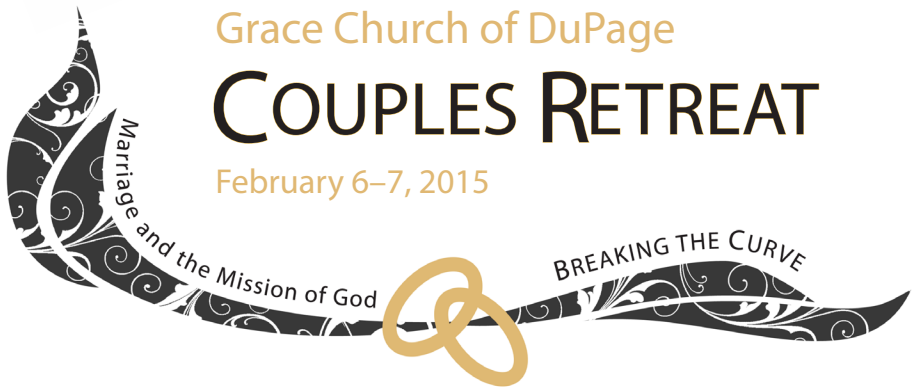




Grace Church of DuPage

COUPLES RETREAT

February 6–7, 2015



Session 3: Breaking the Curve

1. Review and Introduction to the Final Session

2. What Breaking the Curve of Sin Looks Like

2.1. A Tricky Matter

1 Corinthians 13:3: If I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

2.2. The “Family Traits” of Love

1 John 4:7–8: 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

2.2.1. Faithful Presence

2.2.1.1. God's Faithful Presence with and for Us

2.2.1.2. Faithful to Be *Really* and *Fully* Present with and to Others

Albert Borgmann, "Prime Time: Albert Borgmann on Taming Technology," an interview by David Wood: "How we situate technological devices in our homes is morally significant. Placing the television in an inconvenient location in one's home removes it from a position of constant availability and makes room for other engagements to flourish."

Ken Myers, "Attentiveness, Deliberateness, and Other Subversive Activities": "Conversation is kind of a lost art—getting together with people without an agenda or without a to-do list and being able to converse for two or three or four hours, without watching something together. I think it's a practice that has remarkable capacity for how we regard language, how we love one another ... I think we're built, we're constructed, we're created in order to find reality and to find our identity in conversation. [Joseph] Pieper ... says that 'The natural habitat of truth is human conversation,' and I was kind of disappointed, 'cause I thought it was all books. I've got 12,000 books in my library and I thought that's where the truth lives. But it turns out it lives in conversation ... because it's dynamic and it's personal. Truth is personal ...

"So [conversation] would be another good practice that is, in a way, counter-cultural ... It's not uncommon for people sitting in the same room, across the room from each other, to be texting one another (college campuses are famous for this). And not because they want to do it subversively or covertly, but because of the fact that people feel uncomfortable making eye-contact. They feel uncomfortable in the awkwardness. And they feel uncomfortable not be able to control the off-switch. When you're face-to-face with someone in conversation, you can't just turn it off easily ... A lot of our communications technologies are designed to give us total control over a communication, which doesn't just mean the capacity to initiate but the capacity to end the conversation when we want to ...

"[Conversation] is built into our nature. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit converse. There's communication between the members of the Trinity. That's built into our nature. And for it not to be there, and for it not to be mutually supportive, or for one party to want to have control over the conversation, is something that is contrary to the Trinitarian model that's behind us."

2.2.1.3. Faithful In and *Where We Are Present*

community \kə-ˈmyū-nə-tē\
noun | com·mu·ni·ty *often attributive*

- a group of people who live in the same area (such as a city, town, or neighborhood)

Wendell Berry, “Men and Women in Search of Common Ground”: “The danger of the phrase ‘common ground’ is that it is likely to be meant as no more than a metaphor. I am *not* using it as a metaphor: I mean by it the actual ground that is shared by whatever group of people we may be talking about—the human race, a nation, a community, or a household. If we use the term only as a metaphor, then our thinking will not be robustly circumstantial and historical, as it needs to be, but only a weak, clear broth of ideas and feelings.

