

Real Love Submits

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[0 : 0 0] All right, all right. Thanks, Alan. Good morning, everybody. Good to see you. And man, just love like getting to shake hands, say hi, and sometimes even hug as many as I can before the, you know, festivities start happening on a Sunday morning. It's been a good Sunday morning so far. And so we are continuing in the book of Ruth, which is the series we're in, which is called Real Love.

And before we get into it, I want to give a shout out to all those listening online. We love you and we miss you. And if you're new, man, thanks for joining in with us. And like I said, we're about in the fifth installment, I believe. I got my numbers counted right, of the book of Ruth. We have a few more weeks to go in this, but so far it has been just an amazing journey through this passage, looking at this beautiful story of like what starts out in like hopelessness and despair and disaster and how God is bringing out this amazing redemption, but it's being brought about through people living out to this God-like love, which is called chesed, which is some of the word that we see scattered throughout Ruth, but people stepping in and living out this God-like love. And that's, I love how God works. He actually, he doesn't teach us just principles of like, here, let me give you a quick definition of real love. He grounds it in flesh.

He grounds it historically in people living it out so that we could just see how it works. And that makes more sense to our minds. We are a storied people. We are a people that love narratives and learn through narratives. And so this has been just rich and rewarding. And if you're just here for the first time today, I would really encourage you to get our app, go online to our website and listen to the previous sermons and get caught up. But right now we are in Ruth chapter three, and we're going to be looking at verses one to six today. And so we're going to jump right into it. It says this, I'm going to toss these glasses. Thank you, bear. I just realized I had them on.

And it says this, without my sunglasses on. Then Naomi, her mother-in-law said to her, my daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you? Is not Boaz our relative with those young women, with whose young women you were? And so those, if you're new, like what's happened is, is like Naomi and Ruth have come back from a distant land back home to Naomi's homeland, and they're really destitute and poor, and they just need some help. They need some generosity. And so Ruth goes out to work, and she finds a nice guy named Boaz, and whose field she is able to go and gather some food for them. And that's what's happening. That's why she is, Naomi is saying this about Boaz.

So she goes on to say this, see, he, Boaz, is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Wash, therefore, and anoint yourself, and put on your cloak, and go down to the threshing floor.

[2 : 5 1] So like, you kind of see Naomi's coming up with this pretty intricate plan here. Where's this going? But do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. But when he lies down, observe the place where he lies down. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do. And she replied, this is Ruth replying to Naomi, all that you say, I will do. So she went down to the threshing floor, and did just as her mother-in-law had commanded her.

This is God's word. So we are looking at probably a very unpopular part of what it means to live out real love. And that is submission. Like, I know that is a bad word for many of us. Like, nothing sucks life out of the room like submission does, right? But the title of this sermon is Real Love Submits. That's what it is. And I would say, man, submission gets a bad rap because we've distorted it, right? Christians, we're guilty. We've used it to clobber women into this slavish submissiveness to husbands.

But that's not what submission really looks like. Submission is bad, and we can really ruin that when it looks less like a loving relationship of a husband and wife, and more like you're the husband

who's the king of his castle, reigning over it, and the wife has to jump at every single one of your demands, and she doesn't have any say in anything. She's just got to say, yes, sir, yes, sir, three bags full, sir, whatever that is, right? That's what I think where Christianity has really, really blown it and really, really got it wrong in that department. It's more like kings reigning over lowly serfs than it is like a submission of love that happens, that's meant to happen in a loving relationship. And that's not the Bible's vision of submission. And that's like the sinful distortion of it. That's the demeaning version of submission. But I want to say this, submission done God's way is a beautiful thing. And this isn't a sermon to the woman in the room, right? This is a sermon to all of us, dudes as well. It encompasses everybody from young to old, right? And every generation, every gender.

[5 : 01] Because God's submission is what we're created for. And this is a seeming paradox when we're talking about submission. There's a seeming paradox here. It doesn't seem to work out in our minds because we've kind of grown up in a culture that like looks as, man, to be submissive is actually a bad thing. But being submitted, being a submitted person, actually what it is, and here's the paradox, it opens you up to a life of freedom. That's the seeming paradox.

