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Title: *Love for a Lifetime - Posture #1*

Scripture: Matthew 19

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So, it's been several years since we've done a series here at Orchard Hill on romance, and I always hesitate when it's time to do a series. I feel like it's an important topic in the Bible and should be addressed from time to time. But I always hesitate because statistics say that 60% of our adult population is single, and that means that for 60% of us, at least, it's a topic where you say, do I really want to sit through this?

And I know that of the group that's married, there's a group that says, we're good, don't mess with it at all. Don't say anything that we're going to have to have a conversation about. Or there's another group that's married and they're saying that's tough right now. And so rather than being like this great attraction series, I realized that saying we're going to do marriage for a few weeks may actually cause some people to say, you know what, let's take a few weeks off, but I hope you don't do that because marriage and romance are important.

And even if you're in the 60% who say, I'm not married, I'm too young to be married, I'm in high school, middle school, it's just not where I'm at. Probably one of the most important times to think about marriage, think about romance, is before you're in a situation where you've started down a path and now you're trying to figure out what's important to you.

The Bible has quite a bit to say about romance. But what you know, even apart from the Bible, is that it is a big deal, even if you're one of the people who say I'm not interested in a relationship right now. Here's what mythical figure Alex Hitchens once said. This was the movie *Hitch* if you didn't pick that up. He says, "No woman wakes up saying, I hope I don't get swept off my feet today."

The number one song in the country last week, I understand, is by Miley Cyrus. Now, I know some of you are saying Taylor Swift and Miley Cyrus in the same month. What's going on? I'm just trying to do a little research. Here's Miley Cyrus with her song "Flowers." It's the number one song in the country right now. Here's what she says. "We were good. We were gold. Kind of a dream that can't be sold. We were right till we weren't. Built a home and watched it burn." And then she talks about her kind of path through thinking of leaving or not leaving. And here's her conclusion. "I can buy

myself flowers, write my name in the sand, I can talk to myself for hours, say things you don't understand. I can take myself dancing and I can hold my own hand. Yeah, I can love me better than you can."

Now, it's a little twist on the breakup song because the breakup song has been around for as long as songs have been around. And usually, it's I'm sad, I'm disappointed, and I hope for something else. This is I love me better than you can, and I can tell myself stuff you'll never understand. This is like the whole way of thinking, of saying, I don't need anybody or anything. And certainly, that's understandable after you've been through a breakup to say, I'm good, I can buy myself flowers, but it doesn't address a soul longing for a deep connection.

I mentioned that 60% of adults are single according to statistics. I did a little research on the statistics of adults that are currently using dating apps. 28% of adults, according to one site are currently on a dating app. That means half of the people who are currently not in a relationship are on a dating app, and nearly 60% of adults have at one time or another used a dating app. But it makes sense to look online. But what that says is, even when people say, yeah, I'm not interested, they're still open. They don't wake up and say, I hope no one sweeps me off my feet today.

This isn't really going to help the message at all, but this is just a little point of interest. According to the same website that I found that said 28% of people currently on dating apps, it said 72% of women and 53% of men base their desire to move further in the dating app process on something more than the picture. Okay, let me say that again. 72% of the women and 53% of the men make their decision on something more than the picture. Half of the men who are on dating apps make their decision entirely on the picture.

Now, lest you think that only men are shallow in this, here are the statistics on what women are looking for once they go down on the dating app. 32% say religious views are important. 27% say that his job is important to them. Okay, so they might rule you out if they don't like your job. And 22% say they base moving to the next step on height. It's within 5% of your religious views.

Here is what we're going to do over these weeks. Last two years ago, I set out to read through my New Testament in Greek. It's the original language of the New Testament, and I don't say that to be like I read Greek, but I had studied it in college

seminary and had never read through the whole text. I've used it to study for messages, but I'd never just read through the whole text.

