



I Want to Know What Love Is Part 8 – Love is not Self-Seeking

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Boy, getting old is not for cowards. You know you've got five ages. You've got your young and your old and then your "Joe, you're looking good." That started a few years ago. When people start telling you you're looking good, you know you're just about over the hill.

I was traveling recently to Houston to do an event and I found out there is another age beyond "you're looking good." I was in the plane, it was about 8:00 am, and I was feeling lucid; I was feeling okay. I'm not the youngest thing ever, but I felt okay. The flight attendant walks down the aisle and he looks at me and he says, "Sir, are you okay?"

Hey, older dudes, have you ever had anybody ask you if your okay? You thought you were okay, but apparently, you're not okay. Then another guy... There were a couple of them on the flight, working the aisle. The other guy comes by... I mean do I look okay? I don't walk very good, but am I okay? Okay, well thank you for that information. The other guy comes by and goes, "Sir, are you okay?" Now I know I'm not okay because two guys asked me if I'm okay. Then, so help me, I walked out into the wherever you go down the halls and stuff. Another flight operator says, "Sir, can I get you a wheelchair?" So, I guess I'm there now.

I've got some issues down here with my foot. It's getting a little dicey down there. I went to see my Branson doctor friends and they are incredible. Our town has the best doctors in the world. I just love all of them; they are just great men and women. My wife wanted to get a second opinion from a specialist, so I went to another town. I can't tell you which one; it is up there north. This doctor, who I'd never met before and I'll never go back again, starts looking at my information on the computer screen.

He said, "Why you come to me?"

I go, "I don't know. I heard you were a good doctor."

He says, "You got gangrene; we chop off toe. You got gangrene; we chop off toe. But you got no blood on toe; we chop off foot. But you got no blood on foot; we chop off leg." Y'all, I am not exaggerating. That's exactly what he said to me. "We chop off leg."

I went home to Debbie Jo and said, "Baby, it ain't gonna be long their going to be... you know." Life is a hoot isn't it.

Ted calls and he's like, "Hey, will you come talk about the love chapter."

Immediately, it hits me that... I go, "Ted I flunk all of those. Love is patient, love is kind... I cannot speak on that subject. I'm not good at any of that."

This is a true story. As soon as I hung up and told him I couldn't do it because I'm not good at all that stuff, I walked to the freezer and I saw this Toppin's French Silk Pie that had been sitting in my freezer for four months. And I go, "I could do one. I have avoided this crack cocaine experience for four months, I can do love does not seek its own way. Ted, sign me up." Y'all, this pie is crack. Anybody know what I'm talking about? If I had a bite of this thing... The reason I never touch it is because if I take a bite, I could eat the whole thing, easy. Anybody else in this church understand this is crack cocaine. Love does not seek its own way.

So, Paul was having trouble with the churches and they're all acting crazy and they can't get along, so he writes this chapter and probably the most beloved chapter in all of scripture. What he's trying to do is duct tape the church together because the church is all broken apart and the families are broken apart. Paul is attempting to duct tape the church together.

He said, ***1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*** Any marriages know what I'm talking about? Marriages, anybody needing duct tape? ***2 If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.*** ***3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.***

4 Love is patient... Woodland Hills, do we need some duct tape? ***...love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,*** ***5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,*** ***6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;*** ***7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*** ***8 Love never fails...*** It duct tapes business together. It duct tapes any relationship together. ***...but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.*** ***9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part;*** ***10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.***

11 When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. ***12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.*** ***13 But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.*** 1 Corinthians 13

I think, for me, it's the greatest scene in the Bible, except for the crucifixion and the manger scene. There are a lot of favorite places. When Jesus gets surrounded by the lawyers of the day... And the lawyers were always trying trap him. I love the way our Savior responds to people that try to trap him. Oh, my goodness, not only was he glib and interesting and sometimes very humorous, but he definitely had all wisdom and all knowledge.

