

# The Gospel and Emotional Health

## Make Jesus Christ Your Model for Loving Well

Luke 10.25-37; Hebrews 2.17–18, 4.15-16; Galatians 6.2

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**Luke 10.25-37** *And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"<sup>26</sup> And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?"<sup>27</sup> And he answered, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."<sup>28</sup> And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE."<sup>29</sup> But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*

<sup>30</sup> *Jesus replied and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead."<sup>31</sup> "And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side."<sup>32</sup> "Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side."<sup>33</sup> "But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion,<sup>34</sup> and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him."<sup>35</sup> "On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return, I will repay you.'<sup>36</sup> "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?"<sup>37</sup> And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."*

**Hebrews 2.17 - 18** *Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.<sup>18</sup> For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.*

**Hebrews 4.15-16** *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.<sup>16</sup> Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

**Galatians 6.2** *Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ*

**We return now to this series called *The Gospel and Emotional Health*** ...there's more to Peter Scazzero's book than the six core chapters we've covered, and I hope you'll read the rest of it. After today, in the next two sermons, we'll add two topics NOT expressly covered in the book.

So far, we've seen that spiritually mature people become emotionally healthy people. It's a process, not automatic or instantaneous but inevitable. Grace instructs (Titus 2.11) us at the level of the heart, (Titus 2.11ff) the motives. When we believe, we begin to get (Francis Schaeffer) "*substantial healing for the whole person*" not perfect (in this life) but emotional growth...and health.

Today, we consider that the spiritually/emotionally mature person makes Jesus Christ the model for loving well. The truth and reality that God came down; He incarnated into our humanity, entered our place, and identified (became

like) us in every way except sin – that becomes the pattern for love to which the spiritually/emotionally healthy person aspires. So, let's talk about love today and about loving well in the pattern of Jesus Christ:

**#1 - Love Is a Many Blundered Thing**

**#2 - The Heart of the Matter**

**#3 - How to Get What It Takes**

When we think about love and talk about it, we get a warm feeling. We really LOVE to use the word...*Virginia is for Lovers...I love NY...I love my dachshund... love songs... love triangles... we love lasagna...falling in love... "what's love got to do with it?"* (Tina) etc....etc....

LOVE can be blundered a million different ways but to look at two of the most common American Idols (cheap imitations) I'd say: 1) Being Nice and 2) A Feeling or Infatuation.

In the first – being nice – one attempts to be likeable or non-offensive or winsome or even charming. I'm NOT talking about genuine kindness (that's an actual aspect of love – Gal 5.22) but... you know... friendly. Again – NOT true friendship which is a type of love (philia) but just to be friendly... and nice. "She's so nice!"

And second – to have intense interest in someone, to have feelings of infatuation (could even be called being "in love") meaning I have feelings for another person...maybe I've never acted to help or do good to that person (may not even know the person) but I want the person to notice me...

And I may be infatuated or drawn to another person and THINK it's love OR I may be nice, friendly and agreeable and I may THINK I'm loving and maybe others conclude the same about me... AND YET ...when the feelings are gone, it may become evident that I WANTED another person as a friend or a lover but it was a feeling (NOT true love) OR I may somehow discover that being NICE is how I avoid conflict – I just stay agreeable and I avoid the thing I fear MOST: hostility/rejection. Niceness and Feelings.

To be ruled by my feelings (being "*in LOVE with LOVE*" – strong feelings for someone I hardly know) "in love" with how another person makes me FEEL. But neither of these is love. They're actually expressions of self-centeredness. Even the love of a parent CAN BE an extension of self-love.

Well, here comes a man who wants to know about love... *evidently* very intent on growing as a lover. He's a "*can-do*" guy (scholar or lawyer) and he just needs some clarification. He approaches Jesus Christ and asks about eternal life.

The Teacher says, "How do YOU read the Law?"

The self-made man says "Love God and love your neighbor."

"Right", says the Rabbi, "Do that and you'll live."

