

35-Day Guide



**1st Love OS**

Version 2.0

For most of us, our relationships are the most important, draining, restoring, confusing, healing and heart-breaking aspect of our lives. Are you tired of working out of frustration in your relationships? Are you ready to move toward working in 1st Love in your relationship?

### **It is time for a Relationship Restart.**

Think of it this way, each relationship we have is like an app. 1st Love is an operating system. We can keep trying to "update" the app, but until we let Jesus install 1st Love as your new OS, the relationship can not truly restart.

We dare you to join this Relationship Restart experiment! Get ready for 35 days of practical counsel in a new way of relating based on the OS of 1st Love—35 days to discover how Jesus' love for us can transform the feel and flow of our family relationships, our friendships, our romantic relationships and even workplace relationships.

*Journaling can be a powerful tool to use during the next few weeks. It can be helpful to jot down things that reinforce what you are learning as you work through this booklet or from weekly messages. We hope this will be a tangible way to document your progress and thoughts as you grow.*



- Write your current definition of love.
- Spend some time considering how you view love and what you believe love is.
- What are the major things that contribute to your understanding of love (society, family, media, etc)?



- What is your view of the purpose of relationships?
- As you think on the most impactful relationships in your life, either positive or negative, what stands out to you?
- What words come immediately to mind when you think of having relationship with others?



- Write a few sentences remembering a time you felt loved.
- What emotions did you feel?
- Did feeling loved change the way you saw yourself?
- Think about the relationships you feel most loved in. What do you value about those relationships?



## Read

### 1 Corinthians 13 NIV

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

<sup>8</sup> Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup> but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. <sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. <sup>12</sup> For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

<sup>13</sup> And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.



## Read

### 1 John 4:7-19 NIV

<sup>7</sup> Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

<sup>13</sup> This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. <sup>16</sup> And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. <sup>17</sup> This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. <sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

<sup>19</sup> We love because he 1st Loved us.



- The Bible talks a lot about love. As you read the previous two passages did anything stand out to you?
- What ideas challenged the definition of love you wrote on day one?



Over the next twenty-eight days we will be exploring how our relationships can be transformed by God's love when we understand His love for us. The challenge during this journey is for all of us to think of one relationship where we want to see forgiveness, reconciliation, restoration—a relationship where we want to see a restart. This can be a family member, a neighbor, a coworker or a friend. Pray and ask Jesus to show you a relationship that needs a restart.

Write that name here:

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Join us at Westside for the next four weeks to learn more about how this relationship can be transformed by God's 1st Love operating system.

**WFC Lenexa Services**

8:15a | 9:30a | 11a | 5p

**WFC Speedway Services**

8:30a | 9:30a | 10:45a

more info: [westsidefamily.church/services](https://westsidefamily.church/services)



Week 2

**A New Definition**



## Read

### 1 John 4:7-19 NIV

<sup>7</sup> Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us.

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<sup>19</sup> We love because He first Loved us.

## Read

### 1 Corinthians 13 NIV

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<sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

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<sup>13</sup> And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.



Love is foundational for a Christian. Not only is identity and worth cemented in God's love for us, it is reflected in how we show love to others. The fact that God sent His son so that our relationship with God can be repaired reveals that He values relationship. God created us for healthy, vibrant relationships.

1 John 4 is clear about the nature of love as being rooted in God. He is love. All that can be understood about love returns to that foundation. God exists in relationship himself. He is three in one, Father, Son and Spirit. Relationship is the nature of His being.

The Trinity is absolutely foundational to Christianity because it reveals the nature of God as loving relationship. God is radical in relatedness, a perfect communion between Three. God is perfect in His execution of love because it flows from him. His love overflows in and through us. We are called to invite God into our relationships so that our relationships reflect the Triune nature of God. 1 Corinthians 13 is explicit to define what love looks like in action and attitude. Everything flows from love. Love is the root of all our gifts and actions.

- How has God's love changed you?
- How does knowing the value that God places on loving relationships motivate you to also value love?



