

What's Love Got To Do With It?

By Tim Muehlhoff

[Worship team sings song]

Kathy Verhoeven:

Let's continue worshipping as we stand in prayer. Lord God, how blessed are the people who know the joyful sound that we've just been singing, You are exalted on high and lifted up. Oh Lord, Your word says that they walk in the light of Thy countenance and in Thy name. Thy-they rejoice all day long and by Thy righteousness are they exalted. For Thou art the glory of their strength and by Thy favor, our home, our horn is exalted, for our shield belongs to the Lord and our King, to the Holy One of Israel. Lord God, as we are reminded today that we are sinful and flawed and fallen, and You are exalted and high and lifted up, and as we enter Your throne room in prayer, we ask that You would allow us to come before You only in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by His blood that was shed on the cross. Lord God, I am a sinful person and I dwell among an unclean people. And I ask Lord God that as You've reminded me in Your word, that You will not hear my prayers unless I have a clean heart. I would just confess, as we do, Lord, that You would look within my heart, cleanse me of the loss of the flesh, cleansing and the loss of the eyes.

Father God cleanse me of the boastful pride of life when I have a critical thought against another human being. Lord, I know that You have reminded me that I am prideful and that You can cleanse me of that. And we are so grateful that Your word says that if I confess my sin, You are righteous, You are just to forgive us, and cleanse us of all unrighteousness. So we thank You for Your cleansing right now, Lord God. And this will be our prayer this morning, that You would

Muehlhoff: What's Love Got To Do With It?

anoint Tim Muehlhoff. Thank You for Tim and Noreen in the life that they live honoring and glorifying You. We pray that You would open our minds and our hearts, open recesses of our minds to learn new, wonderful things about Your truth, about relationships, for we know that You are a relational God. Thank You, Lord God. In Jesus' name we pray, amen. You may be seated.

Ron Hafer:

Kathy. Now, that is a real priority because Kathy Verhoeven's husband, the John, the beloved one from Heaven, is our baseball coach and they are playing a game even as she's here. So is that a commitment or what? Thank you, Kathy. Big--you won't get a Christmas bonus, but thank you very much. A couple of very important things, about 15 minutes from the time we break from this, in the collegium, Billy Ingram will be there to answer his Q&A. It can be, he says, there isn't a question that he would hesitate to answer. So think of one and be there to challenge him. The finest places in heaven are reserved for those who attend all of Torrey, and those who don't--

[Audience laughs]

Ron Hafer:

Those who don't still have a second chance by filling out the bright green evaluation sheet. Not long ago, in a chapel evaluation, we ask for ideas for Torrey conference, and on that list was Dr. Tim Muehlhoff, so your voice really has power. Thank you for doing that. It helps us immensely and we appreciate that so much. Of course, Billy Ingram will be on tonight. The sad news is that there are only two to three afternoons, but the good news is that there's one still left. Let's have

Muehlhoff: What's Love Got To Do With It?

one final shot. Is it Tim only or--from Dr. Jim, Noreen sitting in Amen corner? So let's thank Jim, and Noreen, and Tim, you come and do it for us.

[Audience applauds]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Thank you. Thanks, Ron. Well, what a treat. Yesterday, Noreen and I are getting a chance to talk to you a little bit about romance, and the highlight for us was really the time at the collegium asking a million questions about casual dating, that really dominated the time. But what--what a great time to talk about things? We live in a time of confusion about love, romantic love. And I want to present some observations about love this afternoon. When you're thinking about committing your life to a person, outside the decision to accept Christ as your savior, I think the person you marry is the single greatest lasting impact decision you make in your lifetime. We need to be clear. What can we observe about love? What does the Bible have to say about love? Now, this confusion about love was very apparent to me when I was teaching at UNC Chapel Hill. Before I came here, I was at the basketball mecca, Chapel Hill, and I was teaching a class on interpersonal relationships. We were doing a whole section on love and I did an assignment with my UNC students. I passed out pieces of paper to all my students. I first ask them this question: How many of you would like to fall in love sometime in your lifetime? Raise your hand. All of my students raise their hand. I then said to them, How many of you would like to stay married to that person for the rest of your life? Raise your hand. All of them, mostly non-Christians, raised their hands.

Muehlhoff: What's Love Got To Do With It?