And that's why it's an essential ingredient of real love. And this is where it starts, our understanding of who God is. See, the person of God is not God living alone and isolated. He is a God of community. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is an eternal community. And therefore, He is a God who can be love. If He was an isolated God all by Himself, how could He say, and how could we say with confidence that He is a God who even understands what love is? Because love by necessity requires you to pour out to somebody else and something else. And so we see the Christian understanding of who God is, the Trinity, like Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Man, that is a beautiful community of love. And guess what? The Bible says we're made in God's image. We're made to be a people just like Him. And to understand that, to understand who God is and us made in His image is the beginning of understanding what the Bible intends for us when it talks about submission.

Now, you may be asking, Jesse, are you implying that there is submissiveness in the Godhead? Like, is there like hierarchy there? Like some is better than the other? And that's where I think we get submission wrong because when we think of being submissive, we think somebody is better than me if I have to submit to them. But the Godhead, the Trinity shows us something else. It says that, man, God is joyful and willingly submissive to each other. And we see this most clearly in the Gospels.

Jesus repeatedly said in the Gospel, especially in the Gospel of John, I do what the Father tells me to do. I only do what the Father tells me to do. We see this submitted Son to His heavenly Father, but He's doing it gladly and willingly. And then we also see that Jesus would say, you know what, if I ask something of my heavenly Father, He gives it to me. The Father submits to the Son's request and His desire and gives Him the desire of His heart and what He wants.

And then we also see the Holy Spirit. He works and He applies and brings to bear all that the Father and the Son have purpose to do. And so the idea behind submission, according to the Word of God, isn't groveling to somebody. It is not groveling to just every authority that we could possibly have in our lives. Submission, as God designed it, is beautiful. It's beautiful when it's rooted in a relationship of love. And submission is a willingness to go along with and help meet the desires of those you love and trust. But submission is always going to be challenging for us because we live in this age which is broken and it's sinful and we hurt each other. And we're not like God in that way.

[8 : 16] But real love, God's love, that has said love, doesn't call us to retreat from submission because of that. Instead, God brings about renewal. That's part of His redemption plan for us. He brings about this renewal and this restoration and part of that is living a life of redemption. And this is what we see in Ruth's response to Naomi's commands, right? We have to remember here, like Ruth isn't this little kid, like some little 10-year-old that Naomi's bossing around like a parent. She's a full-grown woman.

She has been married. She has been widowed. She's gone through some stuff, right? She is not a pushover. Man, she's like bold. When you see some of the stuff she's already done with stepping into Boaz's field and asking for some things, you're just like, man, this chickadee is not a pushover at all.

She is strong and she is good. But still, she listens to everything Naomi says and asks her to do, and she does it. And let's get into actually what Naomi is asking because this actually, you know, we read it and we're like, oh, that's whatever. But actually, when you get into the nitty-gritty, you're

just like, hey, wait a second. There's something bigger going on here.

So we read what Naomi's saying, and it sounds like she's saying, man, Ruth, you know, go take a shower so you don't stink. You've been working all day in the field. Go find Boaz.

Scope it out. See what he's doing. See where he ends up sleeping. Pull his blanket over his feet for whatever reason. Lie down at his feet. And at some point, he's going to wake up and give you some instructions. So we might be thinking, what is going on here? Is this some like strange mating dance that the Israelites did, right? This sounds really, really weird. Like, even for ancient standards, this is like, it feels a little out there. There's got to be a better way to get Boaz's attention, you would think, right? So as strange as Naomi's plan is, it still seems pretty safe for Ruth. Like, it doesn't seem like that big of a deal, but I would say to you, actually, it's anything but that.

[10:23] Naomi is telling her to do something risky and potentially very costly to Ruth. Ruth knows this. She's going into this eyes wide open, but she still obeys, and that is submission.

