

City College Announcement/Lunch Invitation & Instruction

College is for Cultivating...not Consuming.

Nones & Dones Slide

Moment of Silence

Rodney Brooks is a Professor of Robotics at MIT.¹

In 2002, he wrote a book looking into the future to predict the effects of Robotics and Artificial Intelligence on humanity.

In his book, *Flesh & Machines*, he writes that a human being is just a machine a “Big bag of skin full of biomolecules” interacting by the laws of physics and chemistry.

So- if that’s true- what does that mean for the way I interact with people? What does that mean for relationships?

I mean- do I really need to treat the cashier at Target like a person- if he is no different than the self-checkout machine?

Well- Rodney Brooks doesn’t think so. Especially, since becoming a dad. He says-

“When I look at my children, I can, when I force myself...see that they are machines. [But] that is not how I treat them... I interact with them on an entirely different level. They have my unconditional love, the furthest one might be able to get from rational analysis....I maintain two sets of inconsistent beliefs.”- Rodney Brooks, *Flesh and Machines*

This MIT Robotics Professor doesn’t live by Reason. Because even though in his vision of the world, everything is just atoms and electrons...

...when He sees his children- he HAS to live differently. He has to FORCE himself to think about his child as a Robot- when what comes NATURALLY- is...love.

Title Slide “The Search for Love”- Genesis 29:13-35; 1 John 4:7-11

Here’s the thing.

As much as Dr. Brooks wants to have it both ways- you can’t.

Either there is no personal God, and everything that appears relational and personal in the universe is actually not. Like love, joy, respect, honor, admiration...none of those

¹ I owe the following insights to Nancy Pearcey. Finding Truth, pg 164

things are real...they are all just electricity firing thorough neurons in your brain that ultimately doesn't mean anything at all.

We are just skin bags full of molecules. Some fleshy version of a robot.

OR

The entire universe is personal and relational- because the God who created it is personal and relational. And if THAT is the case, then even the smallest molecule...the tiniest material thing- is significant...because it was given as a gift by a giver...out of LOVE.

But we can't have it both ways. One way- personal and relational...is how human beings have lived forever.

The other way- completely materialistic- just seeing people as machines...well, no one has ever been able to live that way consistently.

Here's what I'm posing to you today...If God himself- is fundamentally at his core- love.

NOT POWER.

-LOVE.

Then the entire cosmos was created as an OVERFLOW of LOVE...not a DISPLAY OF POWER.

And if that is the case- we should expect that humans- as God's crown jewel of his creation- as the only beings made IN HIS IMAGE- would be deeply relational and LOVE would be the most powerful thing in the world. Which I would argue is EXACTLY what we observe in humanity.

But if there is no God...if there is just some power of life- some evolutionary impulse- some electric force.....well then we would be leading VERY different lives.

I think everything in your being- down to your very soul- knows the truth. We are all searching for love. And no amount of convincing ourselves otherwise- has ever proven to change that.

Today- from an ancient story in the first book of the Bible- and from a letter written by a man who referred to himself as "the disciple that Jesus loved"- I want to show you what love is...how it breaks us when we don't use it right...and how it can absolutely change your life when you really find it.

Genesis 29:13-35

13 When Laban heard the news about his sister's son Jacob, he ran to meet him, hugged him, and kissed him. Then he took him to his house, and Jacob told him all that had happened.

14 Laban said to him, "Yes, you are my own flesh and blood."

After Jacob had stayed with him a month, 15 Laban said to him, "Just because you're my relative, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be."

16 Now Laban had two daughters: the older was named Leah, and the younger was named Rachel. 17 Leah had tender eyes, but Rachel was shapely and beautiful. 18 Jacob loved Rachel, so he answered Laban, "I'll work for you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel."

19 Laban replied, "Better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay with me." 20 So Jacob worked seven years for Rachel, and they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.

21 Then Jacob said to Laban, "Since my time is complete, give me my wife, so I can sleep with her." 22 So Laban invited all the men of the place and sponsored a feast. 23 That evening, Laban took his daughter Leah and gave her to Jacob, and he slept with her. 24 And Laban gave his slave Zilpah to his daughter Leah as her slave.

25 When morning came, there was Leah! So he said to Laban, "What have you done to me? Wasn't it for Rachel that I worked for you? Why have you deceived me? "

26 Laban answered, "It is not the custom in our country to give the younger daughter in marriage before the firstborn. 27 Complete this week of wedding celebration, and we will also give you this younger one in return for working yet another seven years for me."

