

YOUR LOVE TEAM

Week #6 of the Ongoing Series, "A Year of Love"

Feb. 16, 2022

Rev. Richard Rogers

Okay; how old were you when you learned that you weren't supposed to mix your metaphors? [Congregation laughs] Do you remember that? Like ... [Laughs] Oh, it was just last week! I think it was junior high, right? Where they began to talk to you about not mixing your metaphors. If you're going to use a metaphor, you don't throw in a bunch of other tangents, because then it just gets more and more confusing.

And, as a speaker [laughs], I really try not to mix my metaphors. I really try to stay on what I'm talking about, and not deviate too far. Like, sometimes I get a little creative, but I really try to stay on topic and not just go off on ... Well, sometimes. But to just stay on topic.

So this week, we had two special days right in a row. We had the Super Bowl, which I find kind of special. And we had Valentine's Day, which I find very special. So today I'm going to mix my metaphors. I'm going to talk about love and building a team. And, in fact, I want to talk about your love team.

And I want to do it in the essence of really looking at how the Super Bowl team is built. How the Bengals and the Rams built their teams. Because I believe it's a kind of a case study in how we go about building teams, right? The Bengals had a very traditional way of building their team. They, for the most part, focused on the draft, and they went out and got a few key free agents. Now the Rams [laughs] ... The Rams are LA, right? And how the Rams built their team is: they used their picks -- their draft -- as commodity, as currency to go out and get whatever players they wanted. So they didn't really look at the traditional way of building a team; they just did it the way they wanted to do it.

Case in point is Andrew Wentworth. Andrew Wentworth, as of last week, became the oldest active player in the League. Forty years old; he plays tackle for the Rams. And when Tom Brady retired, he became the oldest player at 40 years old. And he was drafted out of college by the Cincinnati Bengals. And he played 13 seasons for the Cincinnati Bengals, and when he reached the age of 35 ...

Now [laughs], this may be more information than anybody wants. But, at the age of 35, the life expectancy of a right tackle's knees is less than 10 years. And so, when he played 13 years, at 35 the Bengals released him and the Rams picked him up. He was a Pro Bowler, and he played on several Pro Bowl teams. He was an All-Pro; he was it. And he felt he had more good years in him.

And so, for the last five years, he played for the Rams. And I want you to see that it's kind of an illustration of how the Rams and the Bengals had two different ways of building their team. Now, why is that important to you, right? Because most of us do not own an NFL team that we have to really be concerned about how we're going to acquire our players. Right?

What I want you to see tonight is that I believe that every one of us is building a team around us. And I think, for some of us, we're building a team around us very unconsciously. That we're not really paying attention to who's on our team, and the role that they play. But I believe that, if we're going to really fill our life with love, we have to be very intentional about our team.

Sue Enquist, who is a speaker. She played college softball for UCLA; she's a woman softball coach. And she's become a speaker. And she said, "*Life is a team sport, and it's not all about you.*"

But, in some ways, I totally disagree! Because life is a team sport, and your team is 100% about you! Because, in my experience, some people have people on their team that should just not be on your

team! Right? And we have them on our team for all the wrong reasons! And I want you to be very intentional on who serves on your team and, particularly, the position that they get to play in your life!

Ajay Pattani, the founder of Perfect Search Media, said this about teams: *"Life is a team sport. So when you start considering everyone as a team member, your life improves. Team members can be family, friends, colleagues, mentors, even acquaintances. In my definition, anyone whom you positively influence or, in turn, positively influences you qualifies as a team member."*

So this year, if you look at your life If we've dedicated this year to love, do you think that you have all the love that you need to be successful? Do you think you have some of the love that you need to be successful? Or are you feeling like your draft picks have really been way too low, and you need to really pick up a much better team? Right?

Because there's only three sources of love! And I really want you to hear that. There are only three sources of love. That those three sources are ...