They said, "Hey, what's the greatest commandment?" Immediately, Jesus responds, "***The foremost is, 'Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord... I could just see Jesus pinning the lawyers to the wall. 30 ...and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.***" Mark 12: 29-31

Yes, Travis, for 92 years, Kanakuk has had a motto called "I'm Third." This is the great commandment. God first, others second, and I'm Third. God first. Why? Because he is. Because he spoke and the cosmos came out of his mind. That's not bad. One hundred billion galaxies came out of his mind when he thought about the cosmos. Perfectly ordered, perfectly synchronized so that life could exist on little Planet Earth so he could become a dad. God first.

And Jesus says **love him with all your heart**. The Greek said, your heart would be your cardio, the volitional center where life makes up it's mind. Gary Smalley used to say, "Love is a decision" and that is so true in marriage and it's so true in our relationship with Christ. I love God with my heart because volitionally, I have decided that without a doubt there is nobody else that can match up to loving God with all your heart.

And he says **love him with all your soul**. "They chop off toe, they chop off foot, they chop off leg," but they cannot chop off your soul. You've still got that thing. Your soul is where God is your Dad. Your soul is where you understand he's your father. That's where butterflies come from when you hold hands with your wife and pray at night before your go to bed at age 70. That comes out of your soul; it's who you are.

And you **love him with your mind** because, men, your mind is where you keep your purity. You love him with your mind because you don't let anything impure come into your eyes. You love him with your mind because you don't want anything impure to come into your ears or out of your mouth. You love him with your mind; that's where you think.

And then you **love him with all your strength**. Men, that's why the Bible says your body is a temple – the Holy Spirit. That's why you don't put substances into your body because that's where Jesus lives. Ladies, I get to watch this in my bride. You talk about an I'm Third person. I have been married to I'm Third for 46 ½ years. That lady wakes up to love God and love others. You ought to watch her. We've got a hero in my house and it ain't me. I'll tell you what; it's her. The grand kids adore her. The children adore their mom and now, in their 40s, they want to be like her. And that's because she made the decision a long time ago – when she was a little 15-year-old girl without a dad and with a very disturbed home – that she was going to put God first, others second, and I'm Third.

Kanakuk adopted a hero years ago. His name was Johnny Ferrier. Johnny Ferrier was a nine-year-old from Greeley, Colorado, who came to camp. In those days he was actually from Tulsa. Johnny came to camp as a nine-year-old kid. The director in those days was named Uncle Bill. He wasn't our uncle, but we all called him Uncle Bill. He was a fantastic Kanakuk director. Uncle Bill was super inspirational.

One Sunday morning, Uncle Bill held up this little card just like this. As a nine-year-old, Johnny was listening, and it made sense to him. Johnny decided he was going to take that card and keep it. In fact, he kept it until the day he died.

Johnny became a counselor at our camp because the I'm Third kids who grow up get to be counselors – the best of the best, who put God first, others second, and I'm Third. Johnny was one of those. He played running back at Colorado State. He was a fantastic athlete. He graduated from college and he joined the Airforce. They gave him the F86 Sabre Jet, the finest jet in the world in those days. We were fighting Korea, trying to preserve freedom for that little country in that part of the world. Our men and women were fighting with incredible bravery for people they had never met before because they thought freedom was that important. They were giving their lives by the thousands.

Johnny had a habit, as the pilot of this F86. When he would go in to do the work and try to push the communists back to the north, when his buddies would get shot down, they would parachute out and Johnny and his friends would be ordered back to the base. Johnny had a reputation that he would stay in and fight, often times taking anti-aircraft fire into his plane. He would fight until the helicopters came into rescue his buddies so they wouldn't get captured and taken to POW camps. He was I'm third all the way, man. They would say that often times Johnny's plane would come limping into base after he'd taken on fire. He'd stay in to save his friends from becoming captured.