28 And Jacob did just that. He finished the week of celebration, and Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. 29 And Laban gave his slave Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her slave. 30 Jacob slept with Rachel also, and indeed, he loved Rachel more than Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years.

31 When the Lord saw that Leah was neglected, he opened her womb; but Rachel was unable to conceive. 32 Leah conceived, gave birth to a son, and named him Reuben, for she said, "The Lord has seen my affliction; surely my husband will love me now."

33 She conceived again, gave birth to a son, and said, “The Lord heard that I am neglected and has given me this son also.” So she named him Simeon.

34 She conceived again, gave birth to a son, and said, “At last, my husband will become attached to me because I have borne three sons for him.” Therefore he was named Levi.

35 And she conceived again, gave birth to a son, and said, “This time I will praise the Lord.” Therefore she named him Judah. Then Leah stopped having children.

1 John 4:7-11

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him. 10 Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another.

Transition: Let’s look at 3 things from these passages today.

1) Love isn’t competition- its overflowing cooperation.

One of the things that makes the story of Creation in the Bible so unique- is that all the other pagan creation stories at the time were about gods that were in competition with each other.

For example- in the ENUMA ELISH- a popular Babylonian creation myth at the time Genesis was written- the god of creation is Marduk. He was at war with the semi-deity Tiamat. In order to create- he killed Tiamat, split her body in two- and with one half of her body created the sky...and with the other half created the earth.

In these myths- humans come from the spilled blood of gods- and are typically created to be slaves.

In other words- in all the other creation stories at the time that Genesis came onto the scene- the world was created from raw power. One god dominating another god— and then dominating humans who go in turn go to war with each other.

Sheer competition. Only the strong survive.

But the Genesis story is different. Its completely unlike any other creation story. Because in this story- its not the love of power that drives cration- its the power of love.

Genesis 1:1-3

In the story of YHWH in the OT, there is a trinitarian God- Father son and Holy Spirit, who create as overflow of their loving relationship.

You can see it in these verses.

God- or YHWH is God the father, the Spirit hovers over the waters...and that first phrase there- “in the beginning”- that is the Hebrew phrase that also means “through the firstborn”. Or the son.- Better known as Jesus

Colossians 1:15-17

The apostle Paul brings this out in the quotation of an early hymn in the NT church.

He says- Jesus is the “firstborn” of creation. That doesn’t mean he is the first created being. It means- back in Genesis 1- that phrase “through the firstborn”...thats Jesus!

And all things were created through him and for him and he is actively holding all creation together.

Back to 1)

In other words- unlike all the other creation stories- the Bible tells the story of a world that was created from a God who is ONE god, in 3 persons- who was in perfect loving relationship- and who’s love overflowed to create the world...and humanity..not because he needed something from them..but because part of the reality of God who is fundamentally a loving relationship- is that he loves to share...to be generous.

He didn’t NEED to create the universe. He didn’t insecurely NEED to display his power...he did it because he is generous...a function of his love.

Gen 1:27-28

And in all of that- he creates humanity. And instead of doing everything for them- he invites them into cultivating the earth. He shares his image with them...and then he puts them in charge of his creation.

He cooperates with them. And he creates them male and female. And he gives them the task of not only caring for what he has created...but being agents of creation themselves. Only through the cooperation of male and female- will they create more image bearers of God to share the earth with and to love.

Back to 1)

Look- human beings- at our core- have a deep desire to love and be loved. We are at our best, at our happiest- our most fulfilled- when we know for certain that we are loved...and when we are generously giving love to others.

We're at our best when we are dependent and cooperating on a mission of love.

See, the world doesn't run on the love of power...but on the power of love.

And love is only real...its only what we all want it to be...if God is a personal, relational God.

1 John 4:7-8

That is EXACTLY the argument that John makes in his first letter. He says- we should love...because not only is love FROM GOD- GOD IS LOVE. HE is not fundamentally power...or a force. HE IS A PERSON...he is at his core...irreducibly and perfectly... LOVE.

Transition: Now...lets look at how this breaks down in humans through this story of Jacob. He's going to show us that...

2) Counterfeit Love always disappoints.

Let me give you some quick back story on Jacob.

Jacob's name means "Cheater" or "Wrestler".

And from the moment he came out of the womb- he was scheming to compete for love.

He was a twin, and started life by grabbing his brother Esau's heel on the way out of his Mom.

