

Talk It Over

THE VOW

(Week 3)

The Vow of Pursuit

SMALL TALK

1. What's something crazy you've done for love?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ 1 John 3:18, John 3:16, and 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.** How is love described in the Bible? How does this differ from how culture, movies, and TV portray love?

1 John 3:18 (NIV) Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

John 3:16 (NIV) For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV) ⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Culture, movies, and TV generally show love as a passionate feeling that overtakes one's emotions and sustains such feelings as long as they are "in love".

The Bible presents love as a VERB, the actions one does for another.

In media many times "feelings of passion and lust" are confused with "love". Love is focused on blessing someone else, whereas lust is most often self-centered, as in "I love the way you make me feel."

3. **READ Genesis 2:24:** The Hebrew word translated "united" (NIV) or "cleave" (KJV) is a rich word which includes the meaning to cling to, to adhere to, to catch by pursuit, to pursue hard with affection and devotion. Why is it so easy for married couples to become complacent in their relationship with their spouse?

Genesis 2:24 (NIV) That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Is there any other area in life that you can just stop working at when you don't "feel" it anymore, and expect that it will improve?

- I don't "feel" like working out. Can you expect to stop and look and feel better?
- I don't "feel" like going to work? Can you expect to keep getting a paycheck?
- I don't "feel" like raising these kids anymore? Let's get rid of them? Ridiculous! Or to jail you go for a long long time.
- I don't feel like stopping at a red light.

Why are you letting yourself get away with "I don't feel like" pursuing my spouse?

Some of you may be thinking, you make marriage sound so...hard. We are doing good. It's not that hard. We don't need to work so hard at pursuing.

Really? Let me ask you, when does your car begin to stop, when you put your foot on the break, or when you take your foot off the gas.

If you are doing good, but you have taken your foot off the gas, you are already beginning to stop.

COVENANTS require foot on the gas action.

It's true for your relationship with God also. I've seen people growing and excited, and learning about God, coming every week, faithfully, and their feelings are so engaged. Then I've watched something happen that is very interesting. Then they think they have arrived. They get baptized. Then if they aren't careful, they take their foot off the gas pedal. They start stopping. Know what a mean. They aren't doing the things like praying, and they start skipping church or prayer, or Bible Study, or small group. And they have the same kind of excuse that goes like this. I don't feel like it.

That excuse doesn't work for any other area of life, and it certainly doesn't work for a Covenant with a spouse, or a covenant with God. If you want to feel like it, then keep pursuing, keep your foot on the gas. Keep seeking, asking, knocking, pursuing. Feelings follow the right actions.

4. **READ Ephesians 5:21-33.** What does a woman need from her husband? What does a man need from his wife?

*Ephesians 5:21-33 (NIV2011) **Submit to one another** out of reverence for Christ.*

This whole section explains how husbands and wives should submit to one another, and serve the best interest of their covenant partner. Both parties

serve the other party in Covenant. Both parties continue to pursue and seek out the other party's best interest, helping them be who God wants them to be. Both parties are working and seeking that oneness in covenant, pursuing oneness, guarding it, building it, and keeping it. The following explains how that is to be done from each perspective.

²² *Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.*
²³ *For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.* ²⁴ *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.* ²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her* ²⁶ *to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,* ²⁷ *and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.* ²⁸ *In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.* ²⁹ *After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—* ³⁰ *for we are members of his body.* ³¹ *“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and* *be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”* ³² *This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.* ³³ *However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and* *the wife must respect her husband.*

A wife wants to know she is treasured and cherished (exclusively) and that she is secure in her husband's love.

She feels this when he seeks to please her.

A husband wants to know his wife believes in him and respects him and is glad he is her husband.

He feels this when she admires and affirms him.

In mutual submission (5:21) each aims their heart toward pleasing the other.

GETTING PERSONAL

5. Try to name 5 things that you do even when you don't feel like doing it (example: paying taxes)?
6. **For married couples:** How often does the “I don't feel like it” excuse create a gap between your intentions and your actions? **For everyone:** How often does the “I don't feel like it” excuse create a gap between you and God?
7. Have you discovered any methods of success to overcome a gap between your intentions and actions?

MAKING PROGRESS

8. One of our core statements is: "Everyone has a next step." What's your next step?
- Homework for singles:** What steps are you taking to pursue the best interest of Jesus who is your covenant partner? What steps are you taking to pursue the best interest of your potential future covenant partner? **Homework for couples:** (1) Have a discussion about what your spouse does that you appreciate, that help you feel pursued and loved. (2) Go a step beyond: Ask yourself, "How can I *creatively* pursue him/her in the ways he/she would like to be pursued?" Then do it.

February 10, 2019

The Vow of Pursuit

Series: The Vow (Week 2)

Last week we talked about The Vow of Priority.

We talked about how God needs to be your # 1, and that if each spouse is drawing close to God, they can't help but be drawing closer to each other.

This week we talk about The VOW of Pursuit.

When we really want something...we pursue it.

When we really want someone we pursue that someone.

And sometimes we do some amazing things to pursue. Oh, the things we do for love...

- Like an all night greyhound bus ride just to see each other... and smelling like smoke when I arrived!
- Like daily handwritten letters during a one year long engagement while separated by MANY miles... (anyone still hand write a love note anymore?)

I'd like to begin with a question.

Q: What does it require to "fall in love"?

I bet you were thinking, it takes pursuit! But that's not my answer. Sometimes all it takes is A PULSE. For some it doesn't take much. They just see someone and their heart rate goes up. That is true if you are just talking about feelings, all it takes for some to "fall in Love" is a PULSE.

