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FEBRUARY 2017

Stewardship 101

***We Nourish and Care for Healthy Relationships***

There’s no escaping love in February, is there? Everywhere you turn you see valentines cards, red roses, red heart-shaped boxes of chocolates and other sweets for our sweethearts.

This is all good and right, because ever since God looked at Adam and declared, “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18), people have found excitement, companionship, joy, contentment and fulfillment in the in the covenant of marriage with someone special.

For all these reasons February is a good month to celebrate healthy, loving relationships, and not just between two people but also throughout the whole human family. Good stewardship involves taking good care of all the gifts God gives us, and certainly healthy, loving relationships count among the most precious. What would life be like without family and friends? And because Jesus commanded us to love our neighbors and our enemies alike, we do well to work on relationships beyond our immediate circles.

Here are some ways that we can become better stewards of relationships:

**For couples:** Give flowers and chocolate, sure, but also be sure to spend quality time with one another. Talk deeply, and listen intently. Pray and read scripture together, and hold hands during worship Talk often and practice deep listening. Read Gary Chapman’s “The 5 Love Languages,” and share how it might improve your relationship.

**For families:** Rejoice in the love and commitment that holds you all together – parents, grandparents, children, siblings, cousins -- everybody. Organize family dinners every Sunday this month to celebrate family connections. Talk about the love you have for one another. Talk about how you can work to be closer and more harmonious.

**For friends:** Enjoy time with your buddies, but cultivate relationships that are deeper and more spiritual. Do you friends with whom you can share deepest joys, fears, problems? Do you have friends with whom you can grow in faith?

**For church neighbors:** You can send friendship valentines to everybody in church -- your congregation could encourage this with “love your neighbor” Sunday! It would be a great occasion for a congregational friendship potluck, movie night, or game night.

**For community neighbors:** Send a valentine and a piece of candy to everybody in your neighborhood or subdivision, or everybody in your address book to let them know that friendships and neighbors are important. Start – or revive – block parties, community cleanup days, yard sales or fellowship gatherings.

God gives us relationships of all kinds so that we can have companionship, friendship, security and joy. As stewards of all that God gives us, we can nourish and celebrate healthy, strong relationships.

*--Rob Blezard*

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