

June 2-3, 2007 Ordination Sermon
To Be Loved Is To Be Known

It's with great joy that I share with you the story of Jesus love in my life. To set the stage, we are going to see a video clip telling the John 4 story of the woman at the well. It is told from the woman's perspective. For those not familiar with the story, Jesus asks a Samaritan woman for a drink of water, in the middle of the day, as he was passing through her town. We are told that he was breaking a few rules by doing so. Please go to this link to see the video-

<http://www.sermonspice.com/videos/9140/spoken-word--woman-at-the-well->

To be loved is to be known and to be known is to be loved!

That same Jesus who paused at the well has known me, he's seen my sorry self and he has loved me. That knowing has changed me and has allowed me to love in return- to love Jesus, to love others.

His knowing me, his allowing me to know Him, His loving me and him inviting me to love him, has shaped and influenced what is important to me.

Ken and I married at 18.

Jesus came into focus when I was 19 and after wrestling with the call to "come, follow me", choosing to follow, I found myself irresistibly drawn to find out what was important to Him.

At age 19, I was a young mother and wife.
Many options were open to me and as I asked Jesus what to do with myself, my life, what was my purpose, I was drawn to 2 scriptures-

Matthew 16: 24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

1 Corinthians 13: If I speak in the tongues of men and angels, but not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

Now in the early 1970's (perhaps just as now) denying yourself was not a popular life theme. This concept challenged me. So did the description of what true love is. Selfless love was so far from what was in my heart. My love usually wasn't patient or kind, I easily envied, I was self-seeking, I was angry a lot and believe me, and I kept a record of wrongs! My love failed often!

Yet, Jesus was indicating that dying to live and a higher path of love was part of the call to follow him. I could either choose to ignore the challenge or embrace path of change from the inside out and outside in. I was known and loved, how could I help but choose Him? As his disciples said, "Lord! To whom can we go?"

I was young, immature, stupid and willful often, yet God looked deep in my heart and saw that I really wanted to please him and even if I failed most of the time, he'd help me to keep choosing to deny myself and embrace the higher call of love- because I was known and loved.

How I expressed choosing Jesus was by a commitment to serve and love Ken, seeing him as a gift from God. Further, to commit myself to putting first the raising of our child Jesse (and any others the Lord wanted to give us), seeing him as a gift from God and worthy of the best I could give him. This was God's call to me. A desire for an outside career and the building of wealth needed to bow to a higher call on my time. So, we made a choice to live simply so I could be our children's primary influencer and we were lucky to be able to do so. To grow in Christ, I committed myself to going to bible studies and learning how to talk with God about my struggles, my fears, my joys and listening so I could hear from him. From the things I was learning in the bible, it became clear that we needed to be connected to the bigger family of God, so we joined with others on the Jesus path. From the inside out, I was being known and loved, so how could I not want to know and love others? How could I not tell others of the friend I'd found?

When Ken and I had been married for 5 years and had 2 children, we invited 4 single people to live with our family. Over the next 15 years we had 60 young men and women live with us- most staying with us from 1 to 3 years. Ken and I were the mentors of those that lived with us. I'm happy to say most of them still like me! To this day, some are our dearest friends. To be known is to be loved and to be loved is to be known.

I found that I didn't know how to return the love that God was showing me. I knew I "should" love God but I was clueless how to. I heard a wise woman talk about her relationship with God and she said that she prayed "Lord, increase my love for you". I thought, I can do that! So, I began to pray "Lord, increase my love for you", every day, before getting out of bed. I also decided not to evaluate the results for a year, knowing that if I did it would become all about MY effort rather than letting the Holy Spirit do it for me. After a year I probed how I "felt" about

God and discovered a love that continues to grow even to this day. It's what fuels and allows the call to higher love, true love, to find room in my heart. I can only love Him and others because he first loved me.

The beginnings of this church came together in our home in the late 70's. As the church grew, so did our family. By the early 80's we were a family of 6. Because we weren't wise, the strain of caring for a large family, planting a church and not having healthy boundaries, we created challenges for me in relating to the church. We often had sick little ones and that caused me to stay home, week after week, while Ken went off to "do church". I grew to resent the church- getting mixed up in my heart and head what was truly what.

When things reached a crisis point in the early 80's, Ken and I made some hard decisions and worked to get our time priorities healthy. I then was able to see the church for what she is- the local Jesus community- where Jesus loves to be. I was able to see Him sitting at the well again, knowing and loving each of us.

My life was full. Thankfully, I grew to love the church, giving of my time and skill, as I was able. In the early days I spent 2 years working in the nursery, each week, to help establish a safe, caring Jesus environment for our growing church.

Our 4 kids participated in all the possible learning options available- public, private and home schooling. I'm happy to report from my experience that kids can learn where ever it's right for them to be! God is interested in showing up wherever they are.