And when I came to Matthew 19, a very familiar section, it's about divorce and remarriage. I really just assumed I knew all that was here. Literally, it's like I've studied this, I know about porneia, moikia, and the difference in the divorce clause. I mean, I could talk about it before I even read this, but here's what jumped at me.

There are three words, three distinct words, that are used for marriage in the original language. I think each of these words points to a different posture of a healthy romance. And when you look at these words, which is what we're going to do, each word will be a week. And then there's an exception as well here. I think we get a picture of God's intent for marriage and God's intent for romance.

So, what I want to do over these weeks is help us get a picture of God's view of what this can be. And this is why this is important, whether you're single or married because this is God's idea. God created us as relational beings. He also gave and gives the gift of singleness, First Corinthians seven. But if you don't have that gift or you're not interested in that gift right now, then this is something that's important.

Even if you're single and have no intention of ever being married or in a relationship again, chances are you have kids, you have friends, or you have somebody who's in a relationship. Sooner or later, you're going to be sitting across from someone with a cup of coffee, and they're going to say something about their relationship where you have a moment to speak into it. Are you going to simply give a Miley Cyrus kind of advice? Drop pearls like you can buy yourself flowers, write your name in the sand, you can love yourself like no one else can. Or, will you give biblical God's insight?

So, here's the first word that we're going to look at, and it's a word that appears right at the beginning of this section that you heard read. Here's what we see. It's in verse five, and it quotes Genesis chapter two. It says, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united." And this is the word that we're going to look at and "be united" is the way that the NIV translates that. The ESV has "hold fast." The Christian Standard Bible or the New American Standard Bible of 2020 has joined together, and the King James version has "cleave." And so those are a bunch of different words.

And the Greek word that underlies it is the word "kollaō." If you're trying to follow, that's just in English. If you're going to transliterate it "kollaō," the word literally means when you look it up in the lexicon, glue, weld together, adhere, or attach oneself.

And so, it's a fairly straightforward word. And you might think, well, once I look at that definition, it is all about stickiness. It's about sticking together through thick and thin. But the word is used twelve different times in our New Testament. And I want to just show you a couple of these because I think this will help us understand something about this word.

Luke chapter ten, verse 11, is one of these words, one of these places. Here's what it says, "Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near." This verse has the connotation of dust sticking to the feet. That's the idea of it being joined. And so, that's one idea that is almost an unintentional attachment.

Luke chapter 15, which is the story of the prodigal son, verse 15, says this. It says, "So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs." And when he hired himself out, that is the idea of joining himself. It's the word "kollaō" again in the original language.

Acts chapter five, verse 13, is another place where this is used. Here's what we're told. "No one else dared join them." Join - "kollaō." Here's the idea of just a voluntary joining of a group.

And then First Corinthians chapter six, verse 16. Here's what we read and where this word appears again. "Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body?" So, "unites" is the word "kollaō" again here.

So, you may be saying, okay, I don't really track with why this is such an important thing. Here's what this word means. It means a voluntary attachment that you make with another person. Now, again, you may say, okay, what's the big deal? Isn't that evident? Well, here's what happens in a lot of relationships. People will voluntarily come together. They'll attach, and they'll get married. And then one person will start to demand from the other person an allegiance because they're married.

Now, on one hand, that makes sense that we would say, okay, because I'm married, because you're married, then there should be an allegiance. The word itself has the

idea of being joined and being sticky. But when you look at it throughout the New Testament, it has this idea of a voluntary attachment. So, anytime that you or somebody in a marriage relationship starts to say you should and you better instead of pursuing the heart of the person, you've actually lost track of what it is that makes marriage what it is. Which is a voluntary attachment, a "kollaō" with one another.

What we're going to do over these weeks is we're going to talk about some different postures. And I think the posture of this word is really the posture of face-to-face, of two people facing one another, looking each other in the eye, and being intent on one another. It's a turning toward rather than a turning away.