Submission means obeying even when it's hard to do. Ruth has a lot to lose here. As a foreigner, up to this point, she has worked so hard to prove her character in this new town.

She has built relational equity and character equity. By the way, she served and worked hard for Naomi, Naomi, and I think she's enjoying a good reputation and a growing good reputation.

But Naomi is asking her to risk all of that by going down to the threshing floor after dark. See, the harvest season, for most of the laborers at the end of the day and all the ladies that were gleaning, they would go home, right, before it got dark. But some of the men, they would stay behind.

They would stay at the threshing floor. There was a little bit more work to do where they would winnow the heads of grain, kind of throw it up in the air, and the wind would separate the chaff from the good stuff, the seeds, and it would fall to the good stuff would fall to the ground.

[11:30] And that was done late in the evening, possibly even into the dark. And then afterwards, the men would finish, the winnowing guys would finish the day with food and drink. And let's remember, it is the barley harvest, right? So I'm guessing, and I don't want to read into it, there was probably like, you know, sandwiches and IPAs happening afterwards. I don't know. I don't know. I'm just saying. But it was during this time, once the men were tired and full, maybe a little tipsy, that ladies of the night would come to the threshing floor. And this didn't happen all over the place all the time, but it was quite common, and even in Israel. Naomi knows this. Still, she sends out Ruth like a lady in the night. I mean, she sends Ruth. If you remember what she asked her, Ruth is creeping around. She isn't like, hey, go up to Boaz, shake his hand, and say, hey, I'm here. Let's talk. She's like, scope it out, hang back, wait till everybody's gone, and then like, you know, try to sneak in unnoticed and do your thing. And if this goes bad,

Ruth will lose all her credibility. If she gets discovered, if she gets found out, if somebody sees what's going on, she loses all her good standing in Bethlehem, and you can't recover from that. Now she would be a foreigner, a widow, poor and despised by all the people. There may be a lot to gain for Ruth and Naomi. I mean, Naomi isn't putting Ruth in this situation because there's like no upside. No, no, no. There is a lot of upside here, right? But there is a lot for Ruth to lose as well. And I like how Naomi pitches this to Ruth. My daughter, should I not seek rest for you? That it may be well with you? This is like what we call buttering someone up, right? It's like she says this on the front end before she gives her the plan. Naomi knows what she's doing. She's laying it on thick because she knows what she's about to demand of Ruth. And the amazing thing about Ruth is she does not give one objection at all. She hears Naomi's plan and obeys every detail. Because Ruth knows it's not just about her, like Naomi pointed out. She knows there's not only hope for her, but that could mean hope for Naomi as well in a big way. And we're not going to get into all of that. We're going to cover that in a couple of weeks. But suffice to say that she hears Naomi's plan and obeys every detail because she loves Naomi and wants the best for Naomi.

Naomi. It's not just about herself. And Naomi isn't putting herself out there. Ruth is. She's willing to put herself in that vulnerable position. You know, Ruth had every right to tell Naomi to where to stick that plan, right? But she doesn't. She fully gives herself over to Naomi. She obeys. And there's the essence of submitting to someone. Submission means giving up power and becoming vulnerable. That is the essence of submission. And I think that's why we find it so difficult. We live in a world that celebrates power and actually doesn't reward vulnerability, right? I mean, that's why we have the saying, nice guys finish last, right? If you're a nice guy, you're not like trying to vie for power and be in control all the time. You're going to finish last. Our culture reinforces a narrative that says real love is for the foolish because real love requires you and me to be vulnerable. It seduces us with the

promise that power is the way to live safe and secure. Power is the pathway to getting everything you want to living the good life. I remember an old Seinfeld episode. I'm that old.