I then said, okay, on this blank piece of paper I just gave you, I want you to do something. I want you to write your definition of love. I want you to be very specific, a definition that is concrete enough, specific enough, that you can make the decision to spend the rest of your life with a person based on this definition. You may begin, go. You should have seen them, they were like deer caught in the headlights. They were like, some started to cheat, they were like, "What did you put? I have no idea. What did you?" They were thoroughly confused about the definition of love. What's funny is they have a definition of love, because they had to write a 10 page paper on that definition, and it really was influenced by pop culture in my class. I love to show commercials that are seemingly about other things, but they're really providing a cultural definition of love. So one of my favorite commercials to show ladies is for Obsession Perfume. Okay, now I get this in your mind with the commercial is-it's 40 seconds long. It's two models riding on a horse. This guy is just cut. Right. His abdominal muscles spell mom, okay? This guy is unbelievable.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Okay, small objects are rotating around his biceps.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

I mean, this guy is unbelievable. He's riding on a horse. There's a drop dead gorgeous woman behind him, her arms wrapped around his chest. This is for Obsession Perfume, they're riding on

Muehlhoff: What's Love Got To Do With It?

the beach. And this is all the announcer says. It was the moon. It was the mist. It was an obsession.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

It was a horse!

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

What was that? My students at UNC Chapel Hill wanted love to be like that, to be an obsession.

A couple students even challenged me about the assignment. "Oh, come on, Mr. Muehlhoff, we

can't write a ten page paper about love. You can't analyze love like that." And I said to him, "If

you don't have a concrete definition of love, I guarantee you you'll fall prey to the statistics that

are hitting our culture when it comes to divorce." If your definition isn't concrete, then you will

be susceptible to the culture of confusion that exists today. Let me read you some statistics.

Currently, it is estimated that half of all marriages in our country will end in divorce and that

approximately 60 percent of these marriages will involve children. Tragically, 38 percent of

white children and 75 percent of African-American children will experience their parents divorce

before their 16th birthday. Average marriage in the United States that ends in divorce last seven

years. My middle son Jason was on a soccer team, in four years, on the soccer team, all the

parents and kids staying together. There were four divorces on that soccer team. One of the most

heartbreaking memories I have of that time was we were in the parking lot after a game and

Muehlhoff: What's Love Got To Do With It?

obviously the kids were going to have to go with dad and didn't want to. And so these kids are crying and screaming and they're trying to hang on to mom. But it's dad's weekend.

I mean, this is what our culture lives with. There is now a presumption of divorce in our culture today. Many people at UNC Chapel Hill refer to their first marriage as a starter marriage. I went to a website, I was looking at it, said the place to go to meet your next ex. There is a presumption of divorce. It freaked my USC students out when I said to them, I will not divorce Noreen Muehlhoff. They were like, "Mr. Muehlhoff, you can't say that." I said, "What do you mean I can't say--" "You don't know what the future holds." "I know that's true, but I am committed to Noreen Muehlhoff. I will not divorce her." And they said, "Well, well, what-what if something happens? What if she gets hit by a train and like her head is that big?"

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

You know, I might--well, that'll be awkward. You know, it's like, "Honey, get your hats. Let's go."

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

I mean, the culture is like the air we breathe today. You can't help but breathe it in. Interesting article I came across. I love the title. It's called "Till, oh, one day to five months, do they part." It's about all the quick Hollywood marriages. Listen to these people. They mention Britney

Muehlhoff: What's Love Got To Do With It?

Spears, Jason Alexander, two days. Michelle Phillips, Dennis Hopper, eight days. Carmen Electra and Dennis Rodman nine days. I'm amazed she put up with him for nine days.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Drew Barrymore, Jeremy Thomas, 19 days. Lisa Marie Presley, Nicolas Cage, three and a half months. This is the culture we live in. It used to be, in the fifties, to be a divorcee was something that was shameful. Now today, it's something that's expected. People expect to go through one marriage to finally find the marriage. Well, the Bible takes a radically different approach to love and marriage. The Song of Solomon says love is stronger than death. So I want to present to us five observations I know--we didn't mean to paint a disparaging picture of Biola yesterday. I mean, if you meet your future spouse while you're here, that's wonderful. It'll be a rarity if statistics hold out. But if you actually meet that person and you're thinking about spending the next 70 years with this person, think about that. What should we think about before you actually get engaged and get married? Well, here are five observations I want us to think about when talking about romantic love that would lead to permanent love, that would lead to marriage. Observation number one. Although love includes romance, it must be grounded in friendship. You know, when the Greeks wanted to talk about love, they used many different words. They used Lutece, which was this playful love. They used pragma, which was pragmatic love. They used agape which was divine love.

But their two favorite words were eros and storge. Eros is powerful romantic love that flares up very quickly and it expresses itself in dramatic ways. Think of the movie The Notebook. Okay,

Muehlhoff: What's Love Got To Do With It?

it's raining. They're drenched, they grab each other, and it's just like this passionate, you know? Eros, we we we love the idea of Eros, right? A person walks in the room and you're like, wow. God's speaking to me. No.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

No, Eros is speaking to you, and there's nothing wrong with Eros, it's a powerful form of love. The problem with Eros, it puts you on an emotional rollercoaster. You know what I mean? Erotic lovers experience, euphoria, happiness, calm, panic, despair. Erotic lovers are adrenaline junkies, right? Infatuation is a very powerful thing, isn't it? My definition of infatuation, you love everything about that person because you know nothing about them. First time I met Noreen, wow, infatuations. She walked in, honestly, I was-I was bowled over by Noreen right away. She walked in. And I was just like, man, you know, it's infatuation. She walked up, she said, "Hi, Tim." I said, "Tim, what a stupid name. Tim."