Now, I would guess that some of us hear this and we say, well, that's part of the problem for me, is I'm in a relationship and I'm turning toward my spouse and they keep turning away from me. And everything I do feels like it's leaving me without the ability to get them to turn back toward me. Or some of us are saying, I'm not sure I want to turn toward my spouse anymore. I don't find them as compelling as I once found them.

And so, what happens is we just go about life. Maybe it leads to divorce, maybe it leads to just living on parallel tracks where we rarely intersect. But what I'd like to do is just give you what I think is a formula that points to what this column is about. I'm just going to say that it's attraction plus pursuit over time. So, attraction plus pursuit, and it's over time. It's something that we do over time when attraction and pursuit meet.

First, let's talk about attraction. Certainly, "kollaō" has this idea of turning toward a voluntary attachment. And so, there's a certain physical attraction that happens between people that's part of an initial attraction. And you may say, well, I'm just drawn to what I'm drawn to. But part of what this is driving at, this idea of leaving your father and mother and being joined, to cleave, to turn toward each other, is to say, continue to celebrate what has attracted you in the first place and continue even to work at being attractive?

Sometimes people present themselves at the beginning with sweatpants and they're like, hey, this is me. It's good. There's no marketing at all. But sometimes what we do is market ourselves to everybody else in our world, and we rarely, if ever, put any effort into the relationship that we say is most important to us. So, there's a physical attraction.

There's certainly an emotional attraction, speaking about character and values, about some of the things that draw us together. And so, as we work through being in a relationship, what we want to do is say, what was it that attracted me? How do I continue to pursue that? What was it that attracted them? How do I continue to be that so that I'm not in some ways just saying, hey, we're good, we were attracted to each other, but now we're not?

If you're single, this is not just something for somebody else. And here's why I believe that you can say I'm just drawn to what I'm drawn to. But there's also a sense in which you can say, you know what, I want to choose what I'm drawn to. And what I mean by that is, by saying you have some things that you want to be true like some of the women in the dating app said, we want men with a certain height or jobs. And what they're doing is they're saying if they don't, I'm just not swiping right. It's that simple.

And my point is just this. And that is to say when you decide that the character of the person matters, that their faith matters, that their kindness matters, you're investing in something greater than looks. Certainly, looks aren't irrelevant. But what usually happens is that looks carry you only so far. And then it's the character that draws us.

I think it was Andy Stanley who made popular a phrase a few years back where he said, if you're single, what you want to do is you want to be the person that the person you're looking for is looking for. What you want to do is, in other words, instead of saying, I'm out just dating all kinds of people, who is it that the person I'm looking for is looking for? Be that now because that way you're working on attraction now. And what face-to-face means, what "kollaō" means is that you turn toward each other and so you continue to work at attraction. You don't say we were attracted once, we're good.

Here's the second part of this equation. I'm just going to say it's this pursuit, this idea of pursuit. And what pursuit is really saying is that I am going to not just be attracted to you, but I'm going to pursue you, turning face to face. The word "kollaō" has this idea of joining and to join, sometimes you have to pursue.

Tim Keller writes about this in his book, *The Meaning of Marriage*. And he talks about friendship as being a more significant factor in marriage and healthy, long-lasting marriages than people give it credit for. And what he basically says is that when you're a friend, when your spouse is your friend, what happens is that you can garnish

that with romance and have a long-lasting good relationship. But when it's all about romance with just a little bit of friendship, then there isn't a foundation. And his point ultimately is to pursue a friendship with your spouse.

How do you do that? Well, any relationship grows when we give it attention and when there is affection that is expressed. And what I mean here is, attention, saying I'm going to attend to you, I'm going to turn towards you. If "kollaō" has the idea of a voluntary attachment, it only happens with very intentional attention and pursuit means that you're willing to say things and express affection in ways that the other person feels.