Here's a better question:

Q: What does it require to "stay in love"?

How do you keep the romantic edge for the duration of a lifelong marriage? The answer is The Vow of Pursuit. Marriage works when you work at it.

Here's the problem. We naturally pursue things we don't have. And we naturally stop pursuing them when we have it.

This is deadly for marriage. We become complacent. Complacency is deadly toward marriage.

In our culture when we talk about love, we often talk about it as a noun, as a feeling. We fall in love, as if we fell into a pool of passion. It's all about feelings.

But love in nearly every reference made in and around Jesus day is not LOVE as a noun describing a feeling, but Love is a verb. Just in case you weren't good at grammar, a verb is an action word. Love requires action. Love is action. Love is expression.

Is there any other area in life that you can just stop working at when you don't "feel" it anymore, and expect that it will improve?

- I don't "feel" like working out. Can you expect to stop working out then look and feel better?
- I don't "feel" like going to work? Can you expect to keep getting a paycheck even after you stopped showing up for work?
- I don't "feel" like raising these kids anymore? Let's get rid of them? Ridiculous!
- I don't feel like stopping at a red light.
- I don't feel like paying my taxes.

Listen, why are you letting yourself get away with "I don't feel like" pursuing your wife. Let's get back to a foundational verse as we look at this foundational idea.

***Genesis 2:24 (NIV)** That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.*

Do you see where it say pursue your spouse? Actually it does.

united: <i>davaq</i> (daw-bak'); cling or adhere; to catch by <u>pursuit</u> ; to pursue hard with affection and devotion. KJV, "cleave"
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***Psalms 63:8 (NIV)** I cling to you; your right hand upholds me. [God]*

***Job 41:17 (NIV)** They are joined fast to one another;*

they cling together and cannot be parted. [the armored scales of Leviathan]

Judges 20:45 (NIV) ...they kept pressing after
[“pursuing” them] [one army pursuing another]

God built the idea of Pursuit into the definition of both the Marriage COVENANT, and our COVENANT with God, which it reflects. We are to PURSUE, to be UNITED. We are to cling to, adhere to, catch by pursuit, and pursue hard after with affection and devotion in both of these COVENANT relationships.

Seek FIRST the Kingdom of God...

Matthew 7:7-8 (NIV) Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

Matthew 6:33 (NIV) But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness...

I have a question I don't want you to be quick to brush off.

If you don't **FEEL** in love, could it be that you've stopped pursuing your spouse?

Don't brush this off with: “I'm not the one that stopped pursuing, she/he is.”

I'm not asking them. I'm asking you, and I'm asking you to not brush this off. Regardless of what's going on, I'm asking you. Have you stopped pursuing your spouse?

Singles: If you are dating someone right now, and you are not mutually pursuing each other, that is a red flag, and you better run!

Marrieds: How do we keep pursuit, alive, and ignited again?

HOW TO FILL THE FEELING TANK

Q: How do you stop a car?

A: Put your foot on the brake.

Isn't there another way? Yes. Crash. Perhaps like having an affair.

But there's another way... take your foot off the gas. The moment you take your foot off the gas, you are starting to stop.

Let's say you have done for too long and now all your feelings of love are gone.

If you say, "We aren't in love anymore...we want a divorce...aren't you just like the person who says, "I want a new car, just because your car ran out of gas?!" That's very costly! If your car is out of gas, you don't need to dump the car, you need to fill up the tank. So, when feelings are the problem, the good news is that there is something we can do about it.

So, in a word, we need to start pursuing again.

COVENANTS require foot on the gas action.

It's true for your relationship with God also. I've seen people growing and excited, and learning about God, coming every week, faithfully, and their feelings are so engaged. Then I've watched something happen that is very interesting. When they think they have arrived, when they get baptized, they take their foot off the gas. They start stopping. Know what I mean? They aren't doing the things like praying, and they start skipping church or prayer, or Bible Study, or small group. And they have the same kind of excuse that goes like this. I don't feel it anymore. It just doesn't seem real. It doesn't work. The reason it feels like it doesn't work is that you are not working it!

If you want to feel like it, then keep pursuing, keep your foot on the gas. Keep seeking, asking, knocking, pursuing. Feelings follow the right actions. God designed us to continue to pursue!

But how? Let's get really practical.

I. Think something good and SAY it.

Hebrews 3:13 (NIV2011) But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Don't wait for the other to start. You start.

A. Pursue her with words of affection.

Men, are you thinking, *I do pursue her. Like every night!* Yes, but do you pursue her in the way ***she likes*** to be pursued. Do you listen to her? Do you help her around the house? Do you give her affection that isn't with selfish intent?

B. Pursue him with words of affirmation.

Ladies, less words telling him what he is not. Learn to tell him what you affirm in him, in some way that he is!

She wants to know: Do you love me today?

He wants to know: Do you believe in me today?

II. Think something special and DO it.

James 4:17 (NIV) If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.

III. When you want something different, BE it.

To get what you've never had, you must do what you've never done.

To get what you once had, you must do what you once did.

Revelation 2:5 (NIV) Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.

The grass isn't greener on the other side of the fence. The grass isn't greener on this side of the fence. The grass is only really greener where someone is watering the grass. Start watering and fertilizing the grass on your side of the fence!

Dear Lord Jesus,

You pursued me with love in action. You served me to the point of suffering. You laid yourself down and gave yourself for me. You have opened my heart to you. Thank you. Help me to cling to you, and adhere to you, and pursue you. Help me to continue to pursue hard with affection and devotion, and catch oneness of heart by pursuing my covenant partner. I want to honor you. AMEN!