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Tim, you know what I mean? Why couldn't my name be like be Sveinsson. I'm like, Tim!

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Loved her. Loved her! I knew nothing about her. Right, she was beautiful to me, alright, Eros is powerful, our culture fixates on Eros. We have been incredibly impacted by Eros, but the Greeks

also used the word Storge, which was friendship type love. Storge is this. It's the love between friends. It's slow to develop, but will last a lifetime. Listen to what Erma Bombeck said before she died of cancer on her 41 year marriage to her husband. This is how she described it. I love this. "My husband and I have gone through three wars, two miscarriages, five houses, three children, 17 cars, 23 funerals, seven camping trips, 12 jobs, 19 banks, three credit unions, and more than three thousand and nine slammed doors." Now, that's storge, again, because you're out--you know I am romantically inclined towards my wife. I find her very attractive. And we have some pretty passionate moments. Okay? A marriage conference, and I've just spoken on sexual intimacy. Okay, that's a nice lead in.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Okay, you know, but so much of life isn't passionate, right? The dishwasher has to be done. The homework. A science project. Somebody sick with the flu. Storge is what has to be the foundation. You know, the Bible treats Eros and storge as being complementary, but says that storge is the foundation for erotic love. The Song of Solomon is what is a fascinating book. Listen to what she says about Solomon. She states that her lover is radiant and compares his body to polished ivory, that's how she describes Solomon's body. She's not embarrassed to admit that when she feels his touch, her heart pounds. Solomon, uh, song of Solomon 5:4. What stirs such powerful romantic feelings? After sensually describing her husband's body, ladies, let me say this. Song of Solomon sex is not just for the man. In a way, we tend to think that in culture today. Sex is just as much for a woman as it is for a man when you get married. That love relationship, that sexual relationship ought to be two way. It ought to be just as much enjoyable

Muehlhoff: What's Love Got To Do With It?

for the woman as it is for the man. And so she is romantically inclined towards her husband. She longs for her husband. She says in chapter five, his mouth drips with liquid myrrh. Now, what in the world are you talking about? Well, either he drools.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Or some people have suggested she is describing a French kiss. God bless the public reading of His word, you know what I mean? That is powerful. But you know, what she says is the foundation of that, she tips us off in the passage when she says this, chapter five, verse 16, she says, "This is my lover, my friend, O Daughters of Jerusalem." He is my lover, but he's my friend. So what is the first observation? It is that although love includes romance, it ought to be based in friendship. Now I'm going to list some characteristics on the screen, and I want us to go through and answer this question of all the characteristics on the screen which are common to both friendship and romance. Okay, so here we go. Commitment, acceptance, trust, respect, exclusiveness, understanding, spontaneity, fascination, communication, desire for passion, conflict, self-sacrifice, enjoyment, forgiveness. Now of those characteristics, the only two I think that are unique just to romance would be exclusiveness and a desire for passion. Beverly Fear, a communications scholar, asked people to describe romantic love. And when they did, she said, "You're actually describing friendship." Root your relationship in friendship, storge love, and I guarantee you the passion will come.

Focus just on the passion, and I guarantee you you'll get infatuation and the relationship will eventually flame out because when there's three thousand and nine slammed doors, passion is not

going to get you through that. But friendship will. Noreen and I were friends first, and then became exclusive in dating, then became married and were lovers. But we're also friends and it's the friendship most days that gets us through the day. So very first is, although love includes romance, it must be grounded in friendship. So you're thinking about having a lifetime relationship with the person. Here are some questions. First, instead of asking the question, do I love this person, ask the question, do I like this person? Second, how many common interests do we really have now? Noreen and I need to enter each other's worlds, but we have common interests. We love the arts and I love to watch a good movie and then talk about it. We have an appreciation for spiritual things, obviously. So what are your common interests? Do we get excited about the same things? That's very important, and that means getting excited about each other's worlds. It's an acquired taste sometimes, but do you get excited about common things and or spiritual things? One of those things-those are questions maybe to ask if you're thinking about falling in love or making a lifetime commitment.

