoya house was pretty happy.

But that song really resonated with Rich. As I've gotten older, I've looked back and understood why. There's a line in the song that says, *Lawyers clean up all details since Daddy had to lie.*

Wow. That's heartbreak.

And when you look at what's going on in music, I think the reason pop songs always hit on these themes—the double drumbeat of love and the breakdown of love—is because heartbreak is something we all experience.

So much of the quality of our lives depends on the health of our relationships. Excellent relationships are the key to joy in so many areas of life. But unfortunately, heartbreak is the national anthem, and we've all spent time in *Heartbreak Hotel*—whether romantically, through friendships that break down, or in other ways.

Another song I'm pretty sure is from Taylor Swift kept talking about *bad blood*. I think that's about friends who aren't really friends. Girls, is that what it's about? Don't put me on the spot—I don't know! But that sounds like relationship problems to me.

There's an old joke that if you play a country song backward, you get your dog back and your truck back. So what would happen if you played a Taylor Swift album in reverse? Would everything suddenly be fine again?

Excellent relationships are the key, but unfortunately, so often, we don't know how to have excellent relationships. So how do we fix this? What is the key to quality relationships? What must we do?

Wouldn't it be nice if God, the God of the universe, actually gave us instructions about how to love effectively? Well, as it turns out, He does!

Go ahead and turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 13. While you're turning there, let me set the stage for you.

Here's what's going on: the Corinthian church is something like Paul's problem child. He went there, and at first, things started out amazingly. But after he left, all kinds of problems arose.

Here's how they talk about Paul: they say he's too short, he's not good-looking, and he's not a good preacher. That's a tough thing for a pastor, just so you know! On top of that, they've got all kinds of spiritual, emotional, and relational problems in their church.

And here's what happens—just like in any church, the tendencies of the city and community around them don't just stay outside the church walls. They come right inside. Sometimes for better, sometimes for worse. And Corinth had a lot of that going on.

Corinth was a wealthy, coastal city, which meant a lot of trade happened there. Travelers passed through constantly, bringing with them all kinds of ideas about how life was supposed to work. And the people of Corinth? They were very excited about their money and their sports.

They even had a 20,000-person coliseum in the city. Now granted, we have bigger stadiums today. If you've ever been to Gainbridge Fieldhouse, that's about 22,000 seats—that's massive! In fact, when I first took the kids to the Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse in Cleveland, which is about the same size, they were actually scared of it because it was so big.

In Corinth, they had a stadium the same size as a modern arena, where they held Olympic-style games. So they had sports, they had money, they had drinking parties, and they had a lot of

promiscuity. And all of those things didn't stay outside the walls of the church—they came into the Corinthian church with the people.

One other thing that came with them, along with all this high-society wealth, was a desire to *one-up* each other. This attitude of competition made its way into the church, and here's how it expressed itself:

The Corinthians were particularly impressed with one spiritual gift—the gift of speaking in tongues.

You might ask, “What in the world is that?” Well, in the early days of the church—and in some cases even today—God miraculously gave people the ability to speak in a language they had never learned before. That's incredibly helpful when you're trying to evangelize people who speak different languages.

The Corinthians saw this gift and thought, *That is impressive*. So they became obsessed with it. They would come to church, and everyone would try to speak in tongues, competing with one another. That's what was happening.

Paul saw what was going on, so he wrote this letter. In chapter 12, he says, “Alright, you guys are really confused about this.” He goes on to explain how spiritual gifts are meant to serve one another in the church. There are many spiritual gifts, and speaking in tongues is just one of them. The purpose of these gifts is to build up the church. He lays out how to use them the right way—and how *not* to use them.

Then, at the end of chapter 12, he says, *But now I'm going to show you a more excellent way*. That brings us to chapter 13, where he begins to talk about *true love*—because true love is necessary for healthy relationships, particularly in the church, but also in every aspect of life.

Let's take a look at verses 1 through 3. We're going to read them, and I'll pause to comment as we go.

Paul writes: *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*

He's saying, *Look, even if I have this miraculous ability to speak a language I never learned, or even if Heaven itself shows up and an angel teaches me the language of angels—if I go around speaking these languages in church, but my motivation isn't love, then I'm just a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*

Oh sure, I'll get attention. If someone walked in here with two cymbals and started crashing them together—like if your kids got some for Christmas and started smashing them—that would definitely get attention. But it wouldn't be helpful. It would be *annoying*. And most importantly, no one would be built up.