Somehow, Johnny got through the war and joined the F86 Sabre Jet precision team called The Minute Men. The Minute Men were the Thunderbirds of that day. If you've seen them, they are stunning. Johnny had three friends that he flew with and they did airshows around the nation, showing off the new jets to the world.

On one particular day, they were doing the National Air Races at the Wright Patterson Airforce Base in Dayton, Ohio. One hundred thousand people had gathered to see The Minute Men. In the middle of the show, they have a signature movement called The Fleur-de-lis. Johnny and his team would come racing up top of the crowd, treetop level, just under the speed of sound. And all at once, smoke would begin to come out of the back of the planes and they would turn up their afterburners and head straight up into the sky, wing tip to wing tip. Then at 7,000 feet, Johnny's plane would take the screaming right turn. His buddy (inaudible) would take a screaming left turn. The other two planes would continue the design, leaving this beautiful, flowery cross in middle of the sky called The Fleur-de-lis.

Then the Denver Post wrote in the article the next day said, "All of the sudden, the morning of beauty turned in a morning of horror." One of the planes was out of control. Johnny's rudder had stuck in the turn. He plane began to dive out of control for a little bitty suburb outside of Dayton called Fairborn, Ohio. As the plane began to dive, his commander on the other end of the maneuver called out three times for Johnny to bail out. All Johnny had to do was push the eject button and he was out, parachuting down to safety, and back home with his lovely wife and his three children – we raised a fabulous Kanakuk family. All he had to do was push the button. But instead of pushing the bail out button, he pushed the smoke button. And he tells his commander, "I acknowledge the command, sir. I honor you as my commander. But I am not going to let this plane crash into those houses and kill the innocent people below."

The lady who was interviewed the next day had been in a little house with her son, looking out the window of her living room, watching Johnny's plane flying directly toward her house. She said, "As Johnny came close to my house, it's like we were looking at each other eyeball to eye. All of the sudden, he pulled it up and he placed it there." She pointed to a gaping smoky hole in her backyard in the garden, which was the only place in that community that Johnny could have placed the plane without killing anyone, except of course one Captain John T. Ferrier, who gave his life. And he did it because he had a hero who had given his life on a cross. I know Johnny's family to know their daddy well that he believed that if his Savior could do, so could he.

Little wife Tulie got his billfold out of his civilian gear. When he changed out of his civilian gear to put on his flight gear, he left his billfold in the locker room. She opened it up and she found his little card that he had gotten as a nine-year-old kid. She said he carried that card his whole life. She said he lived it every day of his life, certainly to the very end.

Men and women, I know I'm Third works because I watched my dad love my mom until he gave his last breath. I watched my dad, men, honor that woman for 66 years, through World War Two, through the death of a child, through disease, through poverty, through all sorts of difficult things they went through. I never heard my dad criticize my mom one time. My daddy had a habit of writing mommy love notes. Every day, before he would go to work... My daddy was helplessly in love with my mom. Y'all, I don't know if this is appropriate or not, but when daddy was 83, he gave a little sermon in our camp. My mom's name was Darnell. He said, "I'll tell you about Darnell, boys. Darnell's got the pretties legs of any girl I've ever seen in my life." He's 83 years old. He'd write her love letters before he'd go to work on little yellow sticky notes and put them by her little cup of coffee, which he prepared for her when she'd get up in the morning.

Y'all, it works anywhere you go. I loved it when Clemson upset Alabama in the National Championship game. They shoved the microphone in Dabo Swinney's mouth. One of his players is a friend of mine and he said Dabo was an I'm Third guy. He's a God first guy all the way; he's an others second guy; the players love him. They shoved the microphone in his face after he had upset Nick Saban... And I was like *finally!* They said, "Is this a great moment for you?" And he said, "A great moment is Jesus, others, and yourself. That is J-O-Y to me. Jesus, others, and yourself. God first, others second, and I'm Third.

