One thing that we all have in common are relationship problems...

A man once said, “show me a man without out problems and I’ll show you a man without a woman.” **I think he’s dead now… probably a gang...**

How many of you would be willing to admit that you are currently facing some kind of difficult relationship issue in your life? Still in denial I see… that won’t help… LOL!

**The good news is that every problem has a solution! Finding it is often what people stress & struggle with…**

Another thing that all of us have in common is that we all have **opinions…**

**and everyone’s opinion matters… even-though it may not be the solution.**

* Dee and I were raised in different churches in the suburbs of Chicago...
* We met at a wedding reception on October 3rd 1981…
* On February 27th, 1982 we were married in the 100 year old church that I had grown up in…
* God blessed us with 3 wonderful children (Sarah, Stephanie & Matthew).
* By 1993... 11 years later, we had moved to Arizona and were both blessed with very good jobs. The kids all did well in school.

By all accounts we were living a “blessed life”… **The American Dream**

But after 11 years, our marriage should have been getting **better**, **healthier** and **stronger**… **Instead it was dying…**

and suddenly, without any warning, our marriage was wheeled into the ER of life, **“CODE BLUE”**.

**She said, “it’s over Rover, get a lawyer…”**

Here’s my point… Both of us knew what the problem was **(each other)**.

**But if we had all the answers…** why was our marriage dying instead of thriving… growing stronger/healthier? **I’m glad you asked…**

**Testimony -** The week after **we** (not God) had pronounced our marriage dead…

* Dr. God spoke to me, thru His Holy Spirit. (Get you wife & kids together…) I’m glad I listened to Him…
* Dee was **willing**… (which looking back… was the key to success for us… because of her willingness…
* We **went** to the church that a Christian friend had invited me to.
* We **heard** them say that they had been praying for us for 7 months!
* We **heard** God, the Holy Spirit speak to us thru John 3:3.
* We chose **together** to **enter a**…

1. **Love relationship with God.**

In this “born again” relationship with the Father, thru Jesus the Son,

Dee and I both willingly chose to **give ourselves** to this God…,

**who we knew next to nothing about…**

(We came to Him **broken**, **empty (no knowledge of Him)**… **no pride**, **no agenda**, **no blame**, **no ulterior motives**, **no strings**, and **no excuses**).

**Little did we know that by opening ourselves up, being totally honest with God and giving Him total access to our life…**

**We were allowing Dr. God…** (The “Great Physician”, the “Master Healer”, the One who heals the sick and raises the dead) **to come into our broken marriage…**

But not everyone comes to God **the right way** or for **the right reason**… that’s often why people **don’t change** and therefore **their relationships don’t heal**…

* **Matthew 22:35-36**
* Now… Was that the right way to come to Jesus?!!
* It is useless to **test** Almighty God, because **He passes every time**…
* It is senseless to try to **trap** Almighty God, because **He is bigger than anything man can comprehend.**

God showed Dee and I later, that we were both the reason why our marriage was dying… **It is often the reason why churches split & die…**

**Matthew 22:37-38**

His prescription for love is **the cure** for every **sin** and **relationship problem** in the world today – including yours…

You might be think, “how will loving God heal or revive my dead relationships”?

Because when you love God with everything you’ve got, you no longer desire to violate His Word (which you must know, saddens Him)…

The fighting stops when the loving begins… The many hours that you used to spend taring others down…?

God reclaims them for you to now serve Him well **in positive ways…**

The “comeback” in our relationship occurred when fell in love with God **together**.

If just one of us had… our relationship would still have been **half-dead.**

**1 John 4:19**

**God’s love for us** was the “secret sauce”… the missing ingredient for us…

It was a miracle… When we began **focusing and growing** in the pure, unconditional, **love, acceptance & forgiveness of Christ,**

much of the finger pointing & blaming stopped… Well, maybe she still pointed a little… rightfully so…

Fewer fights, less stress & depression, the hopelessness that she would never change was gone…

We began falling deeper & deeper in love with **the One** who had demonstrated **what real love is** by taking our place, and dying on the cross, **for the very sin that we were allowing to destroy our relationship…**

Which (let’s face it) was the sin of living according to our flesh…

Demanding that each other meet expectations (that were often only communicated during a fight)

**The “Good News” of Christ today is that whether we’re talking about a dead or dying marriage** or a dead or dying church body…

**We believe in a God who heals the sick and raises the dead!!**

Jesus told John to write down how this happens in **Revelation 2:1-5**

The church at Ephesus was good at doing what they thought was best…

**keeping all the “bad people” with their “alternative, unholy lifestyles”… and their false teaching out of the church...**

Jesus called these believers “hard working” and “patient”. Not refusing to lower their standards and compromise their church’s witness…

Every church **(and every relationship)** should be so diligent!! Amen?!!

