

WHAT ARE WE MADE OF?



Scripture:

Psalm 119:33-40

³³Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes, and I will observe it to the end. ³⁴Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. ³⁵Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. ³⁶Turn my heart to your decrees, and not to selfish gain. ³⁷Turn my eyes from looking at vanities; give me life in your ways. ³⁸Confirm to your servant your promise, which is for those who fear you. ³⁹Turn away the disgrace that I dread, for your ordinances are good. ⁴⁰See, I have longed for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life.

1 Corinthians 3:10-12, 16-23

¹⁰According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. ¹¹For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—

¹⁶Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? ¹⁷If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

¹⁸Do not deceive yourselves. If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. ¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness,"

²⁰and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."

²¹So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, ²²whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all belong to you, ²³and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



WHAT ARE WE MADE OF?

Can we all just take a breath? I'm a little nervous.

So before we dive into this scripture, there is a lot in this scripture and we're not going to be able to get to all of it unless you guys want to stay here for about three hours which I don't want to do either.

CAREVAN

I want to tell you a little bit about what I did as a youth director before going to seminary. I was at a church called Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church. I was there for five years as their Youth Director of Junior High and High School Ministries. It was the best job! They paid me to play laser tag; they paid me to go to junior high recitals and watch soccer games. It was just an amazing beautiful job where I got to help create space for students to encounter God in a real way.

One of the ways that we would do this is that we would go on a trip called Carevan. Now Carevan is our service and learning trip where we take incoming high schoolers through graduated seniors somewhere throughout the world to go to serve and learn together.

I know it's in the title there, but just to be clear we serve and learn together as an opportunity to build community together but also to help get the kids out of their world and see that there is more than the Sunnyvale suburb that they live in.

AMORE MINISTRIES

My last year at Sunnyvale Pres, we went on a trip with Amore Ministries to Mexico, and I believe that some of you may have already been on this trip. I know that Chris Rhodes has taken people on this trip in the past. The great part about this trip is that you make a direct impact on a community and on a family, and you build your own community very quickly because on this trip, you build one house in four days. Now when I say house, I'm not saying your beautiful three bedrooms, two and a half baths. I'm talking about an eleven by twenty-two foot room. Now in the harder places to live in Mexico that is a home for maybe six to seven people.

After you go on this trip a number of times, you learn tricks of the trade. You make sure that each site has someone who is specifically focused on making sure the house gets built. You make sure you bring some extra supplies, just in case, because Amore gives you a very limited amount of cement. You put fiberglass in the cement sometimes. You have nails; everything is very limited. You make sure that everybody brings their own hammer. But the most important trick of this trip is that you have to build that foundation the first day. If you don't pour the foundation on the first day, you're not finishing the house.

PHOTOS OF OUR WORK

So I brought some photos to give you a little bit of the lay of the land here. I once built that first one; those are two of my kids, and they were great. There is a picture of kids mixing cement, because there is no

electricity. These kids are the cement mixer; their muscles are what make the cement. And the recipe has to be right because you don't want the foundation to be too weak. You don't want the foundation to crack and so you have to make sure that you get the cement right. You have one kid who is specifically zoning in – “No, that's too many shovels of cement.” “No, that's too many rocks.” It's very important.

Let's see what photo is next. One thing about this trip is you never know what environment you're going to get when you walk into your site. Sometimes you are going to get one, like this one, where there is a lot of space around where the building is going. Everyone has some room.

The first time I went on this trip, the building was going right about three feet away from the fence and trying to put the stuff on the walls was a little tight. One of the times that I went on this trip the land that was there literally had a three foot drop because Amore partners with churches in the area and the churches give the information to the families, and they say you need this X amount of space by this X amount of space and you don't know what you're getting. We had to send the kids on a boulder hunt because we needed to fill in to make this foundation level. It was a little bit tenuous, and that first day we wondered if there was going to be enough boulders to fill this huge three foot gap. There was, thankfully.

So here at this site, though, there was a nice even place all ready for them which almost never happens. And it's amazing. So you can see that someone has already made the frame for where the cement is going to be poured and the kids are now pouring the cement into the frame to build this beautiful foundation.

Next photo – Again we don't have power tools. We don't have anything fancy, so the kids are wheel-barrowing all of the

cement over. That's a long two by four they are using to flatten out the foundation because we don't have fancy stuff so you have to use those biceps. They have to trowel it and make it smooth and beautiful.

Next slide – Mike Dislan, who is standing, is a really good guy who was our contractor for that site and he's sitting on that so he doesn't make any dent on that plywood, so he doesn't make any dent in the actual foundation because we want to make sure that it looks nice. This is the floor; there's no carpet, there's no hardwood paneling. This is the floor, just a cement slab, and we're making this a home for someone, so we want it to be lovely; we want it to be absolutely beautiful. So you can see that they are putting the final touches on this foundation, and it looks pretty good, I have to admit.

