

February, 2017

FROM PASTOR CHAMBERS: What a wonderful beginning we have had to 2017! We have spent the month of January reviewing our theme as a church in a series of messages reminding us how important it is to be servant hearted, kingdom minded, and Christ focused as we go into 2017. Now we build on this in February, looking forward to all the opportunities and blessings the Lord will give us! As I write this, my prayer is that God protects every family in our church and blesses them, and that God continues to do something wonderful in our midst as a church. Always remember that there is power in prayer!

DON'T BUY INTO THE "HOLLYWOOD VERSION" OF LOVE: In the context of Valentine's Day, my focus for this month is how our culture can send us the wrong signals when it comes to love and romance and how it can be contrary to the Word of God. **When it comes to "romantic love," our culture today holds it up as the greatest and noblest of pursuits.** We are led by the culture to believe that the need for romantic affection is built into every single one of us, so that we instinctively yearn for that "tingly, bubbly feeling" of "being in love," and it can be intoxicating. Here are three messages American culture sends to us as it concerns "romantic love," and when we listen to them, we fall prey to what can be called, "the god of romance..."



- **"You must live searching for your 'soul mate' that 'completes you'"** This message to those who are not married or at least dating someone is that you will not be content or complete unless you are in a relationship. We all are led to believe by the culture that when we find "the one" and we marry them we all live happily ever after in an enchanted land and this emotion we are experiencing together will be enough to overcome every problem we face in our marriage.
- **"If you don't have a prince, then you can't be a princess."** This message appeals to young ladies, for they strive to be what the culture tells them what beauty is. The message for men is that they have to be "prince charming" with no flaws. Thus we all look to romantic love as the secret to our satisfaction and the missing piece to make life feel complete. The god of romance is so attractive, once we have seen the cowboy ride into the sunset with the girl, or Romeo come to Juliet's window. We want the hearts and the flowers, and we want our stories to end with the words "and they lived happily ever after."
- **"If you are not with someone, then there must be something wrong with you."** This message appeals to single people in our society, for they get the impression that they are somehow incomplete. Thus Valentine's Day does more to emphasize this thought in the minds of those who are single, which isn't right and if you are single, my challenge is to don't believe that lie.

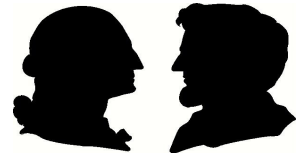
We must understand that these three messages are also the message of the "god of romance." With these messages in mind, our culture uses the outlets of media to subliminally pump into our minds the fact that in most romantic comedies and dramas today, an unmarried couple sleeping together or living together before marriage is a natural step in the growth of the relationship. With the story lines creating a strong emotional connection between the viewers and the characters, we can become happy for the lovers when they finally get physically intimate, being depicted as a step forward. In "Hollywood," it doesn't create more anxiety and complications for the characters; it is normal, expected, and problem free, which by the way is an illusion. Because we are searching for that "soul mate" that completes us, because we desire to be a prince and a princess, because we feel like something is wrong with us if we don't have a significant other, we become desperate at times, and we begin to put that person before the Lord, and we "place the cart before the horse." We must understand that a relationship that might otherwise grow from a friendship into a romance and then into a marriage is **OFTEN DERAILED** when a couple rearranges the order of things, and when things are out of order, a couple places commitment into the earliest stages of the relationship, long before a commitment is appropriate. The result is a very distorted and idealized picture of how relationships work, and will result in complications, anxiety, and many other problems.

With this said, understand that **ROMANCE IS A VERY GOOD THING.** God created it so that men and women would desire one another and that a family can be instituted. If a man and a woman are going to spend the rest of their lives together, then they most definitely have to be attracted to each other or they will be miserable. I personally believe God gives us those emotions to get us to the marriage altar because He knows if you knew how marriage would be after the wedding, you would never do it, because marriage, like anything else takes work, and it is a **TWO WAY STREET** from both partners, and love and romance are keys in developing a strong marriage with **God as the focal point.** On the other hand, **ROMANCE CAN BE A BAD THING** when we make it essential to life and set it up as a false god, thinking and believing that whatever problems we have and whatever red flags we have while dating, this emotion will be enough to overcome any obstacle in marriage. But here is the sobering truth - It doesn't. **IT NEVER WILL.** Why? Because the emotions do die out, we do come back to planet earth, and we find that we have placed romance as a false

god, and idols have no real power to fix a marriage, to heal a broken heart, to comfort a broken person. Romance is NOT ENOUGH. When we put our hope in romantic love and sacrifice SO MUCH for it, you have to ask if this beautiful gift from God has actually replaced Him. When that happens the ending is rarely “happily ever after.”