Okay, observation number two. Although love will benefit us, it must be motivated by more than self-interest, the ultimate expression of love is self-sacrifice. You know, when my parents got married in 1955, culture said marriage is bigger than just you. So my parents were married for 48 years and it was a pretty rocky marriage. But my dad never left my mom. Why? You just didn't do that. He stayed because of the kids. He stayed for me and my two older brothers. He stayed committed because this wasn't just about my dad's happiness. And they had a very rough marriage, but they were together to the very end when my dad died of cancer. Today we have a me first mentality, right? If I'm not happy, then why stay in the marriage? Number one stated reason for getting a divorce today is unhappiness. Today we have a throwaway culture. Think

about this. Sociologists have done a study of how we treat objects and then how we treat people. So if your camcorder breaks, if your toy breaks, if your computer, your laptop has a severe problem, then what the person will tell you is, hey, you might as well buy a new one, get rid of the old one. Our kids had a PS2 and it broke. And I took it into a guy and I said, "Hey, can you fix this?" He says, "Look, I'll be honest with you. I'm going to charge fifty dollars just to look at it. And then if I have to actually fix something, you're up to 100. A new system is right around one sixty five, one seventy five. Buy a new system. Just throw this one away."

And sociologists have said we've adopted that kind of mentality in marriage. Today we throw away relationships, we don't fix relationships. And at marriage conferences, we sit down with couples and we say, "Hey, roll up your sleeves and fight for this marriage. It's not over yet." "Well, but we're desperately unhappy." "Okay? God can change that." So we have people at conferences looking at us saying, "So you're telling me I'm supposed to stay in an unhappy marriage for what, the next 20 years?" And we look at them and say, "No, God doesn't want you to stay in an unhappy marriage. He wants you-He wants to change your marriage, but you have to be in it completely for Him to change it. Divorce cannot be an option." Penn State did a study, when the word divorce is actually mentioned between people, actually verbalized, how long after it's been verbalized will they-will they be in official divorce proceedings? The answer was six months. What does the book of Proverbs say? Life and death is in the power of the tongue. You mention the word divorce in the relationship, Penn State says, guess what? You've just introduced death into that marriage. It's not just about me, my self-interest, and that's what-that's what makes marriage so difficult, is you want to be selfish, but you can't because you're living with another person.

Muehlhoff: What's Love Got To Do With It?

So is this all just about me or can I set my self interests aside and care for Noreen? You know, what is interesting is the birth of our first child, Michael. Ladies, let me just say this, you are the stronger of the sexes. Can we just say that right now? Childbirth, childbirth, my job-I was the coach. Coaching a woman in childbirth is like coaching an avalanche. So-so inuring was delivering Michael, she snapped her tailbone. The nurse actually heard it, we heard it, I didn't know what it was, she knew what it was, and she said, "You're fine, just keep going." And I kept wondering. She snapped her tailbone. I wanted an epidural, I was like, give me one!

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

So afterwards, Noreen went through physical therapy, I had to give her a lower back massage every single night. And there were you know, I wish you--well--

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

I wish I was like that, I wish it was like that. It was not. A woman with a broken tailbone isn't in the mood. Right?

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Okay, so I was massaging her lower back. And now what am I thinking as I'm doing that? I finished massaging her back. I'm like, wow, boy. I'll tell you what, what a tough day. And I was

Muehlhoff: What's Love Got To Do With It?

just expecting my back rub. Yeah, yeah, yeah, right, and Noreen's hand would just kind of come up.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

You know, kind of a, thing. So, can I be selfless with this person? Can I put their needs consistently above my needs? Listen to what Paul says from Eugene Petersen's "The Message" in Philippians, chapter two, verses three to five, in "The Message." "Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don't push your way to the top. Don't sweet talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves enough to lend a helping hand." So if you're thinking about marrying a person, making that lifetime commitment, here are some questions to ask. Number one, am I willing to put this person's needs above my own, even when it's inconvenient? I told you before, the reason I could do a Ph.D. and a Masters is because I had a wife who supported me for seven years of graduate school. Noreen put my needs above her needs. Second question, do I care about this person enough to put a lifetime of effort into it? Even when I don't feel like it? You know what M. Scott Peck said about love, I love this quote, "Love is not effortless. Love, to the contrary, is full of effort."

I remember my married friends would say to me when I was single, "Hey, marriage is work." And I was like, "What do you mean work? What's work about it?" Now I know what's work about it. In the midst of having three boys and a new job at Biola, I still have to attend to my wife. Well, you know, it happens. I'm busy at school. I come home. I now am attentive to my

Muehlhoff: What's Love Got To Do With It?

kids. I want to play with my kids because my dad was so tired when he got home from the factory, he didn't play with me. So now one of my greatest joys is to go play with my kids, catch, whatever, and then we have homework, endless homework. Right. I'm going through elementary school all over again now. We're going through junior high all over again and I'm getting C's, okay?

[Audience and Tim Muehlhoff laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

So, we're doing all of this and then we finally get the kids in bed. Right? It's the holy hour, right? It's like ten o'clock. Michael, our thirteen-year-old is finally in bed. And then I have a choice with Noreen, right. We can sit on the couch and I have two choices. One, I can look at her and say, "Honey, how would you like to analyze our marriage and talk about the strengths and weaknesses of our marriage and pick one thing we could work on?" Or "Let's watch Dancing with the Stars."