The idea he's getting across is, *Hey, guess what?* If I'm doing— I don't care if I teach Sunday school, preach a Sunday school lesson, lead worship, change diapers in the nursery, or if Larry's out there cooking food—if we are doing what we do without a motivation of love, we are a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

Verse 2: *And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.*

What is he saying here? Well, it's a really cool way of saying prophecy. Prophecy is the ability to tell history before it happens. So I have this amazing ability—*Look at me! I can tell history before it actually happens!* And he's assuming that people are actually able to do this, by the way.

If I am doing that, but it's not motivated by a love for the people, I am nothing. If I preach a sermon—this hit me this morning—I said, *If I'm preaching to Calvary Baptist Church, and I don't love these people, and I don't love God, and I just want to stand up here*, I am nothing. Noisy gong. Clanging cymbal.

You think that could happen in a marriage? Could you imagine?

By the way, it's really good to do things out of duty. Duty has taken it on the chin lately. But if you do what you're supposed to do, even when you're not feeling it, because you think, *This is my duty—I made these vows*, I'd take that over not doing it. But it's probably not very profitable.

But what if you were doing something to serve your spouse, serve your kids, but you're like, *My heart's not in this?*

You know what it feels like to serve and get nothing out of it. Then you know what it feels like to do something and be nothing. That's what Paul's talking about. He's saying if you're serving and you're not motivated by love, it's nothing. It's obnoxious.

Verse 3: *If I gave away all that I have—meaning, like, to give it away, he's talking about giving to the poor—and if I deliver my body to be burned as a martyr, but have not love, I am nothing.*

See, true love ensures that we truly serve others. Love ensures that serving is really about meeting the needs of other people, not just looking good or feeling important.

The Corinthians were showing up and doing all these dramatic things. It was attention-getting. I mean, if somebody came in here and rattled off Dutch, and you knew they didn't know the language of the Dutch people, that would get our attention. That's what they were doing, and it was not motivated by love.

See, true love ensures that serving is really about the needs of other people. Service is good, but without love, it is really about how we look more than it is about helping other people.

Love is necessary for excellent relationships because it keeps us focused on meeting the needs of other people. A few years ago... It's been over a decade now. In one of my doctoral classes, we had this very nerdy, kind of heady discussion. When you're doing doctoral theology, what you end up doing a lot of times is reading philosophers, then reading the Bible, and asking, *What's this guy saying? How does the Bible respond to this?*

One of the philosophers we had the unfortunate pain of encountering was a guy named Jacques Derrida. He was a French philosopher and one of the primary architects of a philosophy called postmodernism—which, I'm glad to report, seems to be dying off because we realized it didn't work.

The reason it didn't work wasn't a design flaw—it was *intentional*. It had an acid in it that was *meant* to dissolve relationships. Here's one of the acids: Derrida said that *nobody does anything benevolently*.

So, if you gave money to charity, it wasn't *really* benevolence. If you helped out a person on the street, it wasn't *really* because you wanted to help them. According to Derrida, it was because you wanted to feel good about yourself, make your society better, and maybe just scratch a back so yours would get scratched in return.

Now, pause for a second.

You know what? If I'm hungry and somebody gives me some money or some food, at the end of the day, I'm just happy to be fed. That whole, "*Oh, he's just doing it selfishly*" argument? Sounds like a *you* problem, not *mine*, right?

But what if you went around thinking that *anytime* anybody does something good and kind, they're not *really* loving—they're just being selfish? What would that do to a marriage?

Now, you might say, "*Is this just theoretical nerd stuff?*"

I've got news for you.

There are marriages in *our* community, in *recent years*, that I am aware of that broke apart because the wife said, "*You're not doing enough for me. It's about me. You do you for you, I do me for me.*" And guess what? When her husband wasn't *making her happy* anymore, she wanted more.

Women embraced this philosophy. And it *isn't just women*.

And guess what? So this *nerd stuff*—occasionally I give you nerd stuff—here's where it actually matters. You ready?

They were *teaching this* to *your* college kids.

Do you think this stuff is *irrelevant*?

So then the question is, *What is the Christian response?*

You ready?

Serve others for *the good of others*.

That's what *real* love is.