Relationships thrive on love. 1st Love challenges the definition of love you created last week. If we start with the wrong definition of love, every relationship in our lives is damaged. If we start with the right definition of love, every relationship in our lives is revolutionized. As you do the exercise below, consider how your definition compares with what God says about love.

Reread 1 John 4:7-19. Take a moment and rewrite this passage. Starting with Verse 10, insert your name or a personal pronoun.

### Example

*<sup>10</sup> This is love: not that James loved God, but that he loved me and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for my sins. <sup>11</sup> Dear friends, since God so loved me, I also ought to love one another.....<sup>19</sup> I love because He 1st Loved me.*

God's extravagant and lavish love for us is based on who He is, and not based on what we have done. His love is not associated with our performance or behavior.

You may have experienced relationships based on what you had to offer or what you thought you deserved. 1st Love challenges the notion of transactional love that must be earned. Last week you pondered your definition of love. Does personalizing this passage challenge your previous definition?

▸ More ▸

- Is it easy for you to believe that God loves you just as you are?
- What might change for you if you truly believed that God loved you unconditionally?
- 1 John 4 reveals that God's perfect love drives out fear. How does God's 1st Love for you drive out your relationship fears (for example, your fear of punishment, failure or of not being good enough)?



Relationships thrive on love. Reading 1 Corinthians 13, which describes how God loves us, can be transformational. However, when you insert your name and read the passage as a description of how you are called to love others, it sometimes creates conviction which can motivate you to change.

Read 1 Corinthians 13 and personalize verses 4–7 by inserting your name where the word Love appears.

### Example

*<sup>4</sup> James is patient, James is kind. James does not envy, James does not boast, James is not proud. <sup>5</sup> James does not dishonor others, James is not self-seeking, James is not easily angered, James keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> James does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> James always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

- ▶ After you have personalized the passage, go back through and put a plus sign by your strengths and a minus sign by your opportunity areas.
- ▶ If it is appropriate, ask the person that you chose for a Relationship Restart to provide feedback.
- ▶ What qualities of love do you find most challenging to act out? For example, how often do you keep a record of wrongs to use later against someone? Are you easily angered? Do you justify your anger based on other's behavior?
- ▶ Focus this week on engaging in new ways in 3 of your opportunity areas.



Relationships repair through forgiveness. God's love for us led Him to forgive us. Regardless of our past, God offers us forgiveness. He then calls us to forgive others. We may understand that, but still struggle to forgive. So, what does it really mean to forgive someone? Forgiveness is not a feeling—it is not forgetting—it is not excusing. Forgiveness is an intentional choice towards restoration and healing.

When we pretend we are not hurt or hold onto anger it can interfere with our ability to forgive. Learning to release our resentment, anger and hurt frees us to re-establish intimacy and connection.

## **7 Steps of Forgiveness**

from *The Keys to Loving Series* by Gary Smalley

**Step 1** Define What the Hurt Was and What You Believe You Lost:

When you are angry or hurt it helps to identify clearly that you feel something was taken from you. What did the other person do to hurt you? What were you denied?

**Step 2** Allow Yourself To Grieve:

You have to realize what was lost and mourn. This may take some time. Experience the honest emotions of grief and do not minimize the situation. It is healthy for you to experience the anger and pain.

**Step 3** Seek To Understand the Person Who Hurt You:

It takes maturity to seek to understand why someone hurt you. When you understand why

people act the way they do through realizing the brokenness they have, then you may begin to experience compassion for them. When you understand that those who have wronged you do so often because of their own hurt, anger and unresolved conflicts, then you can start to release some of your anger and hurt.

**Step 4** Release the Desire To Get Even or Seek Revenge:

The word forgiveness means to "untie," "loosen" or "release." When you say it out loud it is powerful, "You are forgiven. I release you." Anger can consume you. You either choose to release your anger or it turns inward and impacts your other relationships. You have to release your offender and hope they someday get released from whatever binds them as well. It is difficult to forgive because it means relinquishing a desire for fairness. 1st Love demonstrates that sometimes justice is about mercy and grace, not about consequences.