“Marriage, for example, is talked about most of the time as if it were only a ‘human relationship’ between a wife and a husband. A good marriage is likely to be explained as the result of mutually satisfactory adjustments of thoughts and feelings—a ‘deep’ and complicated mental condition. That is surely true for some couples some of the time, but, as a general understanding of marriage, it is inadequate and probably unworkable. It is far too much a thing of the mind and, for that reason, is not to be trusted ...

“A marriage involves more than just the bodies and minds of a man and a woman. It involves locality, human circumstance, and duration. There is a strong possibility that the basic human sexual unity is composed of a man and a woman (bodies and minds), plus their history together, plus their kin and descendants, plus their place in the world with its economy and history, plus their natural neighborhood, plus their human community with its memories, satisfactions, expectations, and hopes.”

2.2.1.4. Faithfulness not Spectacularness

2.2.2. The Experience of Hospitality



2.2.3. The Begetting and Rearing of Children



Janet Martin Soskice, "Love and Attention": "For each of us, no doubt, a vision is conjured by the phrase, 'the spiritual life' and for most, I'd wager, ... it involves solitude and collectedness. It does not involve looking after small children.

"I have been in the past envious and in awe of colleagues (usually bachelors) who spend their holidays living with monks in the Egyptian desert or making long retreats on Mount Athos. They return refreshed and renewed and say such things as 'It was wonderful. I was able to reread the whole of *The City of God* in the Latin ... something I've not done for three or four years now.' I then recall my own 'holiday' as entirely taken up with explaining why you can't swim in the river with an infected ear, why two ice creams before lunch is a bad idea, with trips to disgusting public conveniences with children who are 'desperate', with washing grubby clothes, pouring cooling drinks, and cooking large meals in inconvenient kitchens for children made cranky by too much sun and water. From such holidays one returns exhausted and wondering why people go on holidays. But middle-class family holidays are only memorable instances of a wider whole. Parents of small children find themselves looking enviously over the wall at their more spiritual brethren—are these not the true 'spiritual athletes' whose disciplined life and prayer brings them daily closer to God?

"Is the busy new mother a sort of Christian 'on idle'? Will others carry on seeking God's face while you spend eight or ten or twelve years distracted by the cares of home? Is this the 'Martha' phase of life when you run the creche and make the tea, while the real work of attending to God is elsewhere? Not surprisingly, many new mothers feel slightly bitter about this state of affairs."

2.2.4. Flowing Forth from the Springs of Marital Love

Wendell Berry, “Men and Women in Search of Common Ground”: “According to the industrial formula, the ideal human residence ... is one on which the residers do not work. The house is built, equipped, decorated, and provisioned by other people, by strangers. In it, the married couple practices as few as possible of the disciplines of household or homestead. Their domestic labor consists principally of buying things, putting things away, and throwing things away, but it is understood that it is ‘best’ to have even those jobs done by an ‘inferior’ person, and the ultimate industrial ideal is a ‘home’ in which *everything* would be done by pushing buttons. In such a ‘home,’ a married couple are mates, sexually, legally, and socially, but they are not helpmates; they do nothing useful either together or for each other. According to the ideal, work should be done *away* from home. When such spouses say to each other, ‘I will love you forever,’ the meaning of their words is seriously impaired by their circumstances; they are speaking in the presence of so little that they have done and made. Their history together is essentially placeless; it has no visible or tangible incarnation. They have only themselves in view.”

3. How the Curve of Sin Is Broken

3.1. Not by Mere Self-Disgust and Self-Despair

Matt Jenson, *The Gravity of Sin*: "Humility involves a reversing of the process of self-fascination through the self-disgust that comes in falling into 'open and obvious sin.' Self-disgust is not the healing of humanity, however, and this is the crucial point at issue. It is here that we are re-introduced to Christology. It is the humble Christ, certainly in terms of his moral character, but even more so in the very condescension of incarnation, who saves us ... If our sin involves us more than anything in a parasitic love affair with ourselves, what more fitting counter could there be than to look outside ourselves to one who is not ourselves?"

3.2. Seeing Him Who Takes On the Gravity of Sin, and Receiving His Love

3.3. Where Do We See His Love and How Do We Receive It?

Romans 10:13–15: 13 **“WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.”** 14 **How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? 15 How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!”**





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