Yes, you may get your back scratched. You may have a better church because of it. Your marriage and family may be better because of it. But you know what? If that motivates me, and if it motivates *someone* to be loving in their relationships and selfless, *that's a good thing*.

So why would you say otherwise?

Nobody ever asks *this* in the academic world.

I don't know why I'm in academia today, but here it goes.

Nobody was ever asking, *Is this a good thing to teach?* It was always, *Is this philosopher smart?* But the real question should have been, *Is this helpful to the human race?*

Teaching people that serving others is *really* selfish—well, that's turning beauty and truth on its head, isn't it? What would that do to a culture? Would we tear each other apart all the time?

For, I don't know, almost a *decade*, if we thought that we should just be out to get what's ours all the time, and we weren't really concerned about loving each other—and even when somebody *said* they loved you, you knew they didn't *really* mean it—what would that do to relationship bonds?

What would that do to a culture, a marriage, a family?

I can tell you—when you watch people burning cities down, that was the result of the acid destroying love.

But what should the church's response be?

If I do all kinds of things and it's not motivated by love, I am a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal.

Serve others out of a desire to meet *their* need—whether you get something back out of it or not. Sometimes people give and serve because they want to *look good*. Yeah, it stinks when they do that. But you know what? It's still better than *not* serving.

But better yet—let's serve simply for the desire to meet others' needs. That's what the Bible is calling us to do. Because that's what *God* does.

That's what God does.

Real love—*true* love—helps us focus on others’ needs instead of our own.

And then we get to **verses 4–7**—the second principle: *True love prioritizes the needs and feelings of others.*

Verses 4–7: *Love is patient and kind.*

In other words, despite difficulty, love makes us remain on friendly terms.

It does not envy or boast, because love is concerned about others more than self. It’s not going to be envious of their success.

You got accepted into Harvard? (I think that’s still good—I don’t know anymore.) You got accepted into a *good* college? We should be happy for you, *not* jealous of your success.

That’s what true love does. It’s not envious, and it’s not boastful.

It is not arrogant or rude, because true love also involves a humble self-assessment. So it’s not rude or arrogant.

It does not insist on its own way.

In other words, because love is humble, it is not demanding.

It is not irritable or resentful, because love is forgiving.

And as a person, sometimes *I* get irritable. And when I realize I’m doing this, you know what I have to do? Because I *love*, I have to start walking it back.

That’s what love does.

When love realizes it has messed up, it immediately starts repenting.

When you realize, *I’m irritable, and I shouldn’t be*, you back up.

That’s repenting.

You change your behavior because you *want* to be loving.

Verse 6: *It does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth.*

True love will not allow us to embrace and endorse wrongdoing.

Verse 7: *Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

It doesn’t have a suspicious mind about somebody else’s motives.

That phrase—*hopes all things*—is something I have wrestled with for years. I think the best answer I've seen is this: When it says *love hopes all things*, it means love doesn't look at somebody in all their mess and mistakes and say, *That's a hopeless case. There's no hope for them.*

True love says there is *always* hope for somebody. As long as they are alive on this planet, there is still hope for them.

Endures all things—it doesn't just quit on people.

Church, aren't you glad that God doesn't just quit on us? Because if He did, He would have quit on me a long time ago.

If you've been to a wedding at a church, there's a very good chance you've heard these verses—**verses 4 to 7**—read. And the reason is that they truly show what is necessary for a healthy marriage.

But I want you to catch this.

We can apply this passage in the context of marriage—*love is patient, love is kind*—but the original context was a church that was *not* healthy.

So, yes, you can apply this in a marriage. But you can also apply it to your relationship with your parents. If you have parents you're not getting along with, maybe you need to learn to be patient and kind with them.

What about at work? Got co-workers that drive you nuts?

Hey, listen—one of the things about being a Christian is that most of our Christian life is *not* lived inside the walls of this building.

We go to work with co-workers who are not always godly, not always kind, not always righteous. And when we *choose* to act lovingly anyway—because we know Christ—that starts to make the gospel of Christ *beautiful*.

See, when we love, we won't just be concerned about ourselves.

Love makes meeting the needs and feelings of others a *priority*—and then it gets to work.

True love is a *choice*, not a feeling. But that choice leads to action.

When I was translating the Greek text, I realized something—these are *all* verbs.

