

1. We have been talking the last few weeks about **Unity Killers**. Things that destroy unity in our relationships with others whether that be at church, in your marriage, in your home, at work or on the little league field.
2. The first week we saw how **selfishness** can worm its way into our heart and cause damage to our relationships with others.
3. The Corinthian church was causing division among themselves by their selfishness and unwillingness to share with others. They focused more on themselves than upon helping others.
4. The second thing that kills unity in our relationships is when we lose sight of the **purpose** of those relationships.
5. Last week we saw how when Jesus tried to minister to Zacchaeus, which some versions of the bible refer to as scum because he was a cheating tax collector, there was murmuring and grumbling and complaining among the crowd that was around Jesus.
6. Jesus called Zacchaeus down from the tree he was in to spend the night at his house and everyone complained, probably even his disciples, what is Jesus doing.
7. But Jesus reminded them what he was doing. He reminded them of his purpose for being on the earth. **Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."**
8. Son of man was a title that Jesus used to call himself. Basically, what Jesus is saying is I went to the house of a sinner to spend the night because that's what I'm here on this earth to do. Seek and save those who are lost.
9. The people around Jesus had lost sight of Jesus purpose for being here.
10. We too can lose sight of the purpose of the relationships we are in.
11. **The church exists to make disciples, and baptize and teach** those who have accepted Jesus as their savior so they can become mature believers and become disciples themselves.
12. When a church loses sight of that purpose disunity will not be far behind.

13. We learned from Genesis that the purpose of marriage is to reflect the image of God, to produce Godly offspring in the image of God and to give us an advantage in spiritual warfare. Marriage is a love relationship that can only exist in unity when God is at the center of it. When God is not at the center of that marriage or one of those partners chooses to move away from God's purpose unity is going to be hard to come by.
14. That same principle can be applied to your job situation. Find out the purpose of the company you work for and then do everything in your power to help the company achieve those purposes.
15. You will probably be promoted and get raises and you will be seen as a valuable member of that team. Get selfish and begin to think and act like that company is just there so you have a job and can get a paycheck and you probably won't be around very long.
16. Let's move on to our third unity killer this morning. I am going to name this unity killer...

TITLE: **Falling out of love.**

TEXT: **Revelation 2:1-5** "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: **2** I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. **3** You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. **4** Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. **5** Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

INTRO:

1. In order to fully understand what Jesus is saying to the church of Ephesus we need some background information.
2. The church in Ephesus was planted and started by the Apostle Paul. According to Acts chapter 19 Paul spent about two years there in Ephesus ministering, which was not normal for Paul. Paul was a missionary evangelist who didn't stay in one place very long.

3. But while he was there, God gave Paul the opportunity to speak to some of the most influential people in the known world at that time.
Acts 19:10-12 This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. **11** God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, **12** so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.
4. This was more than just speaking to important people. These important people saw miracles and signs and wonders similar to the ones Jesus performed while he was on earth.
5. Paul's fame and the fame of the church he established went far and wide.
6. Ephesus was a city of nearly 60 thousand people which was huge in those days. It was a trade center so the city population would swell with visitors during the day.
7. It was filled with temples to false God's, the main temple being the temple to the God Artemis. This temple was one of the Seven Wonders of the World at that time.
8. The city also had a great amphitheater which could seat 45 thousand people.
9. So what we find was that greatness was a part of the Ephesian culture. But God was not to be outdone by the greatness of this city. The Lord established a great church there as well to be a light to all the people of that city and the province of Asia.
10. This great church was also filled with great people. Listen again to John's description of them in **Revelation 2:2-3** **I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. 3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.**
11. I read that and I think. These believers were tough. It wasn't easy living and doing ministry in a city where people worshiped every kind of God imaginable.
12. It was hard when your message is there is only one true God and only one way to him and his name is Jesus. But these believers hung in there.
13. They worked hard. They persevered and didn't give up when the work was overwhelming.
14. They refused to tolerate wicked people. In other words, people who claimed to be believers in Jesus Christ but who were really wolves in sheep's clothing.

15. They were not fooled by false teachers. They operated in the gift of discernment. They knew who was real and who wasn't.
16. They had endured hardships. We can only assume that they endured physical hardships. These believers may have suffered physical abuse. They probably had been called names and made fun of; but not only had they persevered, they had not grown weary.
17. That's not to say that they never got physically tired. It simply means they were so determined to stand up for that nothing was going to shake them
18. As I said earlier. They were tough. But as overwhelming as all those accolades were and are, the Lord saw something in them that was extremely disturbing.
19. Literally, they had fallen out of love with Jesus, and according to the NLT, with each other. **Revelation 2:4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.**
20. Every commentary I consulted; every bit of research I did brought me to only one conclusion. What Jesus is saying here is you have fallen out of love with me and your brothers and sisters in Christ. You no longer have a love relationship with Jesus, and that has damaged your love relationships with others.
21. Then Jesus says something just as shocking. I say shocking because in our human way of evaluating people and things we would have never said this about the church in Ephesus. **Revelation 2:5 Remember the height from which you have fallen!**
22. Remember the height from which you have fallen? What height have they fallen from? They are some of the hardest working people on the planet. Their doctrine is sound. They won't tolerate wickedness or false prophets. They are willing to tirelessly persevere in the face of hardships. I mean let's be transparent. In 2021 we would call these types of Christians super Christians.
23. Every church in America would love to have a building full of people like this.
24. Folks like this would be leaders and teachers and deacons and people of influence. But there was in fact a height that they had fallen from. They had fallen from the most important aspect of a believer's life.
25. They had fallen out of love with Jesus and others.