There's a book that came out years ago called *The Five Love Languages*, and it's a very simple book. It talked about five different ways that people feel love and how what a lot of us do is try to give love in the way that we experience love. So, you might give gifts and you might be with somebody who's like, oh, that's nice. Why don't you ever tell me you love me? You might say, well, I told you when we got married, what's the problem? Or you may be the person who is always looking to spend quality time together, and that person wants acts of service or physical touch. The book said to try to understand each other's love language and express affection in a way that they experience it. And so, affection, attention, and coming together.

There's another book that John Gottman wrote a few years back. He called it *What Predicts Divorce*. And he had several factors. But it can almost be boiled down to this. He said, "When there's contempt in a relationship or lack of respect, when there's criticism, especially of the person's character, when there's defensiveness, or not taking criticism seriously, and when they're stonewalling or withdrawing, you can almost predict that divorce is inevitable."

Now, what's true of all four of those things? Do you know what's true when those things come together? There's not a face-to-face relationship anymore because you're criticizing, you're stonewalling, and you're full of contempt. Face-to-face means I'm going to work through the challenges and turn toward you, not away from you, and pursue the relationship as being ultimately important, not the most ultimate, but ultimately in terms of my human earthly pursuits.

When we pursue somebody romantically, kindness and gentleness are part of that pursuit because when you're face-to-face with somebody, it's hard to be harsh. Sometimes people will be harsher with people that they're close to than with

strangers. And so, friendship, the pursuit of friendship, is part of this word "kollaō." This idea of attaching yourself voluntarily to somebody.

As I was working on this, I jotted something down in my notes that I'm going to say here, and I debated a little bit about whether or not to say it because you'll hear why in a second. But I think this is important. I was thinking about pursuit, and this word of turning toward each other, and that friendship is foreplay. Here's why. And some of you are like, that wasn't that bad. Here's why I wrote that down. Because in this text you go from leaving your mother and father. So, leave behind what keeps you from turning towards your spouse - pursuit. Then it says that you're joined together. There's this "kollaō." And you know what the next statement is? And the two will become one flesh.

Now, some have said that has no sexual connotation at all, and that may be true. But if you go back to where this is quoted from in Genesis two, this whole idea of one flesh is certainly something that involves more than just an emotional connection. And so, when you join together, when you "kollaō" in a sense, it's foreplay. If it's friendship, if it's pursuit - it is foreplay to intimacy. And here's why I think this is important and why I'm taking the risk to even say this because I assume a few people will say that's not a great word to use in church, but we try to keep it real here.

Here's why I think this is important because some of us, what we'll do, maybe we're married and we think we can skip face-to-face and move right to belly button to belly button. And we wonder why we get a cold reception. Friendship is foreplay. Some of us are way too friendly with some people, and we're making an avenue with somebody who's not our spouse.

And some of us, if we're single, might have ruled out people way too early who would be great friends, maybe even great spouses, because if friendship is foreplay, there could be more. But here's what a typical single person does in our day and age, and that is that they eliminate people on superficial criteria. Now, you may say, well, okay, did you get that from your research on online dating sites? Well, kind of. But also, from knowing a lot of people.

Here's what a lot of single people do, they say there's no one to date. I can't date anybody. If you start with 100 people and they say I can't date anybody who isn't, and let's just pick on an unknown woman for right now. I'll turn it around in a minute. She might say, well, I really need somebody who's taller than me because I wouldn't want

to date somebody shorter than me. Okay, that's fairly superficial. You'd agree. But okay, let's grant it. Let's say that this woman is five-nine. Do you know that that is the average height of the average American male? So, if she wants somebody who's five-ten, she's just eliminated all but about 20% of men.

Okay, so now you're down to 20. Now, let's just say that she says, you know, it's really important to me that this person has a job. I prefer somebody with an income. According to some data, 40% of American adults are currently not working. That's hard to believe, but some data says it. She just went from 80 to 20 or 100 people to 20 people down to about six. Okay, a few more than that. But you get my point. Twelve is what she went down to.

