



GOING DEEPER

DISCUSSION GUIDE

AUGUST 12, 2018

Discussion Guide

CONNECTED TO LOVE

CONNECTING:

45 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A WAY OF CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT YOU MIGHT PARTNER IN THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIVES.)

- IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD MOVE IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU RESPOND TO HIM?
- WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DID YOU INVITE GOD INTO THIS CHALLENGE?
- HOW HONEST HAVE YOU BEEN WITH US? (GRACIOUSLY THANK GROUP MEMBERS FOR THEIR HONESTY IF THEY STATE THEY HAVE HELD BACK.)

GETTING STARTED:

10 MINUTES

- IF YOU COULD CHANGE ANY PART OF THE WAY WE RELATE TO ONE ANOTHER, WHAT, IF ANYTHING, WOULD YOU CHANGE? COULD YOU ELABORATE?

DIVING INTO THE TEXT:

60 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A SIMPLE ROAD MAP THROUGH THE TEXT. FEEL FREE TO USE THESE QUESTIONS IN WAYS THAT BEST FIT YOUR GROUP AND THE DYNAMICS OF YOUR OWN MEETING.)

- USING THE NOTES, DISCUSS THE NATURE AND QUALITIES OF LOVE.
- READ 1 CORINTHIANS 13.1-7 ALOUD. PAUSE. READ THE TEXT AGAIN.
- THIS TEXT WAS WRITTEN TO A CHURCH IN CRISIS, A CHURCH DIVIDED ALONG THEOLOGICAL AND RELATIONAL LINES. IN WHAT WAYS DOES PAUL HOLD FORTH LOVE AS

AN ANSWER TO THEIR EXPERIENCE OF THEOLOGICAL AND RELATIONAL BROKENNESS? COULD YOU ELABORATE?

- DO YOU SEE CHURCHES TODAY EXPERIENCING CRISES ALONG THEOLOGICAL AND RELATIONAL LINES? IF SO, WHAT DO THESE CRISES LOOK LIKE? WHAT IS THE FALLOUT?
- IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, MIGHT LOVE BE THE ANSWER TO THESE CRISES?
- IT WAS SAID THAT LOVE HELPS US RELATE TO PEOPLE AS THEY ARE WHILE WE WAIT FOR THEM TO BECOME THE PEOPLE THEY WILL ONE DAY BE. THINKING ABOUT WHAT PAUL SAYS AND WHAT YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED WOULD YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE? WOULD YOU EXPLAIN?
- DO YOU THINK LOVING IN THE MANNER PAUL DESCRIBES IS EASY OR DIFFICULT? WHY MIGHT THIS BE THE CASE?
- WHEN WE CONSIDER THE LARGER CONTEXT OF 1 CORINTHIANS 13, PAUL IS PRESENTING LOVE AS THE PRIMARY GRACE GIFT WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT LONGS TO BESTOW UPON THE CHURCH (1 CORINTHIANS 12.7, 30; 13.13). ELSEWHERE, PAUL HAS NOTED THAT THE ABILITY TO LOVE IS PROOF OF THE WORKING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR LIVES (GALATIANS 5.22). IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DOES THIS TRUTH INFLUENCE YOUR THINKING ABOUT WHETHER LOVING OTHERS AS PAUL DESCRIBES IS POSSIBLE? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO PARTNER WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT TO GIVE HIM ROOM IN OUR LIVES AND CONGREGATIONS SO HE MIGHT LEAD US TO LOVE IN THE WAY PAUL DESCRIBES?