[15:12] where the whole premise was about getting the upper hand in the relationship, right? And so there's this moment where Costanza's like, yes, I got the upper hand. And then something happens and he loses the upper hand and he's lamenting. And he's like, man, how can I figure out how to get the upper hand back in this relationship? She has all the leverage and power now. And I want to have all the leverage and power in the relationship. Like the world recognizes this and they laugh at it and say like, yeah, this is what we do. Isn't this funny? While power gives you the illusion of control, security, and safety, it is devastating for relationships because real love demands vulnerability from us. True love, God-like love requires us to open our hearts to someone else. And when I talk about the heart, though, the heart is that part of us. We have to remember it's the most real part of who we are. The heart, and you can suppress these things in your heart, but your heart is the place where your like true desires, your true wants, your true will, all those, your true longings, all those reside in your heart. And real love says to have a real relationship, you must expose your heart to another person. Dr. Dan Allender, he's a Christian counselor and he wrote this like really good book called The Healing Path. He talks about the danger of opening the heart. And he says this, embracing a person requires openness. Think about that, embracing someone. Our arms must reach out to the other, which requires a position of vulnerability, right? To be open, extended, and reaching out is to be easy prey to one who might do us harm. As a consequence, we open our arms and hearts to few.

And when those few hurt us, we close down and refuse to open our arms wide to others. In that soil, in that cynicism and suspiciousness, paranoia begins to grow.

But real love, despite all that, despite all that potential of being hurt and wounded by others, real love compels us to take off our armor and let people into the most authentic part of who we are. And let's be honest, that sounds scary and it is. It's scary and it's dangerous, but it is what we were created for, being made in God's image. The Bible opens with a man and a woman together who were naked and unashamed. That is the idea of being totally vulnerable with one another. Adam and Eve lived in the vulnerability of real love. They kept nothing back. They hid nothing from each other, but then they sinned and something changed. Something stood between them. There was this unseeable gap that couldn't be seen with the eye, but was there and was physically manifest in the way they covered themselves with fig leaves. I'm not letting you see my most vulnerable parts and sensitive parts anymore. I don't want you to look at them and judge them and think of them as ugly and wanting and not enough. That's what's happening. There is a sense because of sin, Adam and Eve looked at each other and said, you know what? I don't really trust you fully anymore. They felt safe behind the fig leaves.

And this is what we do with our hearts as we walk in this broken, sinful world. We learn that people are unsafe. They hurt us and they let us down. So we learn to keep our hearts safe and locked up. [18:44] We don't let people into the real us. Now, some of you might be thinking, yeah, but Jesse, isn't that smart? Isn't that wise? Doesn't the Bible say to guard our hearts? And I would say absolutely.

There should be some wisdom in who we are vulnerable with. You shouldn't give strangers access to your heart. You just don't walk up to somebody you have no idea who they are and say like, hey, I just want you to know all about me and this is who I am. Proverbs says, guard your heart with all vigilance.

It is the wellspring of life. Guard your heart with all vigilance. That's what we have to do. And that's the wisdom we kind of learn along the way. It's the pain that we learn through our teenage years and our 20s. We're growing in this like increased desire for identity and understanding who we are and an increased desire for intimacy with people and deeper intimacy with people that pushes us into unwise risks. And so we end up opening our hearts fully to friends and romantic endeavors that just actually end up wounding us deeply. You can be foolish with your heart by opening it up too soon.

That is very true. But I would say this. You can also be foolish with it by being so overprotective that you end up never opening it to anybody. And here's the danger of that. C.S. Lewis puts it this way. There is no safe investment. To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrong and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully around with hobbies and little luxuries.

Avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken.

[20 : 41] It will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least to the risk of tragedy, is damnation. The only place outside of heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations, like that's a big word is what that mean, anxious troubles. Or you could be safe from all the dangers and anxious troubles of love is hell.