First is God. Right? And God loves you unconditionally. The Creator of the universe created the universe in pure love. God loves you! You know, Maya Angelou talks about it in her interview on Oprah that's on our website. And we've all seen it a hundred times. Or maybe you haven't, but it's on our website. And she said her first Unity teacher had her practice the affirmation, *"God loves me."* And she said, *"I had to say it over and over and over again before I could finally feel this idea that God loves me."*

And, for many of us, that is an intellectual understanding. And if you have not fully experienced the infinite love that God has for you, we just ... We have to take that on as a belief. But sometimes our beliefs don't really heal us. Sometimes our beliefs don't really make a difference. And so, over and over again, when we come back to the fundamental truth that God loves you ... But that has to be experienced! That has to be felt! It has to be felt in the cells of your body through prayer and meditation.

And that's why Jesus said the greatest commandment is that you love the Lord, your God, with all your mind, your heart, your soul. Now, why did he say that? Because the underlying principle of the universe is, "As you give, so shall you ..." [Congregation: "Receive!"] Receive! So, as you practice loving God in greater and greater ways, guess what you're actually going to experience more of? You're actually going to feel God's love for you in greater and greater ways.

When you love God in little ways, then it just comes back to you in little ways. And it's not that God doesn't love you infinitely and unconditionally; God does! But we have to open to the experience of it! Like, when you open to the experience of how much God loves you, it's really, truly transformational! That God needs to be on your team; God loves you! That's the first one: God loves me!

The second source is self. Now, the difficulty with self-love is that, when you need it the most, most of us don't give it to ourselves. Like, when we need self-love the most -- when we make a big mistake; or we feel the most unlovable; when we're really having our darkest, deepest moment -- most of us get really cheap with self-love. We close down our heart, and we're not feeling it for ourselves. And so, if we depend on ourselves to be a source of self-love in our most trying moments, many of us end up falling far short.

And so if, in your darkest moment, you don't really feel God's love, and you don't really feel your own love, then who do you turn to? Do you have people in your life that you have a high belief are going to offer you unconditional love in your moment of need? In your time of need?

So, over and over again, the third way is others. And I want you to really look at your -- and this is why I'm calling it this -- your love team. I want every one of us to have three or four people that we know that we can call at any time, day or night, and tell them the truth: what's going on for us. And they would say one simple thing: *"I love you right there."*

Because until we have a team of people around us ... And it doesn't need to be 100 people. It doesn't need to be 1,000 people. It needs to be two or three or four or five people -- a handful of people -- that will say to us, "*I love you right there.*" And, in that moment, we have enough love to do whatever God is calling us to do. To do whatever thing that life calls us to overcome, to be, to have. To be as great as we can be.

But to feel that level of love, we have to be vulnerable! We have to tell the truth!

Now [laughs ... Okay, so let me give you an example. If I tell you that I'm the best football player you have ever seen, right? And you know it's nowhere close to the truth, right? But I want you to believe that. I'm putting on a facade. I'm putting on an air. I'm putting on an act. I'm putting on a lie. And I'm wearing it around thinking that, if you think I'm the best football player in the whole world, you will love me.

Now, you may know without a shadow of a doubt that I'm not the best football player the world has ever seen. And you may love me, even though you know I'm not the best football player the world has ever seen. But if I believe that the only reason you love me is because I'm the best football player you've ever seen, I don't really get to take in your love. Does that make sense? That it's only when I'm honest; it's only when I'm vulnerable; it's only when I reveal myself, and you love me there, that I can actually accept that as unconditional love.

That, to really experience the power of love in our life, we have to let the walls come down. We have to be vulnerable; we have to be honest; we have to let people see us, warts and all. Because only then do we ever really get to feel other people's love. Because if the love is based on the lie, it never feels like love. It just never sticks! It never gets in! We keep it "out there." And so, if we're going to allow other people to be on our love team, we have to be radically honest with them.

Now, am I saying that you need to be radically honest with everyone? No! Like, some people just don't need to know all your dirty laundry. Right? They just don't need to know it. Because they're not going to love you there anyway! But the people that are closest to you, you need to know that they can love you in the place that you fear you are your worst. Because that love counts.