Next slide - The thing is you have seventeen kids and the foundation is a very specific job. So while five or six of them are helping the adults make sure the foundation is done, you have the kids who are in the other group that are making the walls. Now thankfully, this space was properly zoned, I guess you could say. But on this trip at my site the family measured incorrectly, so our foundation had to be three inches shorter than what our little manual had. And I'm sorry, I don't know trigonometry, but thankfully we had a graduating senior who did. So she had to go through the entire book and review all the measurements for our foundation because, again ...

... if you don't build your foundation correctly your house is going to be a little catty-wampus and that's not good. We're building a home here.

Next slide – The foundation these kids built that night was actually solid enough to put their walls up. Sometimes you get back and it has rained and so there’s a crack in your foundation and you have to fix that the next morning. You don’t think about this in our homes today because we have beautiful carpet or hardwood floors, but if you have a crack in the middle of your home, you see it and you’re aware that there is something a little off in your home.

Next slide – I’m just going to breeze through these. This is the process of putting on the tar-paper because we want it to be weatherproof. A lot of the issues that happen down in Mexico is that there are houses that are built, but they’re build from ‘found objects’ and so there is sickness that happens because they are not properly insulated. This is tar-paper and stucco; it’s not the insulation we would imagine. So after the tar-paper, we put on the chicken-wire and the baling wire. You can see the nice little outlets for the doors and the windows.

Next slide – There you have the roof on, so that’s nice. On the inside, we don’t cover up the walls because those walls are actually dual purpose. They’re walls, but they are also shelving. So a lot of the kids who have never been on this trip are very concerned and say, “Why aren’t we making it like a nice drywall for them?” They really need shelving. This is also furniture for them

Next slide – These are some of my girls. I love them. They are doing the tar-paper.

Next slide – This is the stucco process. Again, this was a very narrow spot and you’re trying to get a nice even stucco beautifulness.

Next slide – The windows go in obviously. A lot of the families don’t have windows, so this is actually a luxury for these communities. You can see the

beautiful stucco job, obviously. It’s gorgeous! And this is a photo of that crew with their family. So now this family has a home.

A big issue that happens is because there’s not enough housing for these families. Families have to split up and find other places to live, which is really heartbreaking. So now this family gets to stay together.

Next slide – This is the family, the mom and the dad. Here’s the door that goes on; I think it’s just open. But this entire building would fall over if the foundation is not laid appropriately.

THE FOUNDATION IS CHRIST

So as I read this passage in First Corinthians, I automatically thought of my trip to Mexico and the number of times that I’ve been there to build houses. On one trip we built four houses in four days; we had four groups. I’ve gone on trips where we built a house and there are groups that can’t finish the house, so we would finish our house early and go and finish another house for someone because they weren’t able to finish in the four days. You know, it’s hard because it’s not the way we would have done it, but we work off what we’ve been given because we want these families to have homes.

So we have this amazing passage here that’s talking about foundations. I’m going to go through the passage, but I want you to hold on to the question: If Jesus is our foundation, what is Jesus made of? As I was going through, we see Paul here talking in these first two verses about how he helped lay the foundation of Christ. He helped the Corinthian church with this opportunity of

building their community together, and he recognizes that other people are going to help build and that hopefully, whoever is building is doing it with care and being aware of how you're building the building and where the windows are going, but recognizing that no matter what, the foundation is Christ.

THE TEMPLE OF GOD

And then it's interesting, because it shifts into a different metaphor. In this passage it shifts into us being the temple of God. Now in this time, the temple is where God dwells, so God is literally in the temple, in the town. So you go to the temple to hang out with God. But he is shifting this cultural understanding of where God is by saying that the spirit is in you because you are the temple. Whoa!

That is a completely different paradigm for them, recognizing that they carry God with them wherever they go in their community. They no longer have to go to God, but God is with them and they get to bring God with them wherever they go which is kind of beautiful.

Then it goes into this idea – the part is a little scary in seventeen where it says and I think this is connected with the idea that God seriously loves us. There is this fierce love that God desires to protect his people and his creation. I struggle with this type of language in the Bible though, to be honest, that God will destroy whoever tries to destroy his temple. I struggle with that language. Honestly, I'm having a hard time with that part. But the piece that I'm grabbing onto in it is this idea that we are

holy and that God fiercely loves us and desires to keep us safe.

FOOLISHNESS AND WISDOM

Then it goes into this foolishness and wisdom part. Now I just graduated from seminary, so I think I'm pretty smart. This is calling me out a little bit. I definitely understand that there are a lot of things that I do not know in the world, but I just paid a lot of money to go and get these fancy letters at the end of my name and you would think that I would have all the answers and yet I do recognize that I really just have a new way of asking a lot of questions. It's humbling. It's reminding me that "By the way, you are not all that and a bag of chips." You are my beautiful creation, but God knows more. God's vision for where we are in this world and what we are doing in this world and how we function in this world is much more grand than I could ever understand.