In the middle 80's I got to start hanging out with horses & along the way someone gave me ½ a horse. It was the unexpected fulfillment of a lifelong dream and desire. My middle child, Amy, grew to be a better rider than I and joined the Pioneer High School equestrian team in 1993. 2 years later, she asked me to coach the team. With a willingness to use what I had to bless others, I discovered a passion to create and provide a place for young women and men to belong and be encouraged. I loved being part of a team of coaches dedicated to helping these kids thrive in a sport they loved.

All my children have been blessed over the years by caring, interested adults and my desire was to give back into this community that I am part of and here was my opportunity.

So every summer and fall for the past 14 years, my schedule has revolved around the practices and competitions of the Pioneer Equestrian team. One of the my best achievements was helping the team win the District Sportsmanship award for the past 6 years. Valuing a positive response to competitive challenges

and graciousness in relating to all, were what I tried to model and share. This spring, I handed over the reins of the Equestrian team after 12 years of being the head coach.

And in the middle of this, in 1993, along came Grace, an unlooked for gift from God.

Once again, God was asking me- Will you follow? Will you accept the plans I have for you? Isaiah 22:8-"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD."

Again came His call to lay down my preferences and look for Jesus pausing at the well and hear Him asking me for a drink. What can I give Him? What can I receive from Him? Will I choose love? Will I choose to renew my commitment to raise this child with the same passion and focus as when I was younger? To be known is to be loved and so, I said, yes Lord, if you help me.

So, we became a family of 7, having our 5 children spread over 3 decades. Jesse was 22, Maja 20, Amy 14, and Judy 12 when Grace was born. I thank God for my family and friends- Ken is the best husband and friend a woman could have. He has encouraged and supported what God has called me to do, even when it's been inconvenient for him. He has loved and known me, cared for me and in that love I have been empowered to be me. Our kids, their spouses and our grandchildren are an ongoing source of unspeakable joy to me. I thank them for all the ways they love and support me. I don't regret one day of investment I have made, and am still making, to raise them. By knowing and loving them well, I hope to one day hear these words from God 'Well done, good and faithful servant! Come and share your master's happiness!'

Least you think all has been smooth sailing over the decades, realize I am not dragging you into the depths of our caring for ailing parents and saying goodbye as they departed this life, far too early for what we'd like. We are living with unhealed health issues where our faith and trust is tested. We've had misunderstandings with beloved family that still leave painful places in our souls. Just like you all have had. And just like you, we constantly have to choose to either trust that God is big enough, good enough and is caring enough or we try the futile path of trying to fix things ourselves.

In 1997, God gave me 2 opportunities to connect with what He was doing in the church.

I began the New Moms group- a small group I needed! The friends I had raised my first 4 children with had mostly completed their task, but I had started over again. I needed a new way to connect with moms of young kids. I asked some women in the church with small kids if they'd like to hang out with me and 10 years later we are still going strong! They are kind enough to let me stay even

though my baby is now 14! I have discovered a passion for helping young moms find Jesus as they embrace raising their children- between lack of sleep, being on call 24/7 and trying to remember where the cars keys are, Jesus is saying the same thing to them as He did to me- to be known is to be loved and to be loved is to be known and He will be there for them.

Also in 1997, we began a new ministry at Vineyard. In response to John Wimber's death, we wanted to do something to honor John's memory. Ken thought he heard God tell him that we should start a ministry to single moms. Ken shared that idea with me and I could see a way to begin it, as if it were before me on paper. Ken was trusting enough to let me run with it and so we began with a group of 8 single mom families in 1997. By God's grace and help we now regularly minister to 60-80 families. It felt like a God kiss when Carol Wimber revealed in "The Way We Were", a book she wrote after John's death, that John had been raised by a single mom.

The single moms ministry is based on the concept that relationship is the currency of the Kingdom of God. If we invest in relationship, then what we do will have lasting value. Goods and services may end but love never fades or fails. May God grant us the power to love well!

As the ministry has developed, my passion for it has increased. I want to see the church rise up and stand with single moms, I want justice done for these amazing moms and kids, I want to see kindness extended to those that have been neglected or ignored, I want to see healing extended for those betrayed and having promises broken. It takes a Jesus community to right wrongs and extend a loving hand of fellowship to the outcasts- that's what Jesus did for the Samaritan woman.

That is what we can be when we are moved by the one who sat at the well.

So I invite you to ask the questions I ask myself -

Who am I serving today? Are my actions only about me or do I ask Jesus to show me what the Father is doing and humbly do my best to join in?

Who am I following? Does following Jesus ever cause me to die to something, for His sake, so that I may find life?

In what direction is my love facing? What is love feeding and growing on? Am I drinking from living water or from my own shallow well? Am I asking God to increase my love for Him and others?

May Jesus cause us to be people and a church that has tasted and seen that to be loved is to be known and to be known is to be loved and may we be able to bring others to meet Jesus so He can do the same for them. Amen and amen, may it be so Lord!