The scholar replies, "Yes, but who IS my neighbor?" and Jesus answers with the famous parable known as "The Good Samaritan." A man is mugged on this notoriously bad stretch of road, stripped, beaten and left for dead.

A clergyman passes by...probably leaving worship. He chances on the beaten man. He sees the man and ...steps to the other side of the road. The clergyman is holy and “*who knows that the beaten man may be dead*”; to touch a corpse will render holy men unclean.

Then, a deacon of the church...a Levite, a man of very high standing in the community is also leaving worship. He sees the victim and he too, also a holiness specialist, perhaps fearing a LOSS of holiness (corpse!) passes by the dying man.

Finally, a member of a pseudo-Jewish cult, a despised minority...on a journey (not coming home from worship but on a schedule!) saw him and felt compassion...Then he acted: approached him and bandaged the battered man, lifted him, took care of him and incurred the cost...He loved his neighbor... “And”, says the Rabbi, “Go and do the same”.

The essence of love seems to involve seeing... seeing in a certain way. (v.33) “*When he saw him, he felt compassion*”. The other men saw... but only he was moved by what he saw.

Over and over again this very pattern is seen in Jesus Christ Like the Samaritan, Jesus sees people and He feels what the people feel and out of that “feeling with” (com-passion or sym-pathly = feel or suffer with) in seeing that way, Jesus Christ, like the Samaritan, is moved to help.

To really see someone is the heart of love and generosity and compassion. But the thinker who came to Jesus Christ looking for answers really didn’t want to see or to feel with others. He expressly came to “justify himself” (v.29).

We hope to address this more directly NEXT week but at least note that we all DO this – we say words meant to validate or justify ourselves. We ask questions NOT because we want an answer but because we want to prove to others and assure ourselves that we’re ok. In this case the question was about love and who qualifies for neighbor-love...and it’s meant to validate the scholar as being a truly HOLY person.

“Do you want to know what holiness looks like?” asks Jesus. “Stop looking for loopholes – start looking at people; see them and FEEL WITH THEM... get next to them...be with them.”

Jesus Christ is saying, “*Show me a cult member, an outcast who pays attention and I’ll show you someone infinitely holier than a priest who sees but doesn’t really see and doesn’t truly feel...To see, to hear, to feel – this is the essence of holiness and love.*”

It’s the pattern seen in Jesus Christ, Luke 7.13: “*When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her and said ‘Do not weep.’*” And many other places, the same pattern: He pays attention (sees, hears), He feels what they’re feeling (compassion = to feel with) and then He helps. It’s the essence of love. (The heart of the matter.)

It’s what our “loved ones” want from us, to be seen, to simply have our attention and to know that we feel what they feel. (It’s what you want...and I want.)

There’s a scene in *Little Miss Sunshine*. A messed-up family, second marriage, not going well, the grandfather, living in regret addicted to drugs. The gay uncle, college professor who recently attempted suicide, the awkward, sullen, brooding 17-year-old Dwayne (from the mom’s first marriage) who’s taken a vow of silence until he can accomplish his

dream of becoming a Navy pilot ...and Olive (the one ray of sunshine) 7 yrs. old...a little pudgy, big thick glasses...resolutely happy; and they're driving cross-country in this old VW van.

And after a lot of miles and tension and irritation...there's just a glimpse of ease and play and they unwittingly discover that Dwayne, the would-be Navy pilot is ...color-blind...and Navy pilots can't be color blind...And when that hits Dwayne, he utterly implodes. They quickly pull over and Dwayne runs, howling in anguish and despair, down into a drainage area... breaks his vow of silence with this primal wail and a gush of fury and cursing and... like Job, he sits.

The fearful mother walks down to him but not too close. She tries to reason with him to get back in the van, but he only wants to die. And all her sensible appeals only add to his rage...he's simply heartbroken.

And then comes Olive...she lumbers down the steep hill (in her shorts and red cowboy boots) and the viewer wonders, "What could she possibly say?"