**Step 5** Treasure Hunt:

Look for the good in the bad situation. Hurtful situations may mean that you can now be more sensitive and compassionate to those who are hurting. This does not mean being thankful that it happened and it does not mean desiring it to happen again. This simply means changing your perspective to appreciate what you have learned from the experience. Find the positive in spite of the negative experience. Identify how painful experiences equip you to serve God and others.

▸ More ▸

### **Step 6** Write A Letter:

Writing out your experience can help you release your hurt and anger through the ink of a pen or the click of a keyboard. You can clarify the loss, express and process your feelings, and state what you wish your offender would do or say. By allowing yourself to write out your pain without the fear of sending the letter you are free to experience your full range of emotions.

### **Step 7** Work to Reconcile the Relationship:

It is not always possible to have the restoration you would like in a relationship. It is, however, always possible to pray for those who hurt you. Jesus prayed for those who were crucifying Him leaving you an example of love and mercy. Reaching a point of genuine compassion for the person that wronged you frees you from judgement. It allows you to accept responsibility for your own actions. Forgiveness is rarely easy, but can lead to a desire to reconcile the relationship. With forgiveness comes a release of self, or the "right" to be right.

Being a recipient of God's 1st Love means that we now have an opportunity to offer it to others. Ask God to help you be quick to forgive, to make peace and offer mercy and to share the 1st Love you have received in the same way you have experienced it!

- Are you willing to forgive like you have been forgiven?
- Are you willing to let 1st Love remove your need for justice and vengeance?
- Are you willing to try and live out the 1st Love of God to others?



In his book, *Peacemaking for Families*, Ken Sande identifies "Four Promises of Forgiveness."

These are:

- I will not think about this incident.
- I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you.
- I will not talk to others about this incident.
- I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

When we choose to forgive someone, we are responding to God's forgiveness of us. As a result, we are making a promise to them to respond with grace and love. This means that we will not dwell on the hurt, use it as future ammunition, gossip or respond to them with harbored resentment. We are choosing love.

- Which of the "Four Promises of Forgiveness" do you most struggle with?
- How does the forgiveness demonstrated in 1st Love impact your willingness to forgive?
- How does choosing to forgive move your relationship from transactional to transformational?



Relationships repair through apologies. Just as we can learn to forgive, it is also important to learn to apologize. Refusing to apologize creates barriers in relationships. Learning to apologize gives freedom to re-establish intimacy and connection.

## **5 Steps of a Sincere Apology**

adapted from *The Five Languages of Apology* by Gary Chapman & Jennifer Thomas

### **Step 1** Express Regret:

For many people, an apology is not really an apology without the words "I am sorry." By saying the words, you allow the injured person to see that you regret what happened. It clearly communicates that you know they are hurt without expecting an apology in return.

### **Step 2** Accept Responsibility:

Demonstrating ownership of a mistake means admitting you were wrong. Accepting responsibility shows you understand you do not have the right to hurt another simply because they hurt you. When you accept responsibility for your choices, without justification or blame, you acknowledge your choice as wrong.

### **Step 3** Make Restitution:

Sometimes it is necessary to go a step farther than owning your mistake. You need to make it right by doing something to make up for the pain that you have caused the other person. When you hurt another person steps need to be taken for the connection to be repaired.

#### **Step 4 Truly Repent:**

Repentance means "to turn around" or "to change one's mind." An apology should include an assurance that you do not intend to make the same mistake again. While habits can be difficult to break, a sincere apology should include letting the person know your plan for change and that your goal is to never hurt them in the same way again.

#### **Step 5 Requesting Forgiveness:**

Asking to be forgiven is powerful and can provide restoration for both parties. This can be challenging because it means acknowledging your failure. It also means you have to relinquish control to the other person by asking for something. The words "Will you forgive me?" are often the final step to healing a relationship.

Being a recipient of God's 1st Love means that we now have an opportunity to offer it to others. Ask God to help you to be quick to apologize and to seek to restore relationship.

- Are you willing to admit your mistakes in order to better share the 1st Love you have received?
- Do you need to offer an apology to begin help restart your relationship? If so, what would that apology look like?