That is the trouble of real love. At some point, it calls you and I to risk. It calls you to be vulnerable, to open yourself to someone, to give up power. It stands over, it hands over control to someone else and says, I trust you and I'll do what you ask. Submission requires us to be vulnerable. But here's the thing about submission. It absolutely matters who it is that we're being submitted to. God doesn't demand you to submit to everyone and everything, right? He doesn't demand you to submit to evil people. He doesn't demand that you submit to Satan, right? There are obvious things that God says, no, no, don't be submitted to that. Real love knows that. Real love submits to the good and the trustworthy. Ruth loves and trusts and believes in the God of Israel. We've seen that over the weeks that we've been in this. She knows he is a said love and full of goodness. She also knows that Naomi and Boaz believe this too. And so she isn't just blindly submitting in this scenario. She is submitting because she's thinking of the two people and who they believe and the God that they know and have faith in and serve. And therefore they are good and trustworthy because they worship the God that Naomi loves and trusts too. And she knows, Ruth knows, is that you become like the one that you worship. If your God is sneaky and selfish and cruel, you're going to become a reflection of that. And that isn't worthy of your submission. You know, hundreds of years after Ruth, Israel would have a king named Ahab. He was evil.

He worshiped demon gods of the Canaanites around them. And he was a cruel man. He was an evil man. And so Elijah the prophet, he was God's prophet to Israel at that time. He did not live in submission to Ahab. He lived submitted to God. So we see that actually submission does depend on who it is.

But exceptions like that don't give us an excuse to live a life where we're just submitted to no one. Because if you live submitted to God, he will lead you into relationships that are worthy of your submission. And that is essential to his redemption plan for all of us. He doesn't save us into isolated silos. He saves us into a body. He saves us into a people. He saves us into a church. And the picture that we get of that is being knitted together. We are members one of another. We are like different parts of the body that are sown and intertwined and interconnected with each other so closely and intimately. His church is a people radically changed and being renewed. And that is the context that we get to practice a lot of our submission. Because it is the community created by God's real love. And it is a community that is ongoingly being cultivated by God's real love. And so what we do is we walk as a church, we walk this out. We walk out God's real love toward each other. Look at what

[24 : 14] Ephesians 5 says about the church. In verse 1 it says, therefore be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love. Walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. A fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. And then it goes on that same chapter to talk about what walking in love looks like practically. It talks about all the things we should do and all the things we shouldn't do. And then it ends this way. Verse 21 of Ephesians 5, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

This isn't wives submit to your husbands out of reverence for Christ. This is Paul talking to the whole church. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. The passage starts with the command to walk in love and then it ends with a call to submit to each other. And that is what a loving church looks like. But let's consider what that looks like practically, right? How do we walk this out?

How do we know if we're doing that? I want to just give us two basic, really, really basic markers here. I'm sure there's more, but I'm only clever enough. I was only clever enough to come up with two and guess what? You're stuck with me, so bear with me. Marker number one, that you are doing this.

You're living out this practically, is that you are a meaningful part of a church body. The real you is known as accessible to others. You are invested in people's lives. You care about what's going on in their lives. You're there to serve them and to love them and to be available to them, to sacrifice yourself for them. But there's reciprocation there, right? It's not like you're the only one. When

there's mutual, beautiful walking out of love, we're doing that for one another.

And it's an awesome thing to behold. Marker number two, there is a person, you have a person in your life who is a spiritual authority. Someone who can speak into your life. You receive their counsel and correction, someone that is known and trusted in the church. I have spiritual authority over me in my life. He gets to speak into my life. He gets to say things and I submit to him. I have other friends and other pastor friends that I do with that as well because you know why I've learned along the years to not have that is really unwise and really unhealthy. Some of my most unhealthy times in my life is when I had no spiritual authority over me. Nobody that I gave access to say, you know what, I trust you. Speak into my life. And sometimes, like, man, it's not stuff that's easy to hear, but I know those people are for me and I know that they love me and so I could trust them and listen to them, right? The place where we flourish in the freedom of God's grace and love is in the church.

[27 : 10] And here's the thing, guys. Real love and submission requires incarnation. You can't get this. You can't live this out by doing church online or just watching a TV preacher or listening to your favorite podcast preacher. And I'm not saying you shouldn't do any of those things, man. You can feed on that and those are, like, really helpful things to do. But I'm saying if that's, like, your idea of, like, I don't need to be a part of a church body because I'm being spiritually fed over there, guess what?

