

What's for Dinner?

Connect 4 series

by Pastor Chris Famisaran

I am so blessed to be able to serve in a church that has so many talented wonderful people. Thank you, Ethan. I really, really appreciate our storytellers.

So I believe it was 1965 Simon and Garfunkel... I love Phillip, he always lets me know what he's thinking. Simon and Garfunkel come up with a song I am a rock, I am a rock. I'm an island. I built walls the fortress, deep and mighty that none may penetrate. I have no need of friendship, because friendship causes pain. It's laughter and it's loving. I disdain I am a rock. I am an island. And when I... Of course, I've heard this so many years. I never realized until this last week, I was like, Man, what a horrible viewpoint of being able to look at other people, I just simply want to push myself away from everyone else. And get I think as followers of Jesus, we're not called to push people away. Instead, we're called to draw to connect with one another.

Several weeks ago, I was able to finally, finally, finally after two years, get together with my colleagues, we had a meeting in the morning, we went to Glendale, and I had already envisioned this sermon series in a different way. But as I sat down with them, we finally caught up. Even though we were still wearing masks, we were talking, it was just so good to be able to see each other finally, in person. You know, you can text people you can call people, and even through a screen, you can see people and understand what they're saying their points. But it's never going to replace this interaction that I have here with you. Can you see people's eyebrows be raised when they're texting you, or when they're on the phone? Right? Because somebody could be seen, it could be, you know, speaking sweetly and nicely to you, but could also just have the most sour looking face when they're saying it as well. There's meaning and connection, especially with our our fellow human beings, and especially in our believers, our family here at the Downey church and worldwide because we're connected to this movement to share Jesus with others.

So connection. This month, I want to talk about connection, there are many connections that we have, we're going to talk about connection in general, maybe let's look at it from the perspective of the church. But next week, we're going to talk about connection with your spouse in you know, in light of Valentine's Day. By the way, guys, reminder, Valentine's Day is coming up. Hint, hint. But we also have connections with our family, our kids, our, our, our parents, our cousins, or aunts and uncles. And finally, at the our last week, we're gonna talk about connection with our neighbors with the people that we meet in the community and our job, and how we can better connect. So we're going to get the basics today. And we're going to go deeper in depth in the following weeks. And this is all a process that I've been aiming towards last week we talked about basically discipleship. What does it mean to be a believer to have faith to be able to have a Savior? But also the calling that God has for us to be able to share Jesus with others, to have an a mission statement to having vision to see what the church is about. We've also talked about the importance of Scripture and prayer. And now how do we connect with others?

In fact, I was sitting in when we finally got to lunch. We were eating in this meeting, one of my friends, we started talking about board games. And somebody brought up the idea of Connect 4. Now, how many of you all played Connect 4 growing up? How many of you still play Connect 4? How many of you are merciless, and we'll try to beat the person at all costs. Okay, we have a few honest people. You know, when it comes to Connect 4 and board games, but especially Connect 4 it requires a little strategic, you have to be strategic, because you can't just put for little yellow or red. Let's just call them checkers, because they look like checkers, right? And so you have to have some strategy to it. And relationships are also you, you sometimes have to be intentional, some relationships. You know, if it's like a glove, it's great. It's easy. In some relationships, maybe they're forced relationships, maybe just people you don't really want to deal with but you have to, how do you connect with them? Because connection is important, whether it's your family, or for your job, you'd like making money, right? Gotta be able to connect with the people that you're working with. So the object of Connect Four is to be able to connect four checkers that are of the same color were red or yellow. Much like also dinner.

Now let's try to get to know each other a little bit better. How many of you, when you're asked to make something and you're given the recipe, how many of you will follow the recipe where you cross the T's and dot the I's and follow the periods to the very last detail? How many of you are intentional about following the recipe as it is stated? Okay, we got a couple people go, Okay, how many of you, you look at it, and you think I could do better? Or there's room for there's room for a little creativity? How many of you, okay, all right, not as many this time. How many we just don't even care and look at the recipe. You just do what you want to do. Alright, when it comes to making food, some foods, you're lit, you're allowed you're given you have the ability to be creatively fried rice and stir fry. Okay, it's not that hard to make. It's, it's hard to mess that up. But let's say you're trying to bake a cake. Alright, you got to be intentional about how much flour you put in orange bread. How much yeast? I'm not the baker. You all know my wife's the baker. So help me out. What else do you put in in bread? Okay, baking soda. You put too much baking soda, or too much yeast powder. What happens? Okay, it doesn't come out correctly. Alright, or maybe you don't let it sit long enough. It's not going to rise properly. It's not going to taste right. In fact, over Christmas, Leisa found a new baking recipe. And it took her probably three or four tries to get this perfected. And, and I could tell her she just she was getting upset the first couple batches. It's too firm. It's too soft is that and then finally she found the magic touch. And she's been repeating that since then. And so of course I has her wonderful husband and the benefactor of great hot Toasty Bread. Awesome. But it took her a while to figure it out. And much like our connection sometimes some people it's a little more involved process.