Then it goes into this understanding of no one should boast about human leaders. And that hits home as well. This passage, to me, actually reminds me that we're in a place where we live in a hierarchical society. There are people who are in charge and there are people who aren't. And this is actually saying we all belong to one another and all of our voices are important and we all matter and our leadership isn't just something that is responsible for one person. It's not all on Pastor Cindy to be in charge of us. We are all responsible for being in charge of each other. We belong to one another, and we belong to Christ and Christ to God and so this idea of our higher archical society might not be biblical, guys.

Again, we could dive into so many aspects of this passage. There is so much in here that we can unpack. But I want to go back to that beginning verse. I want to go back to the question: If Christ is our foundation then what is Christ made of,

because I need to know so I can know what I'm made of. It reminded me of a book that I read in college called *Who You Are When Nobody's Looking?* by a man named Bill Hybels. He's written a lot of really great books. One is called *Teachable Moments*; another is called *Too Busy Not to Pray*. What I like about this book is it goes through characteristics of who Christ is. He calls us out on the idea that we are the fullness of who we are when nobody's looking and who we are when nobody's looking is actually more real because we're not afraid that anyone's looking at us and going to judge us.

So I'm just going to review the table of contents because I think it's pretty telling.

Courage: Overcoming Crippling Fears

Discipline

*Achieving Success Through
Delaying Gratification*

Vision: Looking Beyond the Obvious

Endurance:

Crashing Through Quitting Points

Tender Love:

Walking in Someone Else's Moccasins

Tough Love:

Insisting on Truth in Relationships

Sacrificial Love: Giving Without Giving Out

Radical Love: Breaking the Hostility Cycle

LOVE

Do you hear that there was a word that was used four times in here? What was it? Yes, it was love; you guys are right! We're awake. Okay, good. Love, the foundation of this entire book is based on love, and it reminds me that love is very complicated and Christ entered into loving people in a very complicated way. The four different types of love there are just a couple of sentences from each one that I wanted to describe to you because love is complicated

and it's not the way that we see it in movies, and it's not easy for us to engage in a way that is black or white. It's much more gray.

TENDER LOVE

So he defines tender love like this: When you make a mistake Jesus lifts you up, forgives you and continues to treat you with love and respect. Why not do the same for the people with whom you live, work and worship? When you feel lonely and insecure the Holy Spirit stays by your side, comforts you and assures you of God's love. Why not give comfort and support to the people you love when they are going through difficult time?

TOUGH LOVE

Let's go on to tough love. Personally I think this one's the hardest. But somebody has to get close to these people and tell them they're on a merry-go-round going nowhere. Someone has to shake them and say God has a better way for you. Get off the merry-go-round and look to God for direction. Someone has to say I love you too much to watch you ship-wreck your life, your marriage, your family, your job, your soul. So sit down and listen to me because I'm going to say hard things and I don't like doing this, but I must because these things are true and because I love you too much to stay silent when I see you hurting yourself.

**I love you too much to stay silent
when I see you hurting yourself.**

I found that with tough love I have to have a lot of discernment because sometimes people do not want to listen and I have to be really open to it, too.

SACRIFICIAL LOVE

Sacrificial love: "I have found that love is a lot more closely related to work than to

play. It has a lot more to do with being a servant than being a hero. When I set out about the task of loving, I usually end up giving instead of receiving. Love inevitably costs me something. Usually the three commodities most precious to me: my time, my energy, my money, and I do not usually part with these resources because I have them in limited quantities.” Sacrificial love is tough!

RADICAL LOVE

Radical love: According to Jesus, the demands of radical love often exceed those of any written law. Love never seeks to get away with doing the bare minimum. It goes beyond law keeping and offers outrageous service. It goes beyond law keeping and offers outrageous service. Christ is made of love, a complicated messy love that to many didn't make a lot of sense, and I wonder how I enter into that love and how much I'm made of that love.

We all must discover what we are made of because we represent God's love in this world. We are God's temple and we carry the spirit with us wherever we go.

So what are you made of? Are you made of humility or pride? Are you a life learner or a know it all? Are you made of love or hate? Discover what you are made of because you impact the world and the world needs God's impactful love. The good news is that we are not alone in this discovery process. We have each other; we have the Holy Spirit and we are not alone.

As the Psalm that we read today spoke of, God will guide us as we discover more of what we're made of and as we lean into the tough, tender, radical and sacrificial love that Christ calls us to be. We must discover what we are made of because we impact the world and the world needs God's impactful love.

I'm going to call our good friend Russ Kirby up to enter into a time of listening. He's going to play a song that I hope is our prayer for today. It reminds us that we need God to discover who we are. It reminds us that our impact is great and we want to impact the world around us for God's love.

I also want to let you know that Russ helps out with the Jazz Vespers service. He's a great part of our community and we're really thankful for him being here today. So let us all just take a breath and have a moment of prayer.



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LOVE



TENDER LOVE

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