Love and romance is God's idea. We are all wired to love and to be loved. However, due to sin and man's fallen nature, for everything God deems is true and holy, Satan has a counterfeit, and it is the counterfeits we fall prey to due to our natural sin nature. Thus we have selfless love and we have selfish love - and many times **many people “fall in love” due to selfish reasons.** We begin life pursuing love and acceptance, whether it be from our parents, our peers, our teachers, our coaches, or our pastors. When that love and acceptance is not realized, we turn to other things to make us have a sense of acceptance or belonging. The tragedy is this, the harder we chase it the lonelier we feel. We all have a desire to love and to be loved. So when that need is not met, in a man's case, he will turn to pornography or other things such as that, and in a woman's case, she will pursue any man who pays attention to her. Thus we see the mirage of the idol of romance. This is also why so many Christians marry non-Christians. This is why even if both are saved or if both are unsaved always end up dating and marrying the wrong person...or it could be the right person - but the marriage is marked with fighting, arguing, bitterness, abuse, and eventually...divorce. Why? **When we look to someone other than God to complete us and define our lives, it is IDOLATRY.** It is also futile because God is the only one who can complete us. We are made for Him. A relationship with a life partner is a wonderful and precious gift from God, BUT - it was NEVER meant to replace a relationship with the giver. **Only the Lord Jesus Christ can complete us.** Thus it is a matter of priorities. Are you placing your spouse or boyfriend/girlfriend above the Lord? Are you leaning on them to “complete you?” If you are living life like this, you are asking that person to be “god” to you, and that puts too much pressure on a relationship, and is not what God intended. **The challenge is this:** The GOAL OF DATING should be FRIENDSHIP FIRST. If you are unmarried, LEARN TO DELAY GRATIFICATION. If you are a parent, TEACH YOUR KIDS the importance of waiting, for God in His Word teaches us to remain pure for our own benefit. Know that when you decide to do this and/or make changes in this area, it is hard work and will not be easy, but it will be WORTH IT in the long run, for when you choose to do things God's way as instructed in His Word, you will have less heartache and positive consequences when it comes to decisions. **Thus we all need WISDOM!** Note 1 Corinthians 7:2 - “Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.” Note also other passages of scripture on how the Word of God defines what “love” truly is. On this Valentine's Day, may we choose not to buy into the “Hollywood Version” of love. (For more information on this subject, check out Coach Tony Dungy's Devotional on this subject in his book Uncommon Life Daily Challenge, May 5; Also check out the book Gods at War by Kyle Idleman, chapter 11, “The God of Romance.” Excerpts from both were used to write this article.)

NOTABLE AND QUOTABLE: (in honor of President's Day, Abraham Lincoln on the importance of character...) “Character is like a tree and reputation like a shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing.” “Whatever you are, be a good one.” (George Washington on the importance of having the right friends...) “Be courteous to all, but intimate with few, and let those few be well tried before you give them your confidence.” “Friendship is a plant of slow growth and must undergo and withstand the shocks of adversity before it is entitled to the appellation.” (Abraham Lincoln on happiness) “Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.”



CHURCH EVENTS FOR FEBRUARY: Remember the official “church calendar” is located in the church office. Every announcement in the bulletin for Sunday comes from the calendar. If you lead a ministry and desire to plan an activity not yet on the calendar and need it announced for Sunday, please let us know by Friday morning so that it can be announced in the bulletin each week.

Sunday Evening, February 5 - Lord's Supper - evening service
Monday Evening, February 6 - Ladies Bible Study at the church
Wednesday Evening, February 8 - AWANA “Soup”er Bowl Night
Thursday Morning, February 9 - Jolly Seniors at Cross Lanes Christian School
Thursday Evening, February 9 - Ladies Bible Study at the home of Sarah Frazer
Friday Evening, February 10 - Church ski/tubing trip at Winterplace
Monday Evening, February 13 - Advisory Council Meeting - 7:00 pm
Thursday Afternoon, February 16 - Sunshine Seniors Planning Luncheon at the church - 12:00 pm
Sunday Evening, February 19 - C.U.R.E. Youth Group Snak-n-Yak - Pizza Hut St. Albans after evening service
Saturday Morning, February 25 - C.U.R.E. Youth Group - deliver pillow cases to Women's and Children's Hospital
Saturday Evening, February 25 - Sunshine Seniors - Soup and Salad at the home of Jim and Sandy Hudson - 6 pm
Sunday Evening, February 26 - Union Mission Night at SHBC - with Union Mission Choir, Dusty Graham speaking
Monday Evening, February 27 - Deacon's Meeting - 7 pm
Tuesday Evening, February 28 - Mom's Night Out - 6:30-8:30 pm