When the passage talks about love, it's *not* really talking about a feeling.

So, apparently, *Boston* was right—*love is more than a feeling*.

It's all verbs.

Love *does* this. Love *does not* do that. Love *gets to work*.

It forgives. It keeps no record of wrongs.

Because love is always concerned *not just* with itself, but with the needs of others.

This is the glue that holds people together.

So if you and I want to experience the joy of excellent relationships, then we must *choose* to prioritize the needs and feelings of others.

We naturally tend to put ourselves first. But if we start to learn to prioritize the concerns, needs, and feelings of others, that's going to be the glue that holds people together—not only in a church, but in a marriage, a workplace, and dare I say, a civilization.

True love is excellent because it holds people together. It's a glue that builds bonds, not an acid that destroys them. True love endures even after meaningful service ceases.

Look at **verses 8 through 13**: *Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues—this gift you guys in Corinth are so excited about—they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part.*

You've got real knowledge, but it's partial. *But when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.*

So what he's saying is, *Look, you're speaking in tongues, and you're very excited about it. That's a real thing. It's really ministering to people. But guess what? That is not eternal. Something else is.*

He says, *When the perfect comes, those things are going to pass away.*

The perfect, I've got to tell you, is the return of Jesus Christ. It's the return of Jesus Christ.

Here's a little thing for you: One of the things that most Christians are not even aware of—because we're kind of like, *Are we sure that the biblical values we embrace and try to live out are really good?*—is that the arrival of Jesus Christ on the scene, because God the Father loved us, has changed the world for the better.

Most Christian scholars don't actually take the time to study that out.

One of the more interesting things recently, about five or ten years ago, was a book written by an atheist—a non-believer—called *Dominion*.

And what he argues in the book, even though he doesn't believe in Jesus, is that the arrival of Jesus Christ has changed the world for the better.

All of a sudden, because Jesus Christ died on the cross for unwanted people, they started to realize, *You know what? These children that are just abandoned in the streets—the church says, “Jesus died for them. He loves them. They’re valuable.”*

So they started adopting children. They started creating hospitals. They started teaching people who couldn't read because they said, *You know what? They need to know how to read God's Word. Then they'll know who God is and how much Jesus loves them.*

As we read this, we see that things are improving. But guess what? It's not perfect yet.

So what he's saying is that there's a transition taking place. Things are improving. But when the perfect comes—which is when Jesus returns—when that happens, the spiritual gifts like speaking in tongues and prophecy are all going to go away. There will be no need for them. But something else will remain.

Let's continue from **verse 11**:

"When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child."

And you Corinthians are doing just that.

"But when I became a man, I gave up childish things. For now, we see in a mirror dimly—we see truth about God, it's true, but not complete. But then, when the perfect comes, face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known."

As Christians, we *know* God. But He *knows* us perfectly. And the day will come when we will see Him face to face, and we will *know* Him perfectly.

What he's arguing is that the spiritual gifts they are so impressed with will come to an end. But God's plan for the human race is developing *as a child develops*. And it develops into maturity.

But since spiritual gifts are going to end, he concludes the thought in **verse 13**:

"So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three. But the greatest of these is love."

These things—faith, hope, and love—are what scholars call *the great Christian virtues*. Of these, love is the greatest.

What he's saying here is that *love endures even after meaningful service ceases*.

Even after meaningful service ceases.

What do we mean by *meaningful service*?

Sometimes, when we serve each other, there's a sense in which people respond in a way that blesses us. But one of the things I've seen—and I'm going to give you two examples—are situations in real life where *love* causes us to keep serving, even when the response of gratitude is long gone.

Two things.

Number one: The Bible has this amazing way of portraying truth that the human mind struggles to understand. One of the things God does—Jesus does this, Paul does this, it's all over the Bible—is He uses illustrations from the real world that people *already* know well.

One of the things the Bible uses to talk about Jesus' love for the church is *marriage*.

Marriage.

Marriage is a *covenant relationship*. And what he's saying is, *Hey men, the way that Jesus loved His bride—where He sacrificed Himself to meet her needs—that's how you should love your church*.

That was *radical*, by the way, because men were *not* doing that. Not even close.

And then he says, *Hey ladies, the way the church respects Jesus and submits to Him—you do the same*.

Now, some people flip out over that.

