

# THE TAKE AWAY

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Sunday, August 6, 2023

## Message Summary:

In today's message in our new series, *Summer of Love*, Pastor Pascale taught about how to manage different levels of relationships. Even though God can do things independently; on His own, most of the time He chooses to use people and do things through people. We just ended a series of messages on stewardship. The reality is that relationships may be one of the most difficult areas to steward in life. Why? Because relationships can be complicated and even very messy at times. God wants us to learn how to discern and steward (or manage) the relationships in our lives.

We need to be able to discern the different levels or circles of relationships in our lives. The outer circles hold levels of relationship that require less intimacy, knowledge, and trust. These are our relationships of acquaintance with people whom we interact with regularly but do not invite into intimacy. The inner circles hold the space of the most valuable relationships in our lives that have earned that level of access, trust, and intimacy proven over time. Every circle needs a gate with an entrance and an exit, and a probationary period of testing. We need to be able to move people out through the gate if they need to exit a more intimate circle for a less intimate circle because the season we are in or their character demands it. And we need to be able to move people through the same gate into more intimate circles of relationship if they have earned that level of trust, intimacy, and security. Different relationships wear different hats, and each hat has its own level of access.

We have to be careful to ensure that we are not sharing intimate parts of our lives with people who have not earned that level of trust (i.e., through social media, technology, gossip, or toxic relationships). Every relationship – whether stranger, acquaintance, or friend – deserves love. God is love, and we are called to love others the way He does. We can give love, godly love, freely to all. But we cannot freely give intimate access to our lives. To give love the right way, we have to be receiving love from the Father on a regular basis. When we receive love from the Father, that love overflows and pours out of our relationship with Him into every other relationship in our lives, no matter what relational hat the person may wear for us. While we can and should give love freely, we must still learn how to maintain our boundaries between the different levels of relationships and take care to guard our hearts.

## Scriptures:

- **[Mark 12:29-31 NKJV]** 29 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments [is]: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 30 'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This [is] the first commandment. 31 "And the second, like [it, is] this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."
- **[Romans 5:5 NKJV]** 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.
- **[Galatians 6:2-5 NKJV]** 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. 5 For each one shall bear his own load.

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## Discussion Questions:

1. What is our first and greatest commandment? Why is love the foundation of every relationship?
2. What are some of the different levels of relationships we could experience?
3. How do we determine what relational hat a person should wear in our life?
4. Why does every level/circle of relationship need a gate and a probationary period?
5. Why is it important to recognize the change of seasons in our lives?

## Life Application:

Over the next week, as you study the key scriptures, ask yourself the following question: Are you navigating the relationships in your life with love? Remember, every relationship – whether stranger, acquaintance, or friend – deserves love. To give love, we have to be receiving love from the Father. When we receive love from the Father, that love overflows and pours out into every relationship in our lives, no matter what relational hat the person may wear in our lives. So, ask yourself again. Are you showing the love of God in your relationships? How can you grow in how you show love to others?