Now connections, what are some key ingredients for healthy connections and the first one is that of love. Okay? Because in all connections, all relationships we have to have love. Love leads to compassion kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. In fact, let's go to Colossians chapter three where Paul basically says that okay, Colossians 3, Colossians 3:12-14

Don't put your bibles down. We're going to be reading about well, we're gonna read several verses. Alright. And the church is fuller today. Praise the Lord. That warms my heart You have no idea and for all of our visitors as well joining us today. Thank you for joining us today and consider making Downey Church your home church Alright, are we there? Oh, Therefore, as God's what chosen people, we're not just cruising this earth, we are chosen and that makes me feel better because I am beloved. I'm wanted, I'm needed, right? As God's chosen people, holy or set aside and dearly loved. clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other, forgive one another.

And if any of you has a grievance against someone, forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all of these virtues put on love, which binds them all together, in perfect unity. And so this verse is basically kind of setting the standard of what we're going to be talking about will go more in depth into some of these key ingredients. But over all of these things, you have compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, all of these can all be invoked in the word, love. When you look at the world, does it appear that there's a lot of love out there? Some of you, okay, not all, but it's, it feels like you have to look for love, right? More often than not, we're found, we were shown, we're told that the world is messed up. Sometimes I jokingly say, Oh, I've lost confidence in the human race. And then and then my faith is restored. For instance, this week, I somebody shared a story with me of three young men who saw this man get out of the bus and they're probably about maybe 10, 11, 12 years old. And he had a little Walker with him and he tripped, he fell. And the three young men came over, they helped him up, and they helped him get on top the curb, and made sure that the man was okay. I thought for instance, oh, my heart is restored my faith in humanity, it's okay. But then right after that, how many other stories that I see that I was like, Ah, this world is getting worse and worse every day. Now, God has called us he's chosen us, to be the difference in this world, to make a difference, to lead with love, to have compassion, to have kindness and humility, to have gentleness and patience. So as we develop connections with one another, love is the key defining attribute that we have to have. And not only have, but show and live. When it comes to other creating key ingredients, though, in making connections, you also have to have trust and respect. They are essential in all relationships, and all connection.

Let's go to James 1. A couple of books over a couple of letters, James, 1:19, 20. How many of you when you are looking for passages as the Bible you have to start at Matthew, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts? All right. Are we all there? Okay, awesome. James 1:19, My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this. Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. When we develop connections, especially this, we have to be quick to listen. God gave us how many ears? ears and two what? eyes so to speak, how many mouths that God give us? and one tongue right?

And slow to become angry. In all connections, the idea of trust and respect to being able to listen to somebody and especially next week when we're going to talk about this more in depth, some of you are going to be chuckling and maybe some of you are just going to be getting more upset but when it comes to trust and respect, is key and vital. Being able to listen, especially when you're listening, it's not arming yourself with what you're going to come back with. But to truly, if you want to truly trust and respect that person, see it from their perspective, we have heard the phrase, you know, seeing it in somebody else's shoes, right? From their perspective, now doesn't necessarily mean that you have to agree with them. But to have true respect, to have great connections, you have to be able to listen. And trust is also keeping confidence if they share something with you. How many of you have ever told somebody something that was very important to you? Maybe they laughed at it, or worse, they took it and it was something confidential and shared it with everybody. So one of the most demoralizing things that you can experience when confidence and trust is betrayed. So to have healthy connections, we have to have trust and respect, listening, but also having boundaries as well, and being honest with each other. The other thing that we have to have is forgiveness is necessary when we accidentally and I and I put this intentionally or we intentionally hurt each other. Because I don't know maybe you've ever gotten

somebody you've ever have you ever gotten mad at somebody and just wanted to get even with somebody. And yet God does not call us to get even, but to forgive.