Can I just say—if you have a husband who is *literally sacrificing himself* to meet your needs, it's probably pretty easy to submit to him. She's like, *I'm submitting to the one who is giving his life to take care of me*.

So then we have this reality—how does this play out in real time?

I've seen this now as a pastor. Sometimes, as couples who have been married together for decades go through life, when she has a problem, he rises up and goes to work to fix it.

One of the things that sometimes drives women crazy is that men have a desire to *fix* what's broken. And for decades, they do this.

One thing I see with my own bride—when she is not feeling well, she *still* somehow rallies her strength to take care of others, particularly her children and her husband.

But sometimes, after decades together, here's what happens: He gets to the point where he's no longer physically able to rally himself to rise up and fix her problems. And she can't rally her strength to rise up and take care of him.

But you know what? They *still* have love.

He can't fix what's broken. She can't fix it for him.

But they still have love.

That is a *beautiful* picture, in my mind, of an *enduring* love that continues *even after meaningful service ceases*.

All they've got is each other in that bond of *covenant marriage*.

Some of you guys—maybe you've not lived there yet. But maybe you've seen it, where a child is now taking care of an aging parent.

Sometimes it's stressful.

Sometimes that parent doesn't even know how to say *thanks* anymore.

In fact, there are times when that parent doesn't even *recognize* the kid.

But that kid keeps showing up.

They keep getting their nose chewed off. But they keep showing up.

Why?

Because *true love endures*.

And this is what the Bible is calling us to do—to keep *loving* and *serving* others.

Because this is what *heaven* looks like.

Even when you're not getting something out of it.

There's a great leadership expert named John Maxwell. He talks about being the guy that adds *value* to people.

But you know what love does?

It keeps *serving*, even when the other person adds *no value* to you.

And husbands and wives who have been together for *decades* know *exactly* what that looks like.

At the end—when they can't rally to fix or rally to take care of the other.

Or when you're an adult child taking care of your parent as they approach heaven.

You *know* what that looks like.

It's painful.

But it is a *beautiful* thing to behold.

You *can't* buy that.

You *can't* buy that.

But this is what we're *called* to do.

Still, when we think about this—listen—these are the great Christian virtues.

Love is the most excellent way.

But a lot of times when we hear about this, we're *still* going to struggle with motivation.

Because we're *human*. Right, so what do we do when it's hard to love? Where, as Christians, do we get the motivation to love when it seems like there is no payoff for it?

Well, we've got a few answers in the Bible.

In **1 John 4**, the first thing we see is that one of the things that motivates us to love is that we *know* God's character.

1 John 4:7-8 says:

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God."

Born of God means you're born of Him, and you *know* Him. So, let us love one another because we know God. His example sets the standard. His character has *changed* us.

Verse 8:

"Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love."

So, the first motivation is this: *God is love, and He loves us.*

And get this—He loved us *even when we were unlovable.*

1 John 4:19 continues this example of love:

"We love because He first loved us."

When did Jesus first love us? When did God send His Son?

The Bible says, "*For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life.*"

That love was *an unrequited love*.

The human race was *not* saying, "*We love God.*" It was more like, "*We're going to make sacrifices so that maybe God will make our barns full.*"

And then *this* God—the real God—sends Jesus and says, "*Listen, you are separated from Me by sin.*"

And guess what? God sends the rain on *both* the just and the unjust. The worst person you know? His crops grow too. That's not how *God* works.

He sends His Son, Jesus.

"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

So we love because He *first* loved us.

We have this *gratitude*. We have an *example to follow*.

1 Corinthians 11:1—one of the things you ask when you study the Bible is, *Is there an example for us to follow?*

Paul says, "*Be imitators of me, as I follow Christ.*"

Paul had this church in Corinth, and let me tell you, it was *a hard nut to crack*.

They didn't seem to like him. They didn't respect him.

He wasn't good-looking, he was too short, and he wasn't the best preacher they had ever heard.

And yet, he *kept loving them*.

He didn't just wash his hands of them and say, "*You know what? I'll just go to Philippi. Those people love me. They think I'm the greatest thing since sliced bread. I'll just go there.*"

But he *didn't* do that.

He wrote *four* letters.

Four letters.

And that was a *big deal*—because paper *wasn't* cheap back then.

But he still wrote *four letters* to the church in Corinth. We've got two of them available still. He doesn't give up on them. *Imitate me as I imitate Christ.*

So we have an *example* to follow.