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

You know, I mean, putting effort into it when you don't feel like it. Third observation. Although sex is a natural desire for those in love, it often hinders the development of mature love. Ladies, let me say this. I said this at the collegium. Give men a break. We live in the most sexualized age in the history of humanity via technology. We are bombarded with sexual issues. Sex is linked to virtually everything. Cracks me up these these shaving commercials, right, the man is standing there shaving and the woman is draped over him and he's like--

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

And she's like--

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

If Noreen did that I'd be like, honey, come on, I'm tired, come on, just--. But sex is linked to everything. So, ladies, why do men think so much about sex? One, God has created us as sexual beings. God delights in sex. Second, culture takes that form of us and constantly gives us messages and images. So ladies, understand men, we're-we're in the most sexualized age in the history of humanity. This is a tough time to be a man at this time in history. But you add sex to a relationship, you will short circuit the relationship. Guy knows exactly what he's talking about. Sex is reserved for marriage. I tell my students, if you want hot, passionate sex, then you will. You need to see something that's never shown on television. It's a married couple who has said, I'm with you for the rest of your life. I'm absolutely committed to you. You see, those two people making love, that is something powerful because it's not just about the physical act. It's about a celebration of a lifetime commitment. But you never see that on TV. When's the last time you saw a really passionate married couple? Usually you never see it. So when you introduce sex into a relationship, it clouds everything. It dominates the relationship. Listen to what Renee Yasbeck said, "Kissing is a means of bringing two people so close together they can't see each other."

I like that. Two people so close. If kissing can do that, what do you think sex can do? Listen to what one woman wrote to Abigail Van Buren. She said, "Dear Abby, I am a 23 year old woman who's been on the pill for two years. It's getting pretty expensive. And I think my boyfriend should share half the cost, but I don't know him well enough to discuss money with him." Now, I think that's totally understandable. As people, we are-we are five distinct parts. We are spiritual, physical, emotional, social, and intellectual. The problem with sex, it dominates everything. It totally clouds your perspective. Here you are about to make the biggest decision of your life outside of accepting Christ as your savior, and you're involved with each other sexually. Your objectivity is completely gone. We will meet people at marriage conferences, engaged couples, and we will look at them and say, "Why in the world do you think you're compatible? I don't see it, to be honest, while I'm sitting right now listening to you. Why do you think you're compatible?" And then, because we're experts, right? An expert is somebody from out of town. We can we can look at this couple and ask very personal questions and say to them, "Are you sexually active?" And they'll say, "Yes." There's a problem, you're not seeing clearly right now. And we need to see clearly when thinking about marriage.

God is very clear about sex. Paul is very clear in First Thessalonians 4:3, this is what he says. You can't get any clearer than this, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality." Now, it's interesting, right? He's calling us to sanctification, but he starts with sexual sins. Why does he do that? He does that because sex was as prevalent then--premarital sex, as it is now. So Paul is saying the sanctification process entails many different things, but it starts in some ways with sexual sin. So then he uses a Greek word *porneia*, the Greek word *porneia* covers a broad range of sexual actions for sure. It includes

intercourse, but it also includes other things, because Paul adds in verse four that we should avoid lustful passion. So what's the definition of premarital sex? Anything, anything that causes you to desire something God has specifically said is forbidden. So we always get this question from engaged couples, always, what can we do as an engaged couple? I always say to them, well, only you can answer that now, I think there's some things that are out, right? I think intercourse is out. I think oral sex is out. We're the first generation, you are the first generation to be confused about oral sex. I mean, we--for a lot of reasons, people just don't consider oral sex sex, which is ludicrous to my generation.

But your generation, you're like, why is that? Sex is--better to do that than intercourse. Well, that Paul would say? That's out as well. So anything that you do that causes you to lust for that person in inappropriate ways. Then people start to look at us like we're crazy. So what about French kissing? And I'll say, look, I'll be honest with you, if you can French kiss your girlfriend and not have lustful thoughts, I'd be very concerned. That to me--I mean, if you're--if you're French kissing your girlfriend and thinking, "I wonder who will start for the Tigers in the World Series," that's a problem.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

So then they'll say things like this, "Okay, can I put my arm around her and stroke her shoulder?" And I'll say, "I don't know, you tell me, can you?" "Well, it feels really good." "Well, how--what's really good?" "It's really nice." "How nice is it?" "Well, you know, she's a beautiful woman." "Okay, agreed. What do you thinking about when you're rubbing her shoulder?" "Oh, come on.

"What do you think I'm thinking about?" "Okay, it's probably out." "Okay." But God doesn't want us to flirt with it, see that-that's our mistake. Okay, where's the line? I want to come right up to it. I think we need to take a radical view towards sex where Jesus says your right hand offends you, cut it off. Your eye offends you, pluck it out. And we're like, what in the world are you talking about? Jesus isn't talking about self-mutilation. He's saying, because it doesn't make sense. Right, you cut your right hand off, your left hand can sin. You pluck your right eye out and your left eye can sin, and you can sin with no eyes. Jesus is simply saying take a radical venture towards sex. Now, let me brag on my wife. When we started dating, she's--Noreen's a very attractive woman, okay, I wanted--I was always ahead of my wife in every area, and including the physical. So I wanted to kiss her very quickly in the relationship.

