

REAL Relationships: Evolving Together

Sermon series can be found at asburybham.org/sermons

Scripture Reading

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

Summary

Each and every person is created by God and also gifted with gifts and purposes to be used for God and in the serving of others. We do not start out as mature Christians ready to use expertly-crafted spiritual gifts. The Christian faith is a life-long journey of growing and evolving into who God has created and called you to be.

One of the things that we need to remember in each of our most important relationships is that all of us must continue to grow and evolve.

This text from Paul’s letter to the church in Corinth is familiar to most people because it is read most often at weddings. But his words about love can be applied to our relationships at large. Especially for relationships that go the distance.

He tells us that love is patient. Love does not insist on its own way. This is how relationships can continue to thrive even when people grow and change over time. We must be patient with others and understand that God has designed them to grow into a more whole person.

We cannot be so afraid of change that we insist on our own way — trying to prevent people from growing into the best version of themselves.

Instead, we need to find ways to fight distance. If people change and drift apart, the relationship weakens. Relationships that allow change and last the test of time find ways to encourage and bless change and growth. They find ways to build common ground and hold on to shared faith, shared memories, and shared goals or values.

Discussion Questions

- Talk in your group about the differences between immaturity and maturity related to our spiritual journeys. What are the marks of spiritual maturity?
- Why is spiritual growth so critical for an individual? What benefits do the church and community reap from a spiritually-maturing Christian?
- Rev. Mike Holly mentioned that we often fight change in our relationships because we are afraid of that change causing distance as people grow apart. How can you fight distance in the relationship instead of trying to insist your own way? How do you display care and interest in the development of the people in your life?
- While each person must continue to grow in the ways that God has laid out for them, people also can work at growing together (meaning that they take active steps to grow together). Reading the Bible together, attending a small group or Bible Study together, or even engaging in lifelong learning together are all ways that your relationships can grow in the same direction. What examples do you have that demonstrate the importance of this shared growth?

Prayer by Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997)

Dear Jesus, help me to spread Thy fragrance everywhere I go. Flood my soul with Thy spirit and love. Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly that all my life may only be a radiance of Thine. Shine through me and be so in me that every soul I come in contact with may feel Thy presence in my soul. Let them look up and see no longer me but only Jesus. Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as you shine, so to shine as to be a light to others. Amen

Practice

We have come to the final “CORE” foundation of real relationships. Remember that CORE stands for Commitment, Oneness, Respect, and Evolving Together. This week, consider the following practices:

- Take some time to reflect on your own journey of spiritual growth. How have you grown over time and where do you see your spiritual journey going? Write down your discoveries.
- What have you learned from the four foundational elements of real relationships? Spend time in prayer discussing what you have learned about yourself and God.