So let's go to Matthew 6, Matthew 6, some part of a well known passage that we've studied, Matthew 6:14 and 15. Okay, are we there? All right. For if you forgive other people, when they sinned against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, their sins, your father will not forgive your sins. This is coming after the Lord's Prayer. And the Lord's Prayer is a prayer that Jesus taught the disciples. This is like the bonafide template of all prayers for daily prayer. Excuse me, it talks about, you know, our adoration for God, our need for God, our dependence on God for, for helping us to get through life. And even in verse 12, when it says, God intentionally says, Hey, seek forgiveness, and forgive us our debts, as we have also forgiven our debtors. And so God is not only asking us to seek forgiveness, but also as we seek forgiveness, to be reminded of the fact of, Hey, we should forgive those who've also either been in debt or harmed us or hurt us. Now, when it comes to forgiveness, though, that doesn't mean then that you become a doormat to somebody either. Okay? You do not allow them to abuse you or use you. And that may mean as well in love just telling them, Hey, I'm not going to allow you to do that. And if you continue to do that, then maybe we should not see each other. Because as much as and even Jesus as well, he did not, you know, when he when he talks about the fact of, you know, hey, like, was he saying you should let somebody strike you? Far from it was the opposite thing. He was making a point that those who strike people are actually they're weak. And Jesus is not allowing you to be to be slapped. But he's not saying you should, you know, be slapped. But that he was he was showing that man's and sometimes they get upset, and they just emotionally react. And yet Jesus is not asking us to again, be doormats, but to be firm. I mean, was Jesus meek minded? Yeah, he was meek. He was humble. But did he ever get passionate? Right, Jesus was very passionate. And Jesus stood firm. He stood up for others. So when somebody has wronged us, we need to point that out. And also, sometimes however, not everybody is going to feel remorse. And in your own best interest, even if they never say I'm sorry, or they never acknowledged the wrong, it's in your best interest as well to forgive them. So forgiveness is a necessary ingredient for healthy connection.

But connection is also true love requires commitment and accountability to each other Galatians 6:2 says, carry each other's burdens. And in this way you fulfill the what? The Law of Christ carry each other's burdens. Does that mean that we should be overlooking everybody's shoulders watching what they're doing and pointing everything out? No, because then nobody would be here. And let's just be real. But in our relationships, especially for those that we love, sometimes it takes commitment, and intentionality in our relationships. And for instance, if one of our brothers and sisters or a family member or friend that you have, is struggling with something, should we not also be able to say, Hey, I'm here to help you? Or to say, Hey, man, I'm concerned about you. Because I love you, not, man, you're messing up, you shouldn't be doing that. We always come from a point of, hey, is there anything I can do? And can I listen? How can I help? How can I help walk you through this challenging time? So commitment countability be it sometimes things go wrong. And some of you may be asking, Pastor? How do we repair the connection when it's been fractured? How do we fix things? Now, again, sometimes we might think, Hey, I'm going to try to get even. But that's not going to solve anything. In fact, have you ever tried to get even in when you successfully gotten even with that person? Did you feel a million times better? Sometimes just being honest, sometimes it felt really good. But more often than not, this is not what Jesus did not want us to feel better about that. More often, I found that I

didn't feel much better. In fact, I felt worse because an eye for an eye. Eventually, it's not going to solve the world's problems. You have to stop the negative habit.