Week 3

**A New Prioritization**



## Read

### Philippians 2:1-11 ESV

"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,<sup>2</sup> complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.<sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.<sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.<sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,<sup>6</sup> who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.<sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.<sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name,<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,<sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Underline the words *encouragement*, *comfort*, *love*, *affection* and *sympathy*. Focus today on receiving encouragement from Christ, being comforted by His love and noticing the ways that you are guided by the Holy Spirit. The 1st Love that we receive from God is evident in Him sharing who He is with us, including through relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. He loves us so much that He wants relationship with us. Though our circumstances may be difficult, our relationship with God is relentless and secure.

- Notice today that God is with you.
- At the end of your day, journal how you noticed God.



The book of Philippians was written by Paul when he was in prison in Rome. He was writing to the church of Philippi to encourage them that joy and strength are found in relationship with Jesus. In chapter 2, Paul is reminding the church of the humility and submission that Jesus chose. This led Him to make the ultimate sacrifice of His life in order to for us to live fully in relationship with God.

Paul is sharing with us that sacrificial love leads to peace and joy. This concept contradicts the messages of our world. We are bombarded daily by messages that tell us to put our desires first in order to be happy. As Jesus shows us, sacrifice can lead to joy.

- Today pray with gratitude that sacrifice is a part of 1st Love.
- Thank God for loving you.



## Reread

### Philippians 2:1-11

Circle the words *servant*, *humility*, *obedient* and *to the glory of God the Father*.

Notice that in this passage Paul pairs the idea of valuing others with an instruction to be humble and obedient. This is what glorifies God. Living a humble life means that we sacrifice our selfishness and stop demanding our way. It means that we value others. This type of humility leads to unity. Do not miss this. In contrast to pride which is demanding and prioritizes our rights, humility allows us to serve others, walk in obedience to God's loving instruction and look out for one another.

We can choose to prioritize our rights in relationships or we can choose to value relationships over our rights. Understanding this leads to lasting heart change that allows us to make God and others our priority.

- What has Jesus' choice to be humble meant in your life?
- Think of the relationship that you are focused on for this study. How could choosing to be humble impact that relationship?



- Spend 3 minutes watching the *Power of Empathy* by Brene Brown
- [westsidefamily.church/powerofempathy](https://westsidefamily.church/powerofempathy)

Empathy is the capacity to share and understand someone else's emotional responses. Empathy allows us to put ourselves in other's shoes, to see the world from their perspective. Jesus instructs us to encourage others, share their burdens and respond to them selflessly. Empathy allows us to talk with someone without having to focus on fixing them or their problems. Empathy creates space to put someone else before us by listening to them without judgement. It is a humble response that values the other person.

Reread Philippians 2:3-4.

- How would an empathic response from you impact the relationship you are focused on?
- Practice empathy in at least one conversation this week.
- What do you think most often gets in the way of you being empathic to others? How does God's sacrificial love guide you in this area?



While relationships thrive on selflessness, this does not mean that we lose ourselves. Boundaries provide a way for us to have voice and choice within relationships. Healthy relationships have healthy boundaries. Unhealthy relationships either have unhealthy boundaries or no boundaries. When we have no boundaries, we end up in relationships where our voice is not heard. Unhealthy boundaries are typically rigid or inconsistent because they are in place to protect self interests. Unhealthy boundaries include feeling responsible for someone else's happiness, feeling unable to say no because we fear that we will be rejected and compromising our values to meet a request by the other person.

Healthy boundaries allow us to share personal information as we build trust in relationships, communicate our desires in the relationship and say no when we need to. To maintain a healthy relationship, boundaries are in place to communicate what we are willing to accept from the other person and what we are willing to give to them.

- What are your boundaries for that relationship?
- Do your boundaries align with the other person's? If not, how are they different?
- What changes need to be made in order to have healthy boundaries?
- Set up a time to meet with your person and discuss boundaries for your relationship. Setting boundaries together allows you the chance to communicate interests and to develop a deeper understanding of the other person's interests.