You're missing something huge. There isn't a place that you're stepping into that requires you to be submissive to anybody. That has, a TV evangelist has no spiritual authority over you. At the end of the day, he's not picking up your phone calls. And he's not calling you to find out, like, how you and your wife are doing and what's going on in your life. We have to incarnate. We have to be with each other.

And some of this is difficult to believe because, and hard to, like, actually grasp and say a yes and amen to you because the church has been a serious source of hurt for some of us. And I get that. Some of us have opened our heart in the past to a church and they've mishandled it and they've mistreated it and they've trampled on your vulnerability. And that is a painful thing.

That is a hard thing to recover from. And with any relational hurt, it's tempting to just want to lock up our hearts and just let no one in ever again. And I want to say, if that's you, man, my heart goes out to you. I had a mom who was hurt deeply by a church and she kind of lived the rest of her life that way from her 30s on of just never willing to fully commit and step in and incarnate and be a part of a church body. And she missed out on so much. She missed out on the beauty of so many things of being a part of a church. And I don't want that for you guys. And I want this church to be a place where you could step in and just be patient, we'll be patient with you. And we're going to prove ourselves that we are actually trustworthy and good people. That we're not going to abuse and misuse and mishandle your heart.

[29 : 28] We're going to do our best to give you grace and mercy to actually walk alongside and let you heal. And we want to do that. And we just ask that you would trust us enough, even if it's just going like with your heart, just a little bit, just a little bit. We'll take that and we'll walk alongside you.

But at the same time, I can't guarantee you that you won't experience hurt. Even if we love each other and we're really good at love, man, we are also just dunces sometimes.

I love my wife more than anything else on the planet. And I think she would say the same thing about me. She would. But as much as we love each other, man, we hurt each other too sometimes. It happens. We don't want to, but we do that. So what keeps us from closing off our hearts and living for ourselves instead of submitting to each other in love? Well, man, we need God's help. We cannot do it our own. Totally, totally, totally need God's help. We need to know and submit to his perfect love.

Real love submits to the perfect love of God. And I just want to say the more you live in submission to that perfect love of God, the easier it becomes to do all this other stuff I'm talking about.

Submitting ourselves to God's love means we have to open our arms to him and to be vulnerable with him. I mean, that is the safest person that you could open your arms to and be vulnerable with and trust.

[31 : 01] He has promised that he will never, ever, ever misuse it and mishandle it and abuse you or anything. I mean, he's going to love you steadfastly. He's perfect. There's no other way to learn this love and to learn how to grow in being vulnerable than that. God shows us all the time that he is worthy of our submission. He's not cruel or angry or vengeful. He's good. He's good. And I think

what we try to do, and we don't always give God like open access to all of our hearts. We're always trying to figure out and look for his goodness. We step out and, you know, there's times where it's like, God, I don't know if I can trust him with this. I don't know if I can trust him with this part of my herd or this part of my life. And we're always looking for ways for God to prove that he is good.

And actually, that's what Jesus' incarnation is all about. Like he came to show us how good the Father is. He came to show us how good God is. He came to put on flesh and live that outright for us to see John 14, 9. Jesus said this to one of his disciples that asked, man, can you show us the Father? Can you give us a vision of what the Father's like? And he says to Philip, haven't I not been among you for such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. And you can look into the Gospels, and you can look at the life of Jesus and all that he did and all that he was and how he loved us. And you get to see and know the Father through that. You get to see and know who God is throughout. Jesus is the proof, all the proof that we need for you and I to believe that God is worth submitting to. Is he good? Was Jesus good? Yes. Is he kind? Was Jesus kind? Yes. Is he loving?

Was Jesus loving? Yes. Jesus loved us so much that he endured the shame and pain of the cross that you and I could be freed from sin to live with him. Faith in Jesus, living by faith, is submitting to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as being true. That's the beginning of opening yourselves up and opening your heart up vulnerably and being submitted to the love of God and trusting in that. But guess what? It is not a moment that we do that. We are called to live by faith, right? And so our whole life of faith is waking up every day and in every moment saying, man, I am opening my arms to you still. I am believing that you are good. Despite what is going on around me, despite my present circumstances, I am going to believe and trust and look back and have confidence in that this God loves me, that this God is good, and I'm going to continue to live that way.