- **WHAT, IF ANYTHING, PREVENTS US FROM GIVING THE SPIRIT THIS ROOM?**
- **CONSIDER CLOSING BY DISCUSSING WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE TO GIVE THE SPIRIT ROOM TO LEAD YOU TO LOVE IN YOUR GROUP.**

CONTEXT, BACKGROUND, AND COMMENTARY

Love

IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, THE CONCEPT OF LOVE WAS REPRESENTED BY A NUMBER OF WORDS, EACH BEARING A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT EMPHASIS, BUT, IN MOST RESPECTS, HAVING OVERLAPPING MEANINGS. WHILE AN AUTHOR MIGHT USE ONE OF THESE WORDS BECAUSE OF ITS UNIQUE EMPHASIS, MOST OFTEN, PEOPLE GRAVITATED TO USING WORDS WHICH WERE CURRENTLY IN-VOGUE. THIS IS THE CASE WITH THE HIGH USE OF AGAPE TO REFER TO LOVE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. WHILE SOME HAVE ARGUED THE AUTHORS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHOSE AGAPE TO REFER TO A DIVINE TYPE OF LOVE, THE NEW TESTAMENT ITSELF DOES NOT BEAR THIS OUT. RATHER, THE AUTHORS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT USED OTHER AVAILABLE WORDS FOR LOVE WHEN THEY COULD HAVE CHOSEN TO USE AGAPE (JOHN 3.35; 5.20; 21.15-17; 1 CORINTHIANS 16.22). IT IS BETTER TO REALIZE THAT DURING THE TIME WHEN MUCH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WAS WRITTEN, AGAPE WAS BEGINNING TO BE USED MORE FREQUENTLY IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND WRITING. IT WAS BECOMING THE IN-VOGUE WORD FOR LOVE. THEREFORE, THE AUTHORS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WERE SIMPLY USING A WORD THAT WAS WELL KNOWN AND UNDERSTOOD IN THEIR TIME. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THEY DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE LOVE TO WHICH THEY WERE REFERRING TO HAVE DEEP ASPECTS DRAWN FROM GOD'S OWN CHARACTER. IT SIMPLY MEANS THEY DID NOT HAVE A SPECIFIC WORD THEY USED TO REFER TO THIS LOVE. INSTEAD, THE BIBLICAL CONTEXT AND NOT THE WORD CHOSEN BY THE AUTHOR PROVIDES THESE DEEPER MEANINGS AND OVERTONES.

IN SEEKING TO DEFINE LOVE IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, THE ARGUMENT HAS BEEN MADE THAT ANCIENT PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD LOVE IN LOGICAL RATHER THAN EMOTIONAL TERMS; THAT IS, LOVE WAS AN ACT OF DUTY OR OBLIGATION HAVING NO ASSOCIATION WITH ONE'S AFFECTIONS FOR ANOTHER. HOWEVER, THIS WAS CERTAINLY NOT THE CASE IN THE ANCIENT OR TODAY IN OUR MODERN WORLD. LOVE HAS MANY FACETS, SOME OF WHICH INVOLVE DUTY AND OBLIGATION, BUT, IN EVERY CASE, THE MOTIVATION WHICH LEADS AND EMPOWERS

THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THESE DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS IS FOUND IN FOND AFFECTIONS FOR THE OTHER.

IN SCRIPTURE, LOVE IS PRESENTED AS THE ROOT OF SOCIAL-COMMUNITY AND RELIGIOUS LIFE, THE EXPRESSION OF SELFLESS DEVOTION TO ANOTHER (DEUTERONOMY 6.5; LEVITICUS 19.18; MATTHEW 22.37-40). GOD HIMSELF IS PRESENTED AS THE MODEL AND SOURCE OF THIS TYPE OF LOVE BECAUSE LOVE IS THE VERY ESSENCE OF GOD'S BEING AND EXPERIENCE (1 JOHN 4.8; MATTHEW 3.17). FURTHER, LOVE IS THE FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE BECAUSE IT IS GOD'S LOVE WHICH DRAWS HIM NEAR TO PEOPLE (JOHN 3.16; ROMANS 5.8-9; 1 JOHN 4.9; EPHESIANS 2.1-5) FORMING THE MODEL OF HOW PEOPLE ARE TO DRAW NEAR TO ONE ANOTHER (JOHN 13.34-35; 1 JOHN 4.11-21). AFTER DESCRIBING THE PRACTICAL OUTWORKING OF THIS LOVE IN THE SOCIAL REALM, PAUL NOTES THAT LOVE IS THE MOST CRITICAL THEOLOGICAL VIRTUE, STANDING ETERNALLY.