26. Friend, I believe it's time we come back to God's grading system. I believe it's time we see and think how God sees and thinks about things.
27. The greatest Christians are not those who are hardworking and devoted to sound doctrine and willing to not give up in the face of difficulties, the greatest Christians are those who are passionately in love with Jesus and others.
28. Though it may be hard for us to wrap our minds around, according to the word of God, it is possible to be all of those things and more and be completely out of love with Jesus.
29. That's why **Matthew 7:21-23** "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. **22** Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' **23** Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"
30. I have a friend who calls that the scariest passage in the bible. I think he's right. According to that scripture you can be the pastor, you can be an evangelist, you can be a small group leader, you can work in the meal ministry. You can be a youth sponsor, work in the nursery.
31. Be a deacon or a trustee be anything you want and not even be on your way to heaven.
32. We can be any of those things and be falling out of love with Jesus and God's people.
33. God's measuring system says the beginning place and the characteristic that is most important in a believer's life is how in love are you with Jesus.
34. So why is falling out of love with Jesus a unity killer? Because the capacity to love others can only come out of a love relationship with Jesus.
35. **1 John 4:8-11** Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. **9** This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. **10** This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. **11** Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.
36. According to verse eight God is love. The only way we have a true picture and understanding of love is to have received love from God and have returned love to him.

37. How have we received that love? Verse nine says God sent his only son into the world that we might live.
38. Love originated out of and from God. Love is not a manmade thing it is a God thing. God loves us first before we ever loved him and he sent his son to be the sacrifice for our sins. That is the highest form of love that any human being will ever know. To be loved by God and to be forgiven by God of our sins. Love doesn't get any better than that.
39. But then in verse eleven we are reminded that God's reasoning for loving us was not just so that we could feel loved. Since we have received love, we should then show love to others.
40. And it is only out of that love that we are able to experience unity and togetherness and oneness and wholeness and completeness.
41. After all. If we are not in a love relationship with Jesus then we are going to be unable to fulfill this command **1 John 4:21** And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.
42. We can't be in unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ if we are not deeply in love with Jesus first.
43. How about this command. **Ephesians 5:25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her
44. Try loving your wife or your husband without a deeply passionate love for Jesus and see how frustrating it is. It can't truly be done.
45. What about this command. **Matthew 27:37-39** Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." **38** This is the first and greatest commandment. **39** And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'
46. The neighbor Jesus refers to here could be your next-door neighbor, it could be a co-worker, it could be another parent on the football team or the baseball team.
47. It could be anybody in your life. You and I are commanded to love them. That's what unity springs out of is love. But we can't love them if we don't first love Jesus.

Conclusion:

1. I want to ask a couple of questions this morning. Before I ask however I want to make it clear who I'm talking to today.
2. I'm talking to everybody who is within the sound of my voice. Nobody is exempt from answering these questions.

3. Don't make the excuse that you are involved in ministry or you serve here or you serve there or you have this title and that responsibility so therefore you're "ok".
4. The question is not are you ok. The question is **are you passionately in love with Jesus?**
5. Are you passionately in love with Jesus?
6. Are you falling out of love with Jesus?
7. Have you fallen out of love with Jesus?
8. Is your love for Jesus growing day by day or is there a time in your life you can point back to and you know you loved him more then, than you do now?
9. Look back over the last six months to a year of your life. Are you closer to Jesus now or are you stagnant or are you moving away from him?
10. As I was praying this week over this message and as I was praying for everyone who would be here today or listen on the internet, I was reminded of the vows I often recite in a wedding ceremony.
11. As I read them out loud, it just seemed so natural that I would want to express those vows to God. So I did.
12. In the presence of God, I **Jeff**, give myself, to you **Jesus**, as your child. I accept you as my savior. To love and to hold, to cherish and understand, from this day forward, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, to stay by your side, in sickness and in health, at all times, for all the days of my life. I pledge to you, my faith, and my love.
13. I wonder. When was the last time you told God you loved him? When was the last time you set aside time just for him and you focused on and evaluated your love for Jesus?
14. How about your love for other people?
15. Does your love for Jesus and his love for you translate into a loving response toward others?
16. Do you love others or do you tolerate others?
17. Do you love others or do you judge others?
18. Do you pray for others or do you gossip about others?
19. I believe these are the most important questions we will consider today.
20. I would like to ask every person who will, to come forward and stand together.

21. I'm asking us to come together because it's something we all need to do.
22. Spend some time allowing the Holy Spirit to examine us.
23. Ask the Lord's forgiveness that we have allowed our love to grow cold.
24. Ask the Lord to renew our passion for him and for others.
25. Would you declare you vows to Jesus?
26. In the presence of God, I **insert your name**, give myself, to you **Jesus**, as your child. I accept you as my savior. To love and to hold, to cherish and understand, from this day forward, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, to stay by your side, in sickness and in health, at all times, for all the days of my life. I pledge to you, my faith and my love.
27. Worship the savior who is worthy of your love.