- Watch the *Power of Vulnerability* Ted Talk by Brene Brown.
- [westsidefamily.church/powerofvulnerability](https://westsidefamily.church/powerofvulnerability)



Take time to reflect on what you discovered about vulnerability within relationships through Brene Brown's *Power of Vulnerability* talk.

- Vulnerability takes risk. Journal your response to watching *The Power of Vulnerability* talk.
- Considering the risk involved in being vulnerable. What holds you back from allowing yourself to show vulnerability?
- How would taking the risk to be vulnerable have a positive impact on your relationship?
- Think back to the *Power of Empathy* video and imagine yourself responding empathically in your relationship. How can empathy allow you to accept their vulnerability?



Week 4

**A New Expectation**



## Read

### **Romans 15:5-7** ESV

<sup>5</sup> May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

## Read

### **Philippians 2:3** ESV

<sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

## Read

### **James 4:1-3** ESV

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? <sup>2</sup>You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup>You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.



The passages from Day 1 explore the impact of selfishness versus selflessness on relationships.

Romans 15:7 provides a new expectation of what relationships will look like when we build them on our experience of selfless 1st Love. As we learn to live according to God's plan for relationships there is greater freedom to accept differences and allow grace to bring peace.

Living in harmony with others is a reflection of the love that God lavishes on us. Relationships thrive on clarity. Developing an understanding of our desires and the desires of others provides that clarity and leads to living in harmony.

- How does Romans 15:7 challenge your current interactions within relationship?
- What moves you from selfishness to selflessness?
- What is the ultimate purpose for clarity of expectations in relationship?



God created us with needs. These needs include the physical needs necessary for survival, the need for safety, the need for love and belonging, the need to be respected and valued and the need to use our gifts to find a sense of purpose.

When we care for a newborn child, we quickly realize that the child has needs and we recognize the value of meeting those needs. We can easily accept that this precious infant was created with those needs. When we understand that we are also created with needs, we begin to see that our needs are significant.

In James 4, we are encouraged to ask with right motives for the things that we need. Infants ask by crying. We get to ask with words.

Through understanding 1st Love we recognize that God views us as significant. We can learn to believe, "I matter and my needs matter."

- How will understanding the significance that 1st Love gives you empower you to ask for what you need in your relationship with God?
- What about in the relationship that you are striving to restart?



Philippians 2:3-4 broadens our understanding of how to value others in response to the 1st Love God shows us. We are called to relate to others in a loving way because they matter to God; choosing to count their needs as more significant than our own, just as Jesus chose to place our needs above His. We are called to understand our own interests as well as the interest of others.

Often times it is unclear what the other person needs and desires. When we do not have that clarity, it is tempting to make assumptions. The best way to learn about the needs of others is to ask.

Through understanding 1st Love we recognize that God views others as significant. We can learn to believe, "Others matter and their needs matter."

- How will understanding the significance that 1st Love gives to others impact your ability to consider the needs of the person in your chosen relationship
- How would you like to be asked about your needs? Keep this in mind and write a sentence that reflects how you would ask about the needs of the person in the relationship you are seeking to restart. Then ask them about their needs.



Reread James 4:1-3, which describes relationship conflict due to conflicting desires. When we experience pain or disappointment in relationships it may be that we are being sinned against and our needs are being violated or ignored. Or it may be that our desires are being overlooked. But how can we be sure that what we are identifying as a need is not actually a tightly-held desire? Desires reveal how we would prefer to have our needs met.

Unlike needs, which are common to all humans, desires are unique to each individual. Our desires are a product of our family, culture and personality.

Just like needs, your desires are significant because you are significant. In the same way as needs, your desires are not more significant than the desires of others. Other's failure to conform to our desires is not a sin. 1st Love motivates us to resolve conflict whether it is a result of sin or related to our desires.