It works at your profession. I told you one time a couple years ago about my son marrying Cinderella. That's a pretty cool thing when you kid goes off and marries Cinderella. The cool thing about Jennifer is not that she's got pretty blue eyes and she puts on ball gowns and the little kids are fascinated by her, but it's when she's not in the ball gown. Watching Jennifer tape Disney together by being I'm Third... Y'all for eight years, she changed the culture of Disney and you can do it in your theme park, or your show, or your home, or wherever you do business.

She did it at Disney. Y'all, Disney was jaded. Behind the scenes it was layered. You had the face characters like Jennifer. Then you had the furry characters. Then you had the dancers. Then you had the mechanics. It was like the best and the least important. But Jennifer started celebrating the dancers, the swans. She would do parties for the dancers. She would do parties for the mechanics. She'd write the mechanics love notes and notes of appreciation and give them parties. And when

Cinderella gave a party, it's incredible. Y'all, she would do Bible studies in the... Disney would have flipped his lid. Between shows, she would lead Bible studies with Captain Hook and Peter Pan, and Mickey and Minnie Mouse in the castle. It's just true. She did it for years. She began to bring Disney together behind the scenes.

Y'all, it works in a school. Oh, my goodness, you guys, I have very few fond memories of my high school, but there is one memory that I will never forget as long as I live. You talk about legacy... The president of our student body was named David. Our school was all about sports. It was a small school and there was a lot of ego running around that school. But David was so sweet. He was tall, gentle spirited, dark hair, and the sweet smile that he got from his mom, Emma. Emma was the softest spoken, sweetest lady in our community. Emma embodied I'm Third and she handed it to David by the way she raised him.

It was time for the Senior Prom. David was so handsome it was unreal. Certainly, the homecoming queen would be his date to the prom. Certainly, the head cheerleader would be David's date for the prom. Everybody wondered who David would ask to the prom of a small-town high school.

There was a girl who lived across the street from my house named Cathy Sperry. Cathy, bless her heart, was stricken with Polio as a little girl. Her neck was paralyzed. Her mouth was paralyzed open. When she walked down the hall in school, she drooled. I can still see little Cathy's shirts as I'd walk by her in the hall with drool going all the way down her shirt. The children laughed at Cathy because she was the girl the drooled down the hall.

No one knows who invited who to the prom, but no one will ever forget when the president of the student body went across the street from my house and knocked on Cathy's door. He said, "Cathy, I would be so honored if you would bless me by being my date to the Senior Prom. No one knows what kind of dresses anyone wore – we forget soon after the prom – but no one will ever forget the girl with those beautiful baby blue eyes in the baby blue gown. Yes, she drooled, but as she danced with the president of our student body, you would have thought an angel had come down from heaven.

The rest of the story is there was a young man named Alfonse Hollic, who also was at the prom. He was a very country kid, very, very country, back woods kid. Alfonse saw Cathy dancing with the president of the student body, and he was attracted to her. He asked her for a date, and they began to date and they fell in love and they got married and they raised a family together.

It will work for you marriage. I promise it will work if you're a high school student. If you change me first to God first, watch out. The loneliness and the anger that you're feeling will become happiness and joy, I'll guarantee you. It'll work in your place of business, but mostly, it will work in your heart. So, gang, that's why we call it I'm Third and that's why we call it family. F-A-M-I-L-Y. F-A-M – Forget about me. I-L-Y – I love you. If anyone needs a reminder, F-A-M-I-L-Y – Forget about me, I love you.

By the grace of God, may you continue to live I'm Third. Father God, thank you for showing us how. Thank you, Jesus, that even though you existed in the form of God, you do not regard equality with God a thing to be asked, but you emptied yourself by becoming a bond servant and being made in the

likeness of man. Being found in the appearance of man, you humbled yourself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God highly exalted you and bestowed upon you the name that's above every name. That at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. In Jesus' name this church prays... Amen.