Here's what I want you to see tonight. I want you to look at the people in your life, and I want you to put them into three general groups.

And the first group is people that just love you. And I want you to call those people your "greens." And your greens are all the people ... They're your greens. Your greens are all the people that just offer you unconditional love. That just think you're adorable. You tell them whatever's going on in your life, and they believe in you. They love you. They adore you. Right? You can just share anything; you can be totally honest. And they just love you right there. These are your greens. These are your "go to" people. These are the people that you just share yourself with completely. And they just love you, love you, love you. And you need three or four or five solid greens in your life.

The other group is your "reds." And your reds [laughs] are people that don't do a very good job at unconditional love. Your reds are the people -- when you say, "Look what I just did!" -- they say, "Well, that's good, but you could have done this." You know. Or, "You look okay for that outfit." [Congregation laughs] Right? Your reds are all the people that you know you have to work for their love, for their acknowledgement, for their support.

Your greens are the people that just give it freely. And your reds are all the people that you have to work for it; that you feel judged; that you don't feel, even when you do something great, it doesn't really feel like it was enough. Those are all your reds.

So I want you to see that you probably already have a group of greens in your life and, unfortunately, you probably have a group of reds in your life.

Now, the middle group is your "yellows." And your yellows are all the people in your life that either fluctuate -- sometimes they're greens and sometimes they're reds -- or you don't know well enough to know if they're a green or a red. And I want you to just begin to look at the people in your life as: Are they one of my greens? Are they one of my reds? Or are they in the middle; are they a yellow?

Because over and over again, I want you to look for love in your greens more so than your reds.

Now, how many of us have ever had a strong red in our life? And we keep thinking: if we get they're love, it's a higher quality of love than the greens offer us. Right? Because the greens just keep offering us unconditional love, so we just assume that they're too stupid to know that they're supposed to be judging us. [Congregation laughs] Right?

So we give the reds this unbelievable amount of time and attention, thinking if we can finally get their love, if we can finally get their approval, if we can finally get their acceptance, if we can finally get it from them ... Whew! We've arrived! We have made it! We are on top! Right? So we give the reds this unbelievable amount of time and attention, and we don't go to the greens, because they're stupid. Like, they don't have enough sense to know that they're supposed to judge us, and not just unconditionally love us.

So we don't go to the places where we could be loved; we tend to go to the places where it's hard for us to get love, because that love means something more than just unconditional love. Right? And what I want you to see today is: I want you focused on your greens. I want you to focus on all the people that just love you.

There was a time in my life where the primary people in my life were reds. Just reds. And I kept working so hard to get their love and approval, and I was never going to get it. And I realized that if I kept going in that direction, I was never going to win. I was never going to be full. I was never going to really feel the unconditional love that life had for me. And the more that I began to focus on my greens, I realized I wasn't working as hard. It was actually easy to get love. And I quit going over here, and I started going over here. That made all the difference in the world!

Now I have a group of three or four men in my life that I can call anytime, day or night, and say anything about myself, and they say, "*Richard, we love you right there.*" Or, "*Richard, I love you right there.*"

And I want you to see the benefit of having a team of people around you that you know are 100% committed to you feeling full. To you feeling loved. To you feeling accepted. That, over and over again, I want you to look at who your team is. And maybe it's time for a trade. [Congregation laughs] Just sayin'! Right? Sometimes a team's gotta make a trade and say, "*Thank you very much for your years of service to this organization, but it's time for you to go play for somebody else, because I don't need another red in my life!*" Right?

And this is where I get a little bit of heat in my life. "*Well, Richard, we're supposed to love everybody.*" Yes! We are! And I want you so full of love that you're loving your reds ... not looking for your reds to love you. See, that's the difference! I want you to be so full that all the people that want to judge you and whatever, whatever, whatever ... that you're so full that you can love them right where they are ... but you don't need them to love you! That's the huge -- that's a huge difference!