We have the *motivation* of God's love for us.

We *know* God's character.

But then, here's another reason we love even when we're not getting anything out of it—because it *portrays the beauty of the Gospel.*

Romans 5:8 says:

"But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

He wasn't getting anything out of this.

The love of Christ *reconciles* us to God the Father.

See, we have this amazing truth—that while we were yet sinners, separated from God, the reality of sin is that because we did it *our way*, it led to *brokenness*.

And that separation—that is because we are separated from God.

When we do things *our way* instead of *God's*, it's called *sin*, and it leads to brokenness and pain.

But God sent His Son, Jesus, to *reconcile us* to the Father.

Why is it that we know that *heartbreak is the national anthem*?

Why is it that we all, eventually, *understand* heartbreak—even if it's not romantic?

We *know* heartbreak.

It goes all the way back to **Genesis 3**.

Here's what happened:

The first couple, Adam and Eve—the loving God of the universe graciously *creates* them. He says, *"Enjoy each other. Enjoy all the food. Just don't eat from this one tree. Go have dominion over the earth."*

Well, as you know, they don't obey God.

They *choose* to do what they want instead of what God said.

And immediately—here's the *break*. Here's the *chain of consequences*:

1. The relationship between the human race and God is severed. There's now *bad blood*.
2. Adam and Eve turn on *each other*—"It's that woman You gave me!"
3. Their first children—one rises up and *kills* the other out of jealousy.

Then you start tracing it out.

There are long sections of history where the Bible doesn't say much, but by the time you get to *Noah's flood*, the Bible describes the human race like this:

"Every thought of man's heart was only evil continually."

And so come *wars*.

Rumors of war.

Rape.

Racism.

Theft.

Hatred.

Corruption.

You name it.

See, *heartbreak isn't just the national anthem—it's the universal anthem*—since the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve.

So here's what God does.

He sends His only begotten Son.

Jesus lives the sinless life *we* were supposed to live.

And what happens?

He's *arrested*.

He's *put on trial*.

And while He's dying—*naked, alone, and separated from all of His friends*—God is doing a *miracle*.

He's *pouring all of our sins* on Jesus.

And as He's dying, His death is *paying* for our sins.

Now, here's the thing.

If He had *just* died, it would be a sad story that we *hope* is true.

But since He *rose from the dead*, and was seen by **500 people alive on the same day**, we *know* that it is true.

That *sin* that separates us from God. It leads to brokenness—broken hearts, broken homes, broken governments, broken civilizations, broken emotions.

And all of our attempts to solve the brokenness usually just lead to *more* brokenness.

But what He's doing with the pain is real.

What God is doing with the pain is *He's trying to get your attention so you'll turn*.

Because the truth is—*redemption does not lie within*.

What God wants us to do is to turn from our pursuit of sin and turn to *Jesus Christ* for the solution.

And when we come to Jesus in *faith*, understanding that He *died* on the cross for our sins and *rose again*, that belief—that trust—*reconciles us to God*.

And then here's what happens.

Jesus—the one who said, "*Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden*"—He *heals* broken hearts.

And then, as He starts to work inside you and me—because *we* are a mess—He starts to *change* us and *refashion* us.

And then, with the relationships that we have a tendency to *break down and destroy*, He starts teaching us:

"Here's how you love other people."

"Here's how you show grace when people offend you."

"Here's how you have peace, even when it's hard."

And now, all of a sudden, your world starts to be *repackaged and repurposed*.

But even if love is *not* responded to kindly, you *still* know you are pleasing your Heavenly Father.

And *that* carries you through.

See, this salvation we're talking about—it begins with *God's love* for His wayward children.

When we come to Him by faith, we are *reconciled*.

We are *reconciled*.

The reason heartbreak is the national anthem is *because of sin*—in our relationships, in our systems, and in ourselves.

Come to Jesus for salvation this morning.

As our praise team comes for our final song, I'm going to be at the front. If anybody wants to pray with a Christian, if you want to pray over a relationship or something else, I'd love to pray with you.

Or perhaps, if you want to come to Jesus for salvation, I'd love to pray with you.

The Bible says, "*Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*"

And if you'd like to do that this morning, I invite you—come and join me.

I'd love to pray with you.

Please stand for a song of invitation.

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