My wife, when we were dating, Noreen said, "Look, I really think we ought to reserve that for later." And I was like, "Okay, yeah, me too, me too, yes, good, great idea, honey. Lord was speaking to me too. Okay, yes. I was just testing to see if we were on the same page." How long did we go before we kissed? A lot, like like four or five months. Finally, when I kissed her, I knew the wisdom of what she had said. When I kissed that woman the first time, I didn't care about the great commission. I didn't care. I didn't care about social justice. I didn't care about the kingdom of God. It really took off in our relationship. I mean, wanting to continue with it. We had to have strong accountability in place. So sex, God knows how powerful sex is, God delights in sex. But to have passionate sex as He intended, we must be married. So here are some questions to ask when you're thinking about making a lifetime commitment. First, do we have the same difficult standards concerning sex, or are you always having to say to this person, well, I thought we talked about this. No, no, this is too much. I'm uncomfortable with this. Second, do

we even agree with what the Bible has to say about sex? Third, what percentage of our time together is non-physical? Interesting. Fourth, has sex kept us from getting to other important issues? Important things to think about.

Observation number four, although some forms of love may end, permanent commitment leads to mature love. In the biggest celebrity breakup since Cruise and Kidman in 2001, Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston broke up, I believe, because of a fuzzy view of love. I-I made my UNC students really angry because I told them the day they got married that they will get a divorce. I said, "I'll take your money right now. Plop it down. Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston will get a divorce and I bet you they'll get it in five years. They won't make the seven-year mark. They'll do it." And they're like, "Man, you're mean." I said, "No, I'm telling you right now, I know they'll get a divorce." And they're like, "Alright, why do you know this?" "Because I read an interview with Brad Pitt. In it, he said that he was asked, 'well, what do you think about this to life till death do you part thing?' And he said, 'well, you know, I've never really bought into that. I kind of think we'll just go where this thing takes us.' When I heard that, that's a marriage that won't last." You have to have a lifetime commitment. Love is stronger than death. The Bible provides us with a model for the growth of mature love with a beautifully expressed analogy in the Book of Beginnings, the book of Genesis. In it we read this, "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife and they shall become one flesh."

Now, you see three distinct parts in that. First, a man shall leave his father and his mother. What I remember most about our wedding day is seeing Noreen walk down the aisle. It really is an amazing thing. I'm here, have all my groomsmen, all my best friends, and Noreen comes down

Muehlhoff: What's Love Got To Do With It?

the aisle with her father, who's like six four, okay, and he comes walking down, she's drop dead gorgeous. Her arm is looped through his arm. The minister says, "Who gives this woman to this man?" And her father says, "I do and her mother does." Then he took her arm, looped it through my arm, then leaned over, whispered in my ears, "I'll kill you." Okay?

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Oh, my gosh!

[Audience and Tim Muehlhoff laugh]

Tim Muehlhoff:

But you know what he was saying? Mr. Lenihan was so wise, he was saying, "Look, she is your wife now." I stopped being the son of John, I didn't stop being the son of John Muehlhoff, it just wasn't the most important thing anymore. Most important thing now, I am the husband of this woman. You leave your parents, you're ready to re-establish, by yourself as individuals, financially. You're ready to do that emotionally. You're ready to do that second step. You cleave to your wife, you cleave to that person. You become one flesh emotionally, spiritually, and physically. This is highly sexual, this connotation of becoming one flesh. We've lost this idea today. When you become one flesh, you can't come apart without doing severe damage. When I talk about the word cleave, I like to use two objects. We are a Post-it note culture. Great thing about Post-it notes, I love Post-it notes because, why? Because you can put it anywhere. Right? The great thing about a Post-it note is you can just stick it anywhere. Well, what's the problem with the Post-it note? After a while, it doesn't stick anymore. You lose your ability to stick. This

Muehlhoff: What's Love Got To Do With It?

is what the word cleave means. Will you be my assistant for a second? Come up here. What's your name?

Bree:

Bree.

Tim Muehlhoff:

Bree? Thank you, Bree. I want you to open this envelope without ripping it, okay? Do not rip it, but I want you to open the envelope. Okay, go ahead. I'll be really ticked if you do it.

Bree:

[Unintelligible]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Oh gosh.

[Audience cheers and laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Let's say-let's say she shouldn't have been able to do that. C.S. Lewis said this. Nice job, Bree.