She comes clumsy all the way down to where her half-brother sits... sobbing and fuming in this open drain field beside an unknown highway...and she stands there awkward behind him and looks. Then she squats next to him, rests her head on his shoulder and says... nothing. After 30 seconds, Dwayne stands, picks up Olive and gets back in the van.

She feels with him, and it heals him.

It's a good picture and may even instruct us or even inspire us to stop trying to fix people and have all the solutions and sometimes just see people and feel with them...maybe just sit with them...go down, be present.

At first it seems that Jesus is telling the lawyer to be a better neighbor – *"Stop asking if the person in need is MY legal responsibility and start BEING a neighbor to those in need"* and that IS a takeaway but it's NOT the main idea.

Jesus is showing this can-do lawyer...that THIS is the one thing that he just can't do: he can't love God and can't love his neighbor? It's a redemptive taunt; a call to do what Jesus knows the man can't do in his own ever-successful energies so that the man will look outside himself, outside his willpower. He needs a total reorientation.

In order to love we need more than instructions or definition or even inspiring examples - we need something that gets into our motives... So, how do I actually get what it takes to change me into someone who sees others and feels what they feel and loves like Jesus Christ loved?

Three practices or ways to receive the power to love: #1) To show compassion you must first KNOW compassion.

You first have to know that kind of despair Dwayne felt as he crumbled in the field near that highway, *"I'll never qualify; I'm unable to love the way Jesus loves!"*

You have to know the kind of despair known by the beaten man in the parable stripped, beaten and left for dead...with nothing to offer others and no way to help yourself!

Which character in the parable are YOU? The priest? The Levite? The Samaritan? No – you're the man in the ditch.

And in that place of despair which real Christians come to again and again, you must know the touch of the True Good Samaritan, Jesus Christ the despised Outsider, the Alien who came from afar and approaches us and scoops us up and heals us and pays our price... He loves us at greatest cost to Himself! He came down for us came into our situation.

He had to be made like us in every way except for sin...He had to fulfill the agreement made between God and Adam. He becomes one of us in order to obey in our place and to die under the weight of my guilt and shame.

He becomes the High Priest I need. Not the one who pays no attention to me and crossed the street, but the one who saw me and sympathized (to feel with) and who therefore crossed heaven and earth to be with me and give Himself as the atonement for my sin.

I have to know that. Much more than an example – it's a relief. It's healing. It's my liberation from guilt and shame.

When I experience it – it liberates me to love.

#2) I have to know and experience the destiny to which I've been called. On the one hand I see what a failure I am, a real sinner. On the other hand, I know that Jesus Christ lived and died in my place so that God has nothing against me and actually delights in me as if I were perfect. Jesus Christ's record is now mine; I received it when I trusted Him (by faith).

So, I have confidence to come to my Father – the two postures that never go together – the extreme humility of a failure and the extreme confidence of a beloved son. "Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace" (one day I'll be perfect at love-it's my destiny as an adopted child of God!) What God has declared me to be He will make me to be.

#3- I know that like Jesus Christ, I have a very real life's purpose: I am to be a burden bearer – that was Jesus Christ's basic M.O., His animating principle, the purpose that moved Him, the rule of His life, His mission was to identify with others, "Bear one another's burdens and thus fulfill the Law of Christ". Now I am to identify with Him.

It's the pattern of dying with Jesus and rising with Him – this is the path to true love. In faith I die, I descend, and the Spirit raises me to love. I die and I rise again and again; I identify with Christ by faith and the Spirit quickens me to love (Rom 8.11-13).

I take my weak love (often more like niceness or feelings) to the Burden Bearer, the sympathetic High Priest and I say, "Lord Jesus, I'm trying to be nice but I'm tempted to look at my watch... I'm thinking of something I'd rather me doing, I'm just not feeling it and I need to receive mercy from You and grace to help me in this time of need... my "love" fizzles ...In faith I die to it. Raise me to love like You love."

The living Jesus Christ loves to hear those honest prayers and He uses those moments to come to the aid of the tempted and the failed and He changes us in those moments of honesty and need.