And then if she says, you know what, I need somebody who agrees with me politically, wherever she is on the spectrum, maybe 30% agree with you politically. Hard left, middle, or hard right. If we just take those categories. She just went to four people out of 100 that she could potentially date. And we haven't even talked about faith, if her mom likes them, or any of those kinds of things yet.

And here's the point. If "kollaō" is this idea of leaving your family, turning toward somebody, and becoming one flesh, what some of us do is we put the one flesh priority ahead of the friendship and we miss a bunch of people who could be wonderful spouses in our lives.

And then that leads us to one other thing. I'm just going to say it's time, and it's the bottom of the equation. So, attraction plus pursuit over time is what helps us turn toward one another. And time here is really the consistency of saying this will be done not just for a season. Sometimes what people do is they think, well, if I am married, it means that I've already achieved the spouse of my life.

But what if you imagine that voluntary attachment wasn't given? Would you approach marriage differently? Would you approach romance differently? I heard about one man who when he got married said that he told his wife he loved her, and now that it's 35 years later, he said, I told her that if anything changed, I'd let her know. I wonder how that's working in their life?

I realize that some of us may say, well, my spouse is no longer attractive to me, so how do I continue to pursue this person? Or somebody else may say, my spouse no longer pursues me, so how can I pursue them over time? But part of this is where we

move then to the spiritual side of this. You see, you may say, well, if I do that, if I pursue my spouse when they don't pursue me, or if I pursue them and they're not attractive to me in the same way that they once were, then I will, and we and we paint this picture.

But do you know what Ephesians five says about marriage? It says that marriage is a mystery. And after Paul goes into this long section in Ephesians five and talks about husbands loving their wives as Christ loved the church, and wives submitting to their husbands, and this whole picture of marriage, he says, but I'm not just talking about marriage. I'm talking about a mystery. I'm talking about Christ in the church. In the Bible, Jesus is your spouse, he's your husband. And you, if you're a follower of Jesus, are the bride of Christ. And here's why this matters for your marriage. If you understand that Jesus is your husband and you've been the unfaithful spouse and his love for you has been unwavering, uncompromised, then what it means is you can say, if God can love me like that, then I can love my spouse. Even when they don't love me very well.

Now certainly, there's a time for counseling. Even in this passage, there's a time for divorce. But what a lot of couples do is they get into a place where instead of turning face-to-face, they get into getting running, they forget to turn face-to-face, and they forget what attracted them. They stop working on it. They stop the pursuit. They just say if he would, if she would, then I would. And they end up in a bitter place instead of saying Jesus has loved me when I didn't pursue him. And I can love like Jesus has chosen to love in my life.

If you're here, and you're single and saying I'm not sure about love. I haven't seen a lot of it work out well. You can look beyond even human love and understand that God gives us human love as an example when it's right of divine love and as a heart-cry for something greater when it's not. Then what you'll be able to do is say, I can be available to what God may do in this area of my life, but I won't make it my ultimate thing because I've got a source of love that's even greater.

Those are the people who will ultimately make the best life partners, romantic partners, and spouses because they've got a source of love that transcends just you give me love, I give you love, kind of love. So, "kollaō" means to turn toward each other face-to-face and to choose voluntary attachment over and over again throughout your life. Lots of little moments, 10,000 cups of coffee, lots of phone calls, texts, check-ins, lots of moments of saying, I still find you to be the person who

captures my attention and affection. And when that's done, you have a chance to build a life and love for a lifetime.

Let's pray. God, as we begin just a few weeks of looking at Matthew 19, I pray you would open our hearts wherever we are in our own romantic journey to your Word. And God, I pray even more than that we would open our hearts to you, who has loved us perfectly when we have not loved you well. And that being moved by your love would open us up to the kind of love that we really hunger for here and now. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks for being here. Have a great week.