See, most of us were raised in this mindset that says, "*I'm going to have a relationship. And in my relationship, this person is going to be responsible for loving me in all the ways that I want to be loved.*" And if they do it, great! It's fantastic, and you're blessed, and it's amazing. And if they don't do it well, what do we do? Like, what do we do?

And so, over and over again, what I want you to see tonight is: I want you to have three or four people. Now, how do you find out these people? How do you find who your greens are? You actually have to tell them something about yourself, and see if they can just love you right there.

Now, when you start out with your greens, do you drop the big dark secrets about the worst thing you've ever done? I wouldn't suggest that! [Congregation laughs] Right? I wouldn't suggest that you drop your big bomb and say, "*If you can love this, you can love anything!*" I might want to start it at smaller doses. Like, "*I had this thought yesterday.*" "*Oh, Richard, isn't that adorable?*" [Congregation laughs] Right? And then you've got to up the game, and up the game, and up the game.

Or if you share just a little slight one, and they say, "*Man; what's wrong with you?*" Okay; they go over here. [Congregation laughs] Thank you so much, but I'm moving over. What is that thing with the dating app? Where you swipe left? [Congregation laughs] You swipe ... Not that I know; I had to ask! You swipe left! Some people know that app! Alright. Right?

So what I want us to see today is: I want you to have all the love that you need to be amazing for God. Because we cannot transform our world until each and every one of us at least has enough love so that we can be more loving than we've ever been before. And if you don't have enough love in your life to feel full, I want you to make some new choices that allow you to really have you surrounded and enfolded in greens.

Now, some of us don't believe that we even deserve love. And I want you to see that that's one of the most destructive beliefs. Because every one of us needs love; it is the most important thing that we have to have in life. And you don't have to be successful to have it. You don't have to be a perfect little body to have it. You don't have to be smart. You don't have to be attractive. Every one of us deserves unconditional love. We deserve it! But we have to be wise enough to surround ourselves with people that can absolutely offer it to us.

Because, does God love you? Yes! Does God love you with an infinite, unconditional love? Yes! Are we asked to love ourselves? Yes! And, yet, there are moments when self-love is the hardest thing in the world. Has anybody had one of those experiences where you've messed up in a big way, and loving yourself seemed literally impossible in that moment? Right? Because we go through those! And so, if we don't really feel God's love, if we're not being generous with ourselves, then we have to depend on our team to step in.

I believe that's why we have community: spiritual community. Because we need people around us to remind us that we're lovable, even when we're not feeling it. Even when we make a mistake. That we need love. And when we become conscious -- intentional about building our love team -- all things become possible. All things! Because we're now full. We actually know who to go to. It's not a big, long process; it's a two-minute phone call:

"I just did this."

"Richard, how adorable is that?"

"Really?"

"Yes; I love you right there! Now, go back and be amazing!"

"Okay; thanks! I needed that."

And then it's just over. It's just over!

See, I'm really committed to, this year, you having a higher level of love in your life. And, for some of us, we keep thinking one person's going to fill in all the gaps. And we keep trying to find that one person. And if you found that one person that can love you unconditionally and fill in all your gaps, God bless you! But many of us are trying to do it a different way. And when you feel full, then when you are in a relationship, you can give to that other person, because you're full. You're not depending on them every day to fill you up.

"I am loved." Will you say that with me?

[With congregation]: *"I am loved."*

One more time!

[With congregation]: *"I am loved."*

Let's take it into prayer.

And I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God that is right here, right now. That tonight, we give thanks for all the people that have loved us. Who didn't judge us. Who saw us. Who saw our strengths and our weaknesses. Who saw us just the way we are, and could look in our eyes and say, *"I love you right there."* And we give thanks for them! The generosity of spirit -- the generosity of heart -- that allows them to just love us!

And that we want to be "greens" for the people in our lives. We want to be a source of love: to love people when they don't feel lovable. To love them after they've made a mistake, or fallen down, or made a bad choice. We want to be a green! That we love without judgement. We love without fear. We love, because God loves us first.

So in the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

Copyright 2022 Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center/Rev. Richard Rogers