[Audience laughs]

Tim Muehlhoff:

C.S. Lewis said--he didn't obviously know Bree, but he said that you can rip apart a life, you can do it, but there will be severe damage to each person. And that's what we're seeing today, because the average for divorces in your second marriage goes way up higher than the first marriage. So you can rip apart, but then you have a hard time committing. And that's not to say there aren't great second marriages. My brother Ken is in one, but you rip yourself apart. The only way you'll have the kind of love God wants, a fearless love, is a lifetime commitment to each other where you become one flesh. So here are some questions to ask when you're thinking about having a lifetime commitment to a person that will never end. A friend of mine, Tom Robinson, he actually did our premarital counseling, Tom and Ruth Ann, he was thinking about asking Ruth Ann to marry him. They had a very famous writer on relationships come to his church, as the guy was getting in a taxi to leave for the airport, Tom is running after him saying, "Hey, I love this woman. I'm thinking about asking her to marry me. What questions should I ask?" The guy literally says to him as he's getting in a taxi, "Ask yourself three questions." Tom was like, "Okay, what?"

He goes, "First, do you want to eat breakfast with this person for the rest of your life?" Great question. "Second, would you be pleased if your kids turned out just like this person? Third, will this person complete you in what God has called you to do?" And those were the three questions, great questions to ask. Now our last observation, observation and we're fine. Divine Love is the key to human life. Because non-Christians will ask me this question, very awkward question, do I have to be a Christian to have a good marriage? Now, the answer is technically no. I know some non-Christians who have some great marriages, but I think it's a rarity because you need the Spirit of God in you to overcome selfishness. You need to walk in God's power to love each

other as the Bible commands us to love. The key to a healthy marriage is you love God. First, Crawford Laurette's, the father of Brian Laurette's, says the best thing you can do for your spouse is love God because that will bleed into the marriage. Do you know what a prototype is? A prototype is the clearest example of a category. So we have a prototype of the best professor you've ever had. We have a prototype of the worst professor you've ever had. It is the clearest example of a category.

So if I were to ask you to describe the perfect spouse, that would be a prototype. When I ask people this question, this is the answer I traditionally get. A spouse is a person who will always care for me, always look out for me, always accept me, always pursue me, always be interested in me. Sound familiar? They're describing God. God is the only one who can always and consistently do those things. That's what Christians and non-Christians often include in their wedding vows. First Corinthians chapter 13, listen to what Paul says. Again, this is from The Message, "Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut. Love doesn't have a swelled head. Love doesn't force itself on others. Isn't always me first. Doesn't fly off the handle. Doesn't keep score of the sins of others. Doesn't revel when others grovel. Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth. Puts up with everything. Trusts God. Always, always looks for the best. Never looks back but keeps going to the end. Love never dies."

Peter Craft says this, a philosopher, "Scripture says that God is just and merciful, but does not say that God is justice or mercy itself. It does say that God is love, not just a lover. Love is God's very essence." So you've been created to experience divine love, perfect love, and you can't

expect a human to ever do that. So what's so great about Christian marriage? God meets my needs perfectly, so Noreen doesn't have to perfectly meet my needs. So loving a person expecting to be loved as only God can love you, that will be frustration. Listen to what C.S. Lewis said, "Human beings can't make one another really happy for long. You cannot love a fellow creature till you fully love God. When I haven't learnt to love God better than my earthly dearest, I shall love my earthly dearest better than I do now." Love God, that will bleed into your relationship. Men and women, God takes marriage very seriously. I love what the President of Montinomal Bible College said, he said, "The number one evangelistic tool today is a healthy marriage because it's a modern miracle." Every time I share my faith at UNC Chapel Hill, it wasn't through apologetics, it wasn't through some evangelistic strategy. Every single time I shared my faith with a professor at UNC Chapel Hill, it was through marriage. Because marriage is eating everybody up and they would say to me, how do you do it? You've got kids, a wife, a job, and you're doing a graduate degree. How do you guys do it? And I get a chance to talk about my relationship with God.

What does it mean to have Sabbath rest? What does it mean to have the power of God in your life? Men and women, most of you, if statistics hold true, will get married and that marriage will test you, it will complete you and God will delight in your marriage. It is the biggest decision you will have in your lifetime. And these are just some observations to think about, pray about. So let me pray for you and then we're going to do this. We're going to have a moment of reflection. The the worst thing about Torrey is we're sipping from a fire hose right now. Eric Tanaiste this morning was enough for us to think about the rest of the semester, and then what Mike Eris shared with us. And then you're going to get a chance to be with Doctor Ingram, and

then tomorrow it's going to start all over again. So let me pray for us and we're going to have just a couple minutes of reflection. So let me pray for us. Father, we thank You for Your word that speaks to us. Father, we thank You for the people that have presented that word to us. We thank You for the challenges of Torrey. But Father, do not let Torrey just be notes on a piece of paper. Father, we love You, we give You permission to inspect our hearts right now, Father, I know it's warm in this room, but I pray that for a next couple minutes we could have moments of reflection. Father, be with us during this time and guide our thoughts, we give full permission to the Holy Spirit right now to speak to us individually. Lord, we love You. Be a part of this time, we pray in Your son's name. Amen.