Salvation in Christ is being saved from our sins, but it's more than that. It's a life of submission to God. Living by faith is doing just that. I think often what we do is we live partially submitted to God. [34 : 16] We can submit to that historic truth of Jesus dying on the cross for our sins. We look back and we say, man, that was awesome. That is so good. But we have a harder time with submitting to God, the Holy Spirit, in our every day. The idea of a God who fills us and is present all the time, that's less comfortable for us because it means a life of submission to him right now. Not looking back and saying, that's cool what Jesus did back then, that's awesome. And opening yourself up to that, it's opening yourself up to God who leads and guides you in every moment. A God who wants to pour in his love and his goodness to you all the time. But the Holy Spirit is the very relationship where the real love of God moves from an unbreakable true historic reality into a present reality. Real love isn't an abstraction. It's an experience. And the Holy Spirit brings that experience. The more you and I pursue that relationship, and as a relationship we can have, the Holy Spirit is a person. It's not a force.

It's not an energy. The more frequently you say, man, Holy Spirit, I need you today. I need your help. Fill me again. Fill me anew. The more you learn to listen to him and learn where you can listen to him, which is in word and in the prayer. The more we do that, the more you and I give God access to our hearts in the present, in the moment, every single day. And you know what? When we do that, he will pour out his perfect love into you. It's not something that you have to look back on and say like, yeah, that happened one time. And the cross with the Holy Spirit just pour in that love into the present all the time. It's a beautiful thing. But that does mean you lose something as well. You lose your independence to call your own shots. You will lose being the highest authority in your life. The Holy Spirit will call you into a life of greater submission. But how can he do otherwise? Remember, he is God. He is part of that loving community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who joyfully and willingly have submitted to one another in love and trust for all time and will into forever and evermore.

And God's salvation, that walk with the Holy Spirit is bringing you into that eternal holy fellowship of the Godhead that we know and love and believe by faith. And as we give up our rights and independence to be submitted to the love and goodness of God, that actually, again, the more free we become, free from fear, free from insecurity, free to receive God's healing for our pain, free to never walk alone because we have him. We have his church alongside us.

Living submitted to God is a scary prospect, but every step you take into more submission opens you up to a deeper experience of his real love. As the band comes up, we're going to consider how to respond.

And I do want to invite all of us to respond right now. This is an opportunity to take a step into submitting yourself to God's love. Maybe you've never done that. Maybe you've never ever done that and you've never believed, but today maybe something's changed. You're feeling a tug to open your heart to him for the first time, to risk. And I want to dare you, if that's you, I want to dare you to respond and open your arms and ask God to show you that he's real. And as you experience that amazing love for the first time and give yourself over to him, submit to his love. Man, that looks like just saying, you know what, God? You know what, Jesus? I believe that you are who you say you are. You died on the cross for me, a sinner. And without you, I am hopeless. If you're a Christian, what step is the Holy Spirit calling you to take today? Whatever you're holding on to, man, let it go. Open your arms and trust him. Let him in. And I want you to lay aside everything you think, you know, about being filled with the Holy Spirit. I realize, man, there's like been abuse of that. There's been excesses.

[38 : 32] People have tried to turn it into formulas or through weird manifestations. I just want us, I mean, just lay that aside. Just close your eyes and think about this. Acts 2 42. Peter preaches this short little sermon. The Holy Spirit's there. 3,000 saved. You know what the Holy Spirit does?

He fills them with great devotion. Great devotion to the gospel, to prayer, to one another, to the mission of Christ. And that devotion is submission. It's letting yourself go. It's not being devoted to yourself anymore, but being devoted to the Holy Spirit wants to do or he wants to lead. We're going to quietly just examine our hearts, do business with God just for a few short moments. Go ahead and do that right now, and then we're going to do communion together.