BECAUSE OF THE CENTRALITY OF LOVE TO THE LIFE OF GOD AND OUR OWN LIFE WITH GOD AND ONE ANOTHER, LEARNING TO LOVE AND PRACTICING LOVE BECOME CENTRAL TO THE EXPRESSION OF FAITH AND LIFE AS GOD INTENDED IT. HOWEVER, LOVE IS DIFFICULT BOTH IN ITS EMOTIONAL AND EXPRESSIVE DIMENSIONS. HOWEVER, ONE DOES NOT LOVE OUT OF ONE'S OWN STRENGTH BUT COMES TO BE ABLE TO LOVE DUE TO THE IN-DWELLING SPIRIT OF WHO LOVES THROUGH THE BELIEVER (1 CORINTHIANS 13; GALATIANS 5.22). THEREFORE, MOVING TOWARD LOVE AND EMPHASIZING ITS CENTRALITY FOR FAITH AND LIFE BECOMES A JOURNEY OF OPENING ONESELF TO THE DEEP INNER WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CONTEXT OF RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND OTHERS.

THE TEXT

1 CORINTHIANS 13.4-8a: Love is. . .

1 CORINTHIANS 13 IS A PASSAGE WHICH WE OFTEN HEAR READ AT WEDDINGS. WHILE THE TEXT BEAUTIFULLY FITS SUCH OCCASIONS, IT SURPRISES MANY THAT PAUL WROTE THESE WORDS WITH CONFLICT RATHER THAN CELEBRATION IN MIND. 1 CORINTHIANS IS WRITTEN TO A CHURCH WHICH IS SPLINTERING THEOLOGICALLY AND SOCIALLY. AS THE FOUNDING PASTOR, PAUL WADES INTO THE FRAY FROM A DISTANCE IN AN EFFORT TO BRING UNITY. 1 CORINTHIANS 13 IS PART OF A LARGER ADDRESS CONCERNING A DEBATE ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND THEIR USE IN THE CHURCH. AT THE HEART OF THIS DEBATE WERE QUESTIONS LIKE: "WHICH SPIRITUAL GIFT IS THE BEST GIFT?" AND "WHO SHOULD HAVE

AND PRACTICE WHICH SPIRITUAL GIFTS?" QUESTIONS LIKE THESE AROSE IN A CONGREGATIONAL CONTEXT WHERE CERTAIN BELIEVERS WERE ELEVATING THEMSELVES OVER OTHERS BECAUSE THEY HAD SPECIFIC GIFTS OTHERS DID NOT, AND WHERE THESE GIFTS WERE USED IN SUCH A MANNER THAT CONGREGATIONAL GATHERINGS WERE CHAOTIC AT BEST (1 CORINTHIANS 12.15-30; 14.26-40).

IN THE MIDDLE OF PAUL'S DISCUSSION ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS ONE FINDS 1 CORINTHIANS 13, A DISCUSSION CONCERNING LOVE WHICH PAUL OFFERS AS THE MOST EXCELLENT WAY AND ONE OF THE GREATEST GIFTS (1 CORINTHIANS 12.30). ONE CANNOT MISS THESE INTRODUCTORY WORDS BECAUSE THEY INDICATE THAT PAUL UNDERSTANDS LOVE TO BE A TANGIBLE AND REAL OUTWORKING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT DWELLING AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE. ONE MIGHT GO SO FAR AS TO SAY THAT THE ABILITY TO LOVE AS PAUL DESCRIBES IS NOTHING SHORT OF A SPIRITUAL GIFT, A MANIFESTATION OF THE SPIRIT FOR THE COMMON GOOD (1 CORINTHIANS 12.7), BUT ONE WHICH IS BESTOWED UPON ALL BELIEVERS AND CENTRAL TO THE LIFE OF FAITH. IN FACT, WITHOUT THE EXPRESSION OF LOVE, ALL OTHER GIFTS BECOME WORTHLESS (1 CORINTHIANS 13.1-3).