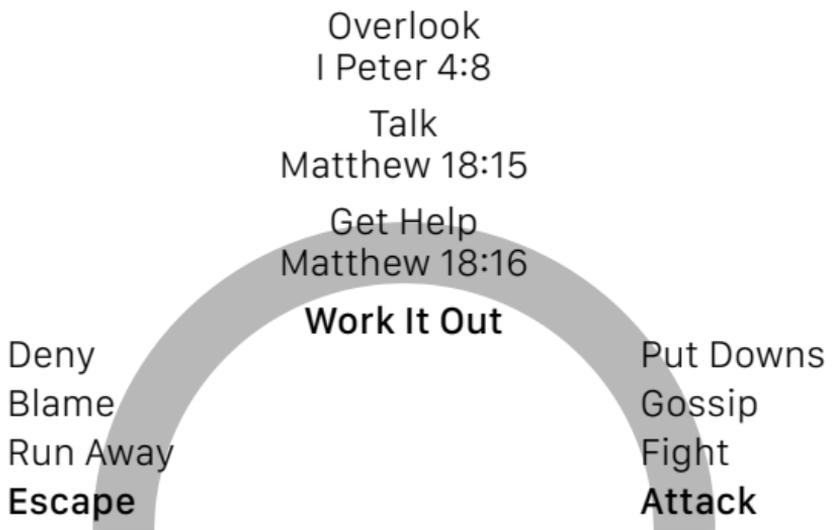
- What personal desires have shaped your expectations in your relationship?
- What is the source of this desire and the resulting relationship expectations: your culture, family, personality or some other influence?
- Have you ever felt you were being sinned against when someone did not conform to your desires? How did you react?
- In light of your new understanding of 1st Love, how would you choose to react now?



Recognizing 1st Love significance restarts our relationship expectations, which restarts our response to conflict. Conflict is part of every relationship. Conflict occurs when we disagree with someone else. Sometimes that disagreement is a result of a sin issue. Other times it is a result of our desires being violated.

Unlike sin which does not allow for compromise or negotiation, a desire allows opportunity for us to learn to balance our own needs with the needs of others. Sometimes conflict occurs because we have elevated our desires to demands. When we begin making demands within our relationships, we are leaving the 1st Love paradigm, which is grounded in the way that God loves us. We are instead basing our interactions on what the other person does or does not do for us.

Thinking back to the concept that we matter and others matter can motivate us to engage with others in new ways. God calls us to learn to live at peace with others, but often the conflict resolution strategies that we learn are not effective or biblically-based. It is important to begin to see that God has a plan for how we handle conflict. This plan helps us transition from being focused on our immediate desires to being focused on God's eternal plan for love. Reflect on the conflict styles on the next page.



### **Escape Responses are Peace-Faking.**

These include leaving without the intent to return for resolution, blaming the other person or denying that you have been wronged. These responses reflect the belief that my needs do not matter, but your needs do matter. James 4:2 reminds us that, "You do not have because you do not ask." With these responses, you do not let others know that you are hurting which leaves the other person believing that there is peace between you. Over time, you can build resentment.

### **Attack Responses are Peace-Breaking.**

Peace-Breaking responses include putting down or criticizing, gossiping or fighting. These responses are self-centered and reflect the belief that my needs matter but your needs do not matter. James 4:2 clearly states that Attack Responses are unhealthy, "You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight." With Attack Responses you are abandoning God's design for peace. Instead you are using power to get your way.

## **Work-it-Out Responses are Peacemaking.**

These include overlooking offenses, talking to find resolution and seeking help when needed. These responses reflect that my needs matter and your needs matter. Romans 15:5-7 calls us to "...live in such harmony with one another." The desire for connection and harmony drives these responses. This requires communication and a loving approach to find a resolution that works for everyone involved. It also allows us to forgive the other person without discussing the issue which is useful for single incident hurts.

- How was conflict handled in your family growing up?
- How do you tend to respond in conflict? How do you need to change in responding to conflict?
- What peacemaking approach can you use in your relationship?



Recognizing 1st Love significance restarts our relationship expectations which restarts how we communicate. It is important to be aware of how we are speaking to the people that we value. We communicate with others through our body language, tone of voice and our words. The goal is to align each element of communication in a way that reflects our love of the other person. When communicating, think IDAHO—intentional, direct, authentic, honest and open.

