

Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets
5 Questions to Help You Determine Your Next Move

Session 6

Question #5: The Relationship Question – What does love require of me?

“A new command I give you. Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”
- Jesus, John 13:33-34

Session Overview

Relationships are built on mutual honor and respect, not rules. And that brings us at last to our final question: The Relationship Question. This question paves the path to relational health but doesn't guarantee the other person will choose to walk it with you – it lays a foundation for mutually beneficial relationships but comes with no promise the other party will choose to build on it. This clarifying but terrifying question should stand guard over our consciences. It should serve as a guide, signpost, and compass as we navigate the unavoidable complexities inherent in every relationship. It should inform how we date, parent, boss, manage, and coach. It should form a perimeter around what we say and do in our roles as spouses, coworkers, and neighbors. It's a question that introduces inescapable clarity to just about every moral, ethical, and relational decision you will bump up against. Our final question takes us to the heart of Jesus's new covenant command – the standard by which his followers are required to evaluate their behavior, conversations, and attitudes – a question I'm quick to invite even religious skeptics to adopt because of its relationally healing properties and potential.

Conversation Starter

Share a story of a time love required far more of you than you thought possible.

Watch the video

Group Discussion

1. The first four questions come with a guaranteed return on investment. What makes The Relationship Question the least certain and most demanding of all five questions?
2. Why was Jesus' new command regarding love so revolutionary?
3. The apostle Paul lists these attributes of love in relationships: kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22). Which of these comes easiest to you – and which do you need God's help with most? Why?
4. In 1Corinthians 13:4-8, Paul provides a more detailed description of what love is. He ends the list with this phrase: “Love never fails.” In a world of broken relationships and promises, how is this statement true?
5. Do you tend to expect others to demonstrate a more selfless, extravagant love toward you than you generally feel is required of you? Why might this be the case?

Making Better Decisions

Think back to your most recent conflict with a family member or significant other. Would the tone and temperature of the conversation have been different if both parties had predecided not to be *self-seeking* and to *protect* the relationship at all costs? Love doesn't seek to win the argument. Love seeks to protect the relationship. Besides, nobody ever *wins* an argument when family is involved. I've seen too many parents *win* all the arguments and *lose* their kids in the process. Go back to your disagreement with the person close to you? How might the disagreement have gone if you had *both* chosen ahead of time to enter into it with love rather than trying to win? What if the other person had no interest in approaching the encounter in love, but you did? How might that have changed the situation? What did you learn about yourself and the costly nature of love through this exercise?

Session Wrap Up

The Relationship Question is fueled and informed by Jesus's "as I have loved you" command. It intersects with every imaginable relational scenario in ways that are both clarifying and terrifying. We are all tempted at times to ask or wonder how little we can get by with relationally . . . the very thing we don't want the person on the other side of us to consider. This question calls us to account. When presenting this concept publicly, I often ask the audience to commit the following to memory: *When unsure of what to say or do, ask what love requires of you.* We are to do unto others as our heavenly Father, through Christ, has done unto us. He did what was best for us. We, in turn, are to do what's best for others even when less than what's best is embraced as acceptable by the others. This may require you to pick up your phone and rebuild a bridge you burned with your unassailable logic and sarcasm. You were right! But being *right* wasn't what love requires of you. You may need to write a letter or rewrite an email. Invite someone to meet you for coffee. And *no*, the other party may not be interested in what love requires of you. They may have no interest in what love requires of *them* either. I warned you. There's no guaranteed return on investment with this question. But this is how we make the world better. And, if we're honest, this is how we want to be treated by others. So, here's our fifth and final decision.

Decision #5: The Relationship Decision

I will decide with the interests of others in mind.

Final Personal Study

Do

Recall a favorite movie where the main character made a costly sacrifice of love for another or perhaps many others. Describe why this was such a powerful demonstration of love? Love is not about powering up but stepping down. In a situation this week where you could power your way through, practice doing the opposite. Rather than try to win, find a way to love.

Reflect

The apostle Paul offers this mind-bending description of what real love is:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others; it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not

delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (1Corinthian 13:4-8)

Next to each phrase below, describe how you are doing with that particular aspect.

- * Love is patient
- * Love is kind
- * Love does not envy
- * Love does not boast
- * Love is not proud
- * Love does not dishonour others
- * Love is not self-serving
- * Love is not easily angered
- * Love keeps no record of wrongs
- * Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth
- * Love always protects
- * Love always trusts
- * Love always perseveres

Decide

In John 13:34-35, Jesus says: “As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples. If you love one another.” Why do you think Jesus isolates and elevates love as the defining mark of his followers?

Based solely on your demonstration of love to them this past week, would most people know (without you telling them) that you are a follower of Jesus?

Decision #5 is The Relationship Question. Will you decide now to act with the interests of others, based on what love requires of you? Why does this last decision require us to push past our resistance?