But somewhere along the way they stopped listening to God and elevated what they believed mattered most…

**above** what matters to God… **people (who have a soul and who’s lives demonstrate they may not have a saving relationship with Jesus)…**

They lost sight of the fact that God calls His church to be a “hospital”**that**…

1. **Demonstrates His love to others.**

The church (God’s gathered people) **should always unite to:**

* **Hear from God the Holy Spirit** speaking thru the Word that is (delivered by men and women alike). God is **no respecter of persons.**
* Hearing God thru prayer, and people who’s lives demonstrate holiness…
* Becoming a group that demonstrates (inside & out) the U.L.A.F. of Christ.

So that folks can connect and receive the **healing** or **revival** that God knows they need…

to heal the stress, anxiety, depression & hopelessness of broken relationships… and revive the relationships that were thought to be dead

* **Matthew 22:39-40**

When Dee and I gave our lives to Jesus we were like sponges!! Soaking up what God was telling us…

But once a sponge is full, it is… not very useful.

Our knowledge of the **love, acceptance and forgiveness** of Christ… **had to be** rung out on others (which started in our own home – with Dee and our children)…

By demonstrating God’s L.A.F. to each other… we were making room for God to **fill us** and **give us more** of His love…

**I echo Paul’s prayer for you from Philippians 1:9-11 NLT (on screen)**

As we walk and growing in God’s love, we **sin less…** (Betsy’s blog)

If you can name one sin that you can commit while loving God & others the way His Word instructs us to, **I will give you a $100 bill.**

God challenged me on how much I actually loved Him and others…

I do much more for Dee now, than I probably had done for her in the previous 11 years of of our marriage!!

I never lowered my expectations, I just stopped getting so bent out of shape when they weren’t being met… God was teaching me patience…

Then God spoke to me again by His Holy Spirit… **this time through Matthew 9:37-38…**

* He said, “one of these days you’re going to preach My Word.”
* I said, “did you hear that honey? God said **you’re** going to be preaching His Word!!

After 2 years of foolishly running away from God’s call on my life…

He helped me realize that that’s not what His love produces… So lastly, His prescription for love requires…

1. **Sacrifice – it’s never easy… blood, sweat & tears are usually involved…**

John 13:35 – “By **this** (Jesus’ command/prescription to sacrificially love others) all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

And Jesus wants others to know that we are His disciples, Amen?!! So that we can show them the way to Him…

The church we were saved in demonstrated this sacrificial love very well to us… every week… **they were holy, obedient people…**

They could have judged us… **they could have thought we were going to muscle in and take their ministries away in the church…**

They could have tried to drive us away… but they didn’t…

**Instead, they sacrificed…** they loved our “rough” family even with all of our hurts, habits & hang-ups… God used them to make us want to be like them…

Their **sacrifice** caused me to **sacrifice** and **embrace Godly change…** (I like Dee, became willing…) I may be a slow boat, but I always get there…

**Then and only then did…**

* My church mattered more than I did. As a result, **He rescued me from myself… and put me on the pathway to ministry.**
* When I stopped trying to fix my broken down old wife, and began showing her **consistently** that she matters more than me… **He resurrected our dead marriage.**
* Loving God, listening to God, and obeying His Word…, **made those without a saving relationship with Christ matter more than me.**

As a result God used us to lead hundreds to Christ thru:

10 years of ministry to the homeless.

6 years of ministry at two retirement homes.

5 years of managing a Christian owned debt collection service.

And 25 years of leading miscellaneous people to Him along the way…

Who matters more than you?

* Would your spouse/children say that **they matter** more than you?
* Would I, your pastor (or others in the church) be able to say that your life demonstrates that **the church here** and it’s mission to reach the community for Christ… matters more than you?
* Would God say that your life shows that **He matters** more than you do?
* Would our community say that New Beginnings Church sacrificially demonstrates the U.L.A.F of Christ?

If not, the answer is easy… God’s prescription is love…

But only take it if you want eternal life with Him in heaven someday…

If you want more joy, more love, hope & less stress in your relationships here…

How do I do that, you ask…? Simple… If you are **willing** (as Dee and I were) pray, and receive the **Love, acceptance and forgiveness** that Jesus died for you to have…

**Give** your life to Jesus… then watch & see… God will do a much better job with it than you can…

Watch and see how He heals your broken relationships… how He revives this good church…

Watch and see what God does in the community around us… they will BE AMAZED…

If you would like God to begin doing those great things thru you today…

It won’t be easy to humble yourself, **but that is why it’s called a sacrifice…**

Please come and kneel at an altar for prayer or come to the front and pray…