### **Intentional**

Intentional communication reflects an awareness that communication has purpose. Sometimes the purpose is focused on an end goal while other times it is about strengthening relationship.

### **Direct**

Direct communication is clear and to the point. It removes ambiguity.

### **Authentic**

Authenticity in communication means that we bring our true self into the relationship. We are willing to communicate what we need and desire. We are willing to respond in a genuine way.

### **Honest**

Speaking the truth in a loving way is essential in healthy relationships. Honesty builds trust and provides safety. Being honest means that we are willing to say the difficult things that need to be said.

▸ More ▸

## Open

Open communication flows from vulnerability. Simply put, this means that we share ourselves within our relationships. Imagine our hearts open to others.

- Matthew 12:33-35 helps you see that “the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.” God loves you enough to reveal what is in your heart so that you can love Him and others. How does 1st Love challenge what is in your heart?
- How does what is in your heart change what comes out of your mouth?



Week 5

**A New Identification**



## Read

### 1 John 3:1 NIV

<sup>1</sup> How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God.

## Read

### Romans 8:14-17 NIV

<sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

## Read

### Galatians 4:1-7 NIV

<sup>1</sup> What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. <sup>2</sup> The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. <sup>3</sup> So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. <sup>4</sup> But when the set time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. <sup>6</sup> Because you are His sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." <sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are His child, God has made you also an heir.

Did you notice the usage of the word "Abba" in Galatians? This word translates into "daddy," evoking an intimate, personal relationship. This is the word chosen to describe our relationship with God. He is not only a heavenly Father, but a loving daddy to us.

- Do you have any barriers to seeing God as an affectionate father?
- Close your eyes and imagine spending time with your Abba Father. Notice how you are feeling. Describe this image and what it evokes for you.
- How would it impact not only your identity, but also your relationships with others if you knew God as your loving, caring daddy?



When our identities are based on who we are in Christ, we are able to be authentically ourselves in and out of the context of our relationships.

Murray Bowen identified a concept called "Differentiation of Self" which reveals the value of being able to know our own emotions, opinions and values without relying on other people to define them for us. It is possible to be different from others and still remain emotionally connected to them.

Having confidence in who we are in Christ releases other people from the responsibility of providing our identity. It also allows us to feel loved and accepted for who we are because we are able to be who Jesus created us to be. Jesus makes this possible when we seek Him first for the unchanging foundation for our identity.

- Spend 5 minutes watching the video *Our Identity In Christ*
- [westsidefamily.church/identityinchrist](https://westsidefamily.church/identityinchrist)
- What do you think of when you consider your identity?
- How have your views of God and yourself shifted in the last few weeks as you have engaged in Relationship Restart?



We must know who we are in order to have healthy relationships. Our identity is not in our relationships with others. However, the way we respond in our relationships reveals what we believe about our identity. Our identity is shaped by the way we believe God views us, the way we think others view us and the way we view ourselves.

In Christ, our core identity is based off of what Jesus has done for us and what He thinks about us. That is eternal and unchanging. Our core identity is not shaped by how we view ourselves or how we believe that others view us. Aspects of our identity are influenced by our roles (spouse, parent, child, sibling, gender) and our passions (music, sports, art).

These secondary aspects can influence how others view us and how we view ourselves, but they cannot bear the weight of our core identity because these things can change. When we allow someone else to determine our identity then we can become prideful (focused on wanting others to think well of us) or fearful (concerned that others will think poorly of us).

Sometimes the truth that we are children of God is overshadowed by our experiences, past relationships and the beliefs we develop throughout life. It is important that we spend time exploring whether our identity beliefs are true.

▸ More ▸

- ▶ Create three separate columns on a fresh page in your journal. In the first column list how you believe others see you. In the second column write how you often view or label yourself. In the third column write what you have learned about who you are as a result of 1st Love.
- ▶ What do you notice as you compare the these lists? What is easier to believe?
- ▶ What are the things you desperately long to be true about your identity, but fear are not?
- ▶ What does 1st Love significance say to those fears?



Considering all we have learned in the past four weeks, write a letter of healing. This may be a letter to God, yourself or someone else.