PAUL SEEKS TO DESCRIBE THIS LOVE WHICH HE PRESENTS AS SO CENTRAL TO THE LIFE OF FAITH AND CONGREGATIONAL LIFE IN GENERAL. IN DOING SO, HE PILES UP 15 VERBS WHICH INDICATES LOVE IS MULTILAYERED AND COMPLEX IN ITS EXPRESSION. IN PAUL'S DESCRIPTION, HE BEGINS WITH WHAT LOVE IS AND THEN FOLLOWS WITH WHAT IT IS NOT BEFORE ROUNDING OUT HIS DESCRIPTION BY NOTING WHAT IS ALWAYS ASSOCIATED WITH LOVE. MANY OF THESE VERBS WORK IN PAIRS. IT IS IN READING THEM IN THIS MANNER THAT ONE DISCOVERS THE RICHNESS AND FLOW OF PAUL'S THOUGHT.

PAUL BEGINS BY NOTING THAT LOVE IS BOTH PATIENT AND KIND. THESE ARE THE PASSIVE AND ACTIVE EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE. PATIENCE IS THE PRACTICE OF BEARING WITH SOMEONE OVER TIME WHILE KINDNESS IS THE EXPRESSION OF GOODNESS AND COMPASSION. TOGETHER THEY FORM AN IMAGE OF LOVE MEETING SOMEONE WHERE THEY ARE AND JOURNEYING WITH THEM AS THEY ARE, NOT ASKING FOR IMMEDIATE CHANGE OR PERFORMANCE BUT RATHER GIVING FREELY AND GENEROUSLY WHAT A PERSON NEEDS TO CHANGE. PAUL THEN SHIFTS TO DESCRIBE WHAT LOVE IS NOT. HE NOTES IT IS NOT ENVIOUS OR BOASTFUL. THESE TWO VERBS ARE A PAIR. THEY PORTRAY A PERSON WHO NEITHER LONGS FOR WHAT ANOTHER HAS NOR

BOASTS ABOUT WHAT HE HAS. LOVE IS NOT PROUD, NOR DOES IT DISHONOR BECAUSE IT IS NOT SELF-SEEKING. IN OTHER WORDS, LOVE DOES NOT ELEVATE ITSELF OR BEHAVE IN WAYS WHICH SHAME OR DEPRECATE OTHERS BECAUSE IT IS NOT BEHAVING IN A WAY WHERE SELF IS THE OBJECT OF ATTENTION AND DEVOTION. LOVE IS NOT EASILY ANGERED, NOR DOES IT KEEP A RECORD OF WRONGS. IN OTHER WORDS, REAL LOVE HAS A HIGH THRESHOLD FOR BEING AGGRAVATED AND AGGRIEVED, BUT WHEN SUCH OCCURS, SCORES ARE NOT KEPT TO BE SETTLED. LOVE DOES NOT DELIGHT IN EVIL BUT REJOICES IN TRUTH. SIMPLY PUT, LOVE DOES NOT DELIGHT WHEN ILL BEFALLS ANOTHER OR WHEN A PERSON BEHAVES IN INAPPROPRIATE WAYS, BUT IT CELEBRATES WHEN WHAT IS RIGHT AND JUST IS FOUND IN THE LIFE AND EXPERIENCE OF ANOTHER. THIS LOVE ALWAYS SEEKS TO GUARD AND PROTECT OTHERS. IT ALWAYS FILLS IN GAPS OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE WITH TRUST. IT ALWAYS HOPES FOR THE COMING DAY OF FULL REDEMPTION AND WAITS PATIENTLY FOR THE ARRIVAL OF THAT DAY WITHOUT FAIL.

WHILE ONE MIGHT NOTE THAT PAUL'S DESCRIPTION OF LOVE IS NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE ACCOUNTING OF THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNTING OF LOVE, IT CERTAINLY COVERS A WIDE SWATH OF ITS CORE MEANING AND PRACTICE. IN PAUL'S MIND, LOVE IS BEST UNDERSTOOD AS PRACTICED, BUT THIS DOES NOT MEAN HE DEVALUES FEELING. THE PATHOS OF LOVE IS ALLUDED TO IN PAUL'S STATEMENTS CONCERNING REJOICING, TRUSTING, AND HOPING, AND THESE ALL INVOLVE EMOTIONAL ELEMENTS. RATHER THAN ASSERTING EMOTION HAS NO PLACE IN LOVE, IT IS BETTER TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE PRACTICE OF LOVE IS CENTRAL TO ANY RELATIONSHIP. LOVE MUST BE EXPRESSED TO BE LOVE. HOWEVER, ONE CANNOT DISCOUNT THAT FOND AFFECTIONS ARE ALSO PRESENT MOTIVATING AND EMPOWERING SUCH LOVING EXPRESSIONS.

REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

WE ARE HARDWIRED TO CONNECT, BUT CONNECTING IS HARD. GOOD THING JESUS HAS MADE IT POSSIBLE AND THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES IT A PRACTICAL REALITY IN MY LIFE OR IT WOULD NEVER HAPPEN AT ALL! THERE IS JUST ONE PROBLEM REMAINING. CONNECTING IS MESSY, SO MUCH SO I OFTEN WITHDRAW FROM THE VERY THING I WANT SO BADLY, RELATIONSHIPS. IN THE BEGINNING EVERYONE IS WONDERFUL. . .AND THEN YOU GET TO KNOW THEM. YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN. PEOPLE ARE WEIRD. SOME OF THIS IS BECAUSE I GO THROUGH LIFE NORMALIZING MY FEELINGS AND BEHAVIOR. WE ALL DO. BUT ACCOUNTING FOR THIS, SOME PEOPLE ARE STILL REALLY WEIRD, AND HARD TO GET

ALONG WITH EVEN WITH THE SPIRIT AT WORK IN BOTH OF US. IN SPITE OF THE SPIRIT'S DEEP WORK, PEOPLE ARE CRANKY, MEAN, ABRASIVE AND MORE. WAIT. MAYBE THIS IS ME. REGARDLESS, RELATIONSHIPS ARE STILL HARD AND EXTREMELY MESSY, BECAUSE GOD HASN'T FINISHED HIS WORK IN US. SO, WE EXPERIENCE A REDEEMED ABILITY TO CONNECT WITH SOME LEFTOVER BITS OF CONTROL, MANIPULATION, AND KINGDOM BUILDING. SOMETIMES I CAN LOOK PAST IT ALL. SOMETIMES I CAN'T AND I WANT TO RUN AWAY. SO I DO. I SUPPOSE THAT IS WITHIN MY PURVIEW. I CAN ALWAYS WALK AWAY, BUT I AM LEARNING THAT IF I REALLY WANT RELATIONSHIPS I CAN'T EXERCISE THIS ABILITY TO WALK AWAY. I HAVE TO STAY PUT AND WORK THROUGH THE MESS. WHILE I WOULD LIKE TO REPORT THAT SIMPLY LOOKING AT SOMEONE AND SAYING, "STOP IT!" BRINGS ABOUT GREAT RESULTS, I WOULD BE LYING. THE SAME COULD BE SAID FOR ME. MULTIPLE ATTEMPTS TO LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND TELL THAT FELLOW TO JUST STOP HAVE BEEN MET WITH LITTLE TO NO SUCCESS. SO, WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

IF WE CAN NOW CONNECT BUT CONNECT REMAINS HARD AND CREATES SUCH MESS, HOW CAN WE CONNECT? IT IS HERE I AM DISCOVERING THE POWER AND NECESSITY OF LOVE. LOVE HELPS US DEAL WITH THE RELATIONAL MESS OUR BROKENNESS CREATES. PETER SAYS IT THIS WAY, "LOVE COVERS A MULTITUDE OF SINS" (1 PETER 4.8). ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING THIS IS, LOVE HELPS US DEAL WITH PEOPLE AS THEY ARE WHILE WE WAIT FOR WHAT THEY ONE DAY WILL BE. HOWEVER, LOVE WHICH MAKES CONNECTING WITH MESSY PEOPLE POSSIBLE IS A LOVE WHICH IS MORE THAN BEING POLITE AND TOLERANT OF ONE ANOTHER. THAT KIND OF LOVE DOESN'T CUT IT WHICH IS PROBABLY WHY I STRUGGLE TO CONNECT BECAUSE THIS IS THE WAY I LEARNED TO LOVE. RATHER, THE LOVE WHICH HELPS US CONNECT IS A LOVE WHICH MIRRORS GOD'S LOVE. IT IS DEEP, STRONG, AND ABIDING. IT IS A LOVE WHICH I AM NOT CAPABLE OF GIVING, BUT THIS IS NOT REALLY A PROBLEM BECAUSE THE SPIRIT IS WILLING AND DESIROUS OF LOVING IN THIS WAY THROUGH ME. BECAUSE THIS IS TRUE, MY LOVING OF OTHERS IS REALLY MORE ABOUT MY OPENNESS TO THE SPIRIT THAN MY ABILITY TO LOVE.

REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

WE WERE MADE TO CONNECT, BUT WE FIND CONNECTING HARD EVEN THOUGH GOD HAS MADE IT POSSIBLE ONCE MORE. PART OF THIS IS BECAUSE WHEN WE CONNECT WE DISCOVER RELATIONSHIPS GET MESSY. WE ARE NOT YET THE PEOPLE WE WILL ONE DAY BE.

WE STILL COME AT ONE ANOTHER WITH AGENDAS AND EFFORTS TO CONTROL. GOD HASN'T FINISHED REWIRING US YET. THIS RELATIONSHIP DYNAMIC OF MESSINESS OFTEN SENDS US RUNNING AND SCREAMING FROM PEOPLE. . .AND CHURCHES. EVERYTHING STARTS OUT GREAT. PEOPLE SEEM WONDERFUL, AND THEN WE GET TO KNOW THEM AND DON'T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH THEM. SO, WE EXERCISE OUR RIGHT TO WALK AWAY. WE START A NEW RELATIONSHIP. WE GO TO A NEW CHURCH. WE BEGIN A NEW MARRIAGE. HOWEVER, IF WE WANT TO BE LONELY NO MORE, WE MUST STOP EXERCISING OUR RIGHT TO WALK AWAY. WE HAVE TO STAY WITH PEOPLE, AND THIS IS HARD, BUT LOVE MAKES IT POSSIBLE. THE PROBLEM IS, THE LOVE WHICH MAKES IT POSSIBLE IS A LOVE WHICH IS BEYOND US, BUT THIS REALLY ISN'T A PROBLEM. THE LOVE REQUIRED IS A LOVE WHICH IS OF GOD, FROM GOD, AND BY GOD IN AND THROUGH US. SIMPLY PUT, THE SPIRIT CAN LOVE OTHERS THROUGH US, LEAD US TO LOVE OTHERS THROUGH US. WHAT IS NEEDED FROM US IS STAYING PUT. IF WE CAN STAY PUT, WE GIVE THE SPIRIT FERTILE GROUND TO LOVE THROUGH US AND WE DISCOVER WE ARE LONELY NO MORE. THIS WEEK, WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO CONSIDER STAYING PUT IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS. IN THE ANCIENT CHURCH, THIS STAYING PUT WAS REFERRED TO AS A VOW OF STABILITY. SIMPLY PUT, PEOPLE VOWED NOT TO MOVE OR RUN AWAY FROM THEIR PRESENT CONTEXT OR RELATIONSHIPS BUT TO GIVE THE SPIRIT THE GROUND HE NEEDED TO DO WHAT ONLY HE COULD DO IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS. THIS RUNS CONTRARY TO HOW WE AS A CONSUMER CULTURE THINK, BUT THIS SHOULDN'T SURPRISE US. GOD IS NOT CREATING A CONSUMER CULTURE. VOWS OF STABILITY CAN BE EXPRESSED SEVERAL WAYS, BUT THE MOST COMMON MODERN FORM IS MEMBERSHIP. WHEN RIGHTLY UNDERSTOOD, MEMBERSHIP IS A VOW TO STAY PUT, A VOW TO BE FAMILY, TO GIVE THE SPIRIT GROUND IN OUR LIVES. YOU MIGHT CONSIDER PURSUING MEMBERSHIP WITH UNION CENTER AS AN EXPRESSION OF THIS VOW. IF THIS IS SOMETHING YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN, YOU CAN CONTACT THE OFFICE FOR MORE INFORMATION.



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