Let me just ask you a quick question? When the most haunting quote comes from Eugene Peterson, Peterson said this, "We don't need more information as Christians, we need more obedience." So let me ask you this. Listening to Eric Thomas this morning when he talked about magic books, he talked about the fear of the Lord. He said, "What do you need to lay down and burn in front of God?" For the next minute or two, would you ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you one thing in your life? That, you know, right now, you need to lay down in front of God and you need to say, you know what, I need to repent. Thought life, gossip, negative attitudes, unbelief, secrets, and would you ask God right now to reveal to you one thing you need to lay down? For some of you, romantic love has become an idol in your life, it consumes you. Thinking about your future spouse, being angry that you're not in a relationship, constantly thinking about being in a relationship, would you take the next few minutes to simply say to God, God, I give it to you? The word says be anxious for nothing. In the next few moments, would you just simply say to God, "God, I give you my future when it comes to dating, marriage, love, and I'm just going to

Muehlhoff: What's Love Got To Do With It?

rest and focus on You and seek the kingdom of God first and trust that in Your timing, You will, if it's Your will, bring somebody in my way." And we'll just hand it to God right now in the next few minutes.

[Music plays in background]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Two last things and then we'll be done. What is one thing, since being at Torrey, either listening to the worship, listening to the speakers, your own times of reflection, what is one thing you already know God wants you to do? You don't need to pray about it, you don't need to think about it. God has laid this on your heart and He wants you to do it. And your notes, would you write that one thing God is saying to you, I want you to do this?

[Silence]

[Music plays in background]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Last night, Kerry talked about ingratitude. Would you, in your notes, write five things you want to thank God for right now? King David said, I shall remember the words of the Lord, surely I will dwell on my past. Would you write five things you want to say thank you to Dad that he has done in your life?

[Silence]

[Music plays in background]

Muehlhoff: What's Love Got To Do With It?

Tim Muehlhoff:

Eric Tannis this morning talked about Jonathan Edwards going for a walk, contemplating Christ. Would you in your notes put a time that you can think of, already in the next 24 hours, in which you're going to go for a walk with the Lord and present these five things to Him? He already knows what they are, but it's the act of presenting it to Him that is praised. So would you just write a time in your notes right now when you think you have time to go for a 15 minute walk, half hour walk with the Lord, and present your praise list and ask Him to reveal things from this Torrey conference that you're going to wrestle with? Would you just right now, ballpark, put a time in your notes when you're going to take a walk with the Lord?

[Silence]

Tim Muehlhoff:

Okay, stand with me. Let's give praise to the God who loves us and ask Him to continue speaking to us during this Torrey conference. Father, we come before You as Your children. Lord, we celebrate the fact that we are loved as a father loves his children, as a king loves his subjects, as a shepherd loves his sheep. Father, Your word says that all of our sins have been forgiven at Calvary, Father. All of them. The things we struggle to forgive ourselves, You have forgiven, Father. All of our sins, Father. Sexual purity is such a hard thing to talk about. So much guilt is attached to it. We all have regrets, Father. Those sins have been forgiven at Calvary. Father, we do not take lightly the death of Jesus, Father. He hung on the cross. He did it willingly. He said, not my will, but Your will, Father. The word says that Your wrath was placed on Him. That wrath was my wrath, Father. For the sins that I have committed, the sins that are represented in this room, Jesus willingly took it. Father, Your word says that He prayed in

Gethsemani, Father to be--well, let this cup pass from me. And yes, he willingly drank of that cup. Father, we have a God who loves us.

Father, I pray for the future marriages represented in this room. Father, I pray that in a culture of divorce that people would see marriages where You are the most important thing, Father. We pray for marriages that will be strengthened. We pray for the children that will be born into these marriages, that when they go and get married, they'll have a healthy model of what a Christian marriage should look like. Not a perfect marriage, but a marriage where people love each other. They're committed for life, where divorce is not on the table. Father, would we be the new generation? Would we change the cultural dialogue about divorce? Would they see marriages and be brought to You, Father? We give to You our futures, Father. Your word says seek first the kingdom of God. And I pray that the Kingdom issues would resonate with each one of us. I pray for this walk that's going to happen in the next 24 hours. Father, I pray that we would see You in a new light. I pray that we would be moved to tears, that we would have such a vivid impression of the fear of the Lord. We'd have a vivid impression of the cross. We have a vivid impression of that forgiveness, Father, that we would stand before You and not ask for anything because we are so filled up with gratitude. Father, we are Your children. We rejoice in that Father, we call you Abba because You said call us Abba. Father, we-You are close to us. We struggle to even find words to express the gratitude that we have. We're going to heaven, Father, our sins have been forgiven. Lord, let us express that gratitude. We love You. We pray in His holy name. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.