Consider what you want to communicate, any forgiveness or reconciliation that is necessary and what an extension of grace would look like. You may want to consider some of the following questions as you write:

- What are the strongest lies you believe about yourself that keep you from fully embracing who God says you are?
- In what ways have you attempted to find your identity in others? How can you change your expectation in relationships with others to a Christ focused one?
- How does having a 1st Love view of your identity allow you to have freedom to be vulnerable, empathic and selfless in relationships?



Just as it is important to know who we are in Christ, it is important that our relationships are redefined when we reconcile them. Instead of the identity of the relationship being defined by hurt, loss, anger, bitterness or unforgiveness, we can call our relationship redeemed, restored or reconciled. These words reflect the loving heart of God towards us and, therefore, can be part of our relationships with others.

Plan to spend intentional time with the person you identified for Relationship Restart. Simply connect with them and continue to practice what you have learned. Strive for authenticity and vulnerability. Be courageous. Own who you are and appreciate them. Rest in your 1st Love and allow that to flow into your relationship.

Do not forget that it is easiest to rest in those relationships that we nurture. This is especially true as we learn to walk with and trust God. Spend some time with Him today as well. Take a walk and notice His creation. Listen to music and worship Him. Quiet yourself before Him and share your heart in prayer.



Read back through the journal you have kept to document this journey.

- Rewrite your definition of love. What do you notice about how your definition of love has changed in light of 1st Love?
- What is different in the relationship you chose to restart? How did you define your relationship before this study? How do you define it now?
- What areas do you still hope for change? What is your plan for continuing to invest in that relationship?



As we finish this series, consider all that we learned about our identity in Christ. He has chosen us and calls us His beloved son or daughter. In Galatians 4:1-7, we are assured that this confers all the rights of heirs and speaks to the affection and unconditional love that God has for us. This not only impacts the individual relationship of those closest to us, but should lead us as we engage in our community.

Being in relationship with God spurs love towards those around us and a desire to hear their stories. We mirror Christ in this way. He wants to see broken places healed. He wants the blind to see. He wants the lonely to be welcomed in and find a family. He wants to throw parties when someone needs to celebrate and create openness in homes and hearts to help people mourn when needed.

- Going forward, how can you follow Jesus' example of loving and blessing others?
- What practical needs do you see?
- How can you allow 1st Love to seep into all the cracks and crevices of the world around you?



1st Love changes us, transforms our relationships and impacts the way that we engage in our community.

Next week Westside begins the series "What If the Church BLESSED Every Neighborhood," which focuses on learning how we can use our God-given purpose in our community.

We will discover five simple practices that will put us in the middle of what God is doing where we live, work and play. These practices are designed to bless the people in our lives and allow them to see 1st Love through us.

Please join us!

**WFC Lenexa + Online Services**

8:15a | 9:30a | 11a | 5p

**WFC Speedway Services**

8:30a | 9:30a | 10:45a

[Online.westsidefamilychurch.com](https://www.online.westsidefamilychurch.com)

## **WESTSIDE RESOURCES:**

### **Genogram Workshop**

**May 10 or 17, 2017**

Better understand where you come from and how you have been influenced by your family.

[westsidefamily.church/genogram](http://westsidefamily.church/genogram)

### **LifeLines**

[westsidefamily.church/lifelines](http://westsidefamily.church/lifelines)

### **Counseling**

[westsidefamily.church/care](http://westsidefamily.church/care)

### **Sign up for Right Now Media**

A large video library of small group curriculum videos, videos on relationships and great videos for youth and kids.

[westsidefamily.church/rightnow](http://westsidefamily.church/rightnow)

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## **RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

*Anatomy of the Soul*

Curt Thompson

*Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*

Peter Scazzero

*The Gifts of Imperfection*

Brene Brown

*When People are Big and God is Small*

Ed Welch

*Peacemaking for Families*

Ken Sande

*Forgiving and Reconciling:*

*Bridges to Wholeness and Hope*

Everett Worthington





**1st Love OS**

Version 2.0

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