So how do we how do we repair the fractured connection? Matthew 18, Jesus gives us some very sage advice that I know I preached on and have to remind myself, this is how, whenever you have a problem with somebody, this is how you should begin to repair the relationship. Okay, so Matthew 18, verse 15. It says, If your brother or sister sins go and point out their fault, just between how many people just the two of you, right? So if you recognize that something's going wrong between you and your friend, hey, let's go talk about it. Let's go meet up. There's something wrong between us. There's, there's something that I feel like is in between us. Let's talk it out. And as we have we discussed have love, trust, respect, compassion, kindness. And if they listened to you have won them over. I mean, sometimes some people, they do things and they don't even realize that they're upsetting somebody else, or they've caused hurt or damage. But if they don't listen, take one or two others along so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. And when I say if you're going to go to somebody if you're going to bring somebody in, make it somebody that brings somebody in that is respected and trusted, and can be objective. And if they still refuse to listen to them, tell it to the church and if they refuse to even listen to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. Jesus Are you being kind of harsh here? Jesus says treat them as pagan and tax collector. And when you when you hear that, when you read that what comes to mind when Jesus says, treat them as a pagan or a tax collector? Is Jesus judging them? They're not part of the Hebrews, they're not part of the Jews, be gone with them, or they're lost. That's sometimes what we think. Right? But in actuality, Jesus actually has the opposite in mind, when he says, treat them as a pagan or a tax collector. He's basically stating, okay, you need to start at the very, very beginning of basics, and helping to repair this relationship because they have no idea what you're talking about. When you're bringing somebody who's not in the faith, or especially when it comes to a tax collector, when Jesus says, tax collector, the people who are first hearing this, or think, you know, tax collectors, they don't know anything, when you share the Gospel, okay? When you share the Gospel. When you share the gospel with everybody, do you start? Do you start with Leviticus or Romans? Those of you who've read the Bible, no, no, that's not where you start. You start with the basics. You start with who Jesus is, who God is, that God is a God of love. And then from there, you slowly build up so when Jesus says, Hey, treat them as a pagan or tax collector, that doesn't mean to shun them, to treat them ill, but to love, and start at the very beginning. And then from there, I pray that the fractured relationship can then be healed.

Now, Brene Brown, she wrote, We cultivate love, when we allow our most vulnerable and powerful selves to be deeply seen and known. And when we honor the spiritual connection that grows from that, offering with trust, respect, kindness and affection. Love is not something that we give or get. It is something that we nurture and grow connection that can only be cultivated between two people that exists within each one of them. We can only love others as we love ourselves. Shame, blame, disrespect, betrayal, and withholding of affection can damage the roots from which love grows. Love can only survive these injuries if they're acknowledged, healed and repaired. Connections require intentionality. Especially when it's been damaged and it's been hurt.

There's also another How should I say? Is it a poem? It's often been attributed to Mother Teresa whether she wrote it or somebody else I don't know but this is something that it speaks truth I'm sure some of you have heard this. Allegedly, Kent M. Keith wrote this. People are illogical, unreasonable and self centered. Amen. Love them anyway. If you do good people will accuse you of selfish ulterior

motives. Amen? Do good anyway. If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies. Succeed anyway. The good that you do today, okay. The good that you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. But do good anyway. Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable. But be honest and frank anyway. The biggest men and women with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men and women with the smallest minds. Think Big anyway. People favor underdogs but only follow football follow only top dogs. Fight for a few underdogs anyway. When you spend what you spend years building may be destroyed overnight. Build anyway. People really need help but may attack you. If you do help them. Help people anyway. Give the world the best you have. And you'll probably have your cake to your cake. Teeth kicked in. But give the world the best that you have anyway. To be a follower of Jesus to means you're going to be misunderstood. You're going to be misunderstood by your friends. They're going to be misunderstood by your family. And that's so true even especially for Some of you, I know that you're experiencing that conflict within your own family because they don't understand the new choices and the new direction that you're going in your life. And when they don't understand. It makes them upset, especially if it some of the things that you're changing, you're changing your new positive habits are going against the grain of what your family has lived. And maybe they feel threatened. Love them anyway. As we talked about these ingredients, love, trust, respect. Forgiveness, commitment, accountability. What are some, what is the one ingredient that you feel that you do well, and what's another ingredient that you can grow and improve? Think about this, this week. If you're comfortable enough. Share it with your family, your spouse, your friends. Maybe this could be a time to build trust and respect. meet somebody new get to know them.

And the action step for this week is for the one ingredient that you can grow and improve every day this week. Pray in genuinely practice this ingredient. Whether it's love and love can be kindness, compassion. But it could also mean practicing intentionally practicing trust and respect, accountability, whatever it may be, and I pray that my friends, may we be a church that grows deep, strong connections, not only in this church, but I desire that you have deep strong connections with your spouse, your loved ones, and those around you. May the Lord bless lead and guide you,

Father in heaven, thank you for your goodness. God, I pray that Downey church will be a church deep, full of connections not only with one another, but our community and those that are around us, Lord only you through only through you is anything possible. So may you Lord in fuses with love, Lord, where we've been heard, help us to repair those broken connections. May we be people of trust of respect? May we love one another. When that sometimes means approaching and saying hey man, I'm concerned for you. May we be a church and a family that is faithful to you? And may we share you and your soon coming with others in Jesus name? Everybody said amen.

Grace and peace everybody.