He was a born competitor.

He schemed his brother out of his inheritance, by taking advantage of his brother's weakness- HUNGER.

Then- because he was jealous of the way his Dad loved his brother more than him, he competed for his Dad's love.

When his Father was old and blind- Jacob tricked their Dad by sending Esau away and then he dressed up like his brother and sat next to his dad's bedside to receive the blessing that was meant for Esau.

Jacob learned that you can't really be loved as you are- you have to earn it, or cheat, or wrestle love away from somebody. Nobody will love you for who you are.

And because he tricked his MUCH STRONGER brother who then was out to kill him- Jacob ran away from home and ended up at his Uncle Laban's farm.

Looking for somebody to love him. So he stays with Uncle Laban for a month, just working there for room and board...and that's when his Uncle activates the competitor in Jacob.

Gen 29:15

He says, 'Hey- doesn't feel right you working for me for free...what do you think I should pay you?'

v 16-17

So Jacob- who has already had his eye on his cousin, Rachel- which I know seems gross to us...but back then...it was kind of thing to marry your cousin. Lets move on.

What I want you to see here is the evaluation. Where it says- that Leah had "tender eyes"- this is an ancient Hebrew way to say- "She has a great personality".

In other words...Leah was not physically attractive...compared to HER sister Rachel- who is.

And now we see another completion brewing between sisters. Every time somebody came around knocking on the door- it was always for Rachel. All the attention went to Rachel. Leah was always left out in the cold.

v 18 & 20

So Jacob says- I'll work 7 years if I can marry Rachel.

And we get this super poetic, Hallmark card verse here in 20.

Baby, 7 years of hard labor is like a few days at the beach- when I know you're the prize!

That verse shows us how much Jacob is hanging on this relationship with Rachel. Everything. This is his shot at the love he really wants, but could never get. And now- he has been given the opportunity to earn it. Compete for it. Just work 7 years- and you get the prize.

But look what his competitive obsession devolves into.

v 21

He reduces her down to a mere object. This is very caveman. I WANT HER. GIVE HER ME FOR MY FUN.

Listen- this is just ancient. this is exactly what happens when people desperate for unconditional love put all their hope in receiving that from another person.

We reduce them down to objects.

And ironically- while we want to be loved just for our own selves without conditions-- we're always loving other people for what they can give us. That's why Jacob rejected Leah..and went for Rachel.

v 23

Now, Laban turns the tables on Jacob. And since according to custom, he wants to marry off Leah the older, before Rachel the younger- he switches them.

I know what you're thinking. HOW IN THE WORLD DID THIS HAPPEN?

Well, its not that difficult with the customs of this day. See the bride would be heavily veiled. From the ceremony all the way through the feast that would last for hours. Then after drinking for several hours, the couple would go into a dark tent, with no lights, where they would consummate the marriage.

Somewhere along the way, Laban puts Leah in the wedding dress and walks her down the aisle. And Jacob is none-the-wiser.

v 25

Until morning.

In the morning- after a drunken night of consuming...turning a person into an object- and celebrating the big win of Jacobs competition for what he thought was finally LOVE..

In the morning he awakes to the disappointment of Leah.

Back to 2)

In the morning, when you come to your senses, the Rachel you thought would save you is exposed as the Leah you were trying to avoid.

This has happened to all of us.

This is the story of our cosmic disappointment.

That we were created to only be satisfied by knowing and loving God, instead,... because we don't think God exists, or we don't really trust him...or like Jacob, even

after he has clearly shown himself to us...we still just **can't believe** that ALL the love...ALL the approval... and ALL the joy that life has to offer is actually wrapped up in knowing God...

...so we look to a human to give us that love. To give us that satisfaction.

APP: We just need somebody to tell us they love us.

So we are all asking ourselves "What must I do to be saved?"

To be saved from my loneliness?

To be saved from my rejection?

To be saved from my fear of failure?

To be saved from the glares of others that would see us as unlovable?

So, for the approval of others, or the pleasure we think we will get out of them...we go to work.

We buy clothes to look just right for the praise of someone else.

We work hard at the gym to catch the eye of that other person... that Rachel that will make 7 years of work seem like a couple of days.

...and this isn't always Romantic.

Sometimes it's for your parents.

Sometimes you want to catch the eye of your classmates or co-workers.

Sometimes you just want the boss to say "Good Job".

And while none of us would say MY SOUL NEEDS THAT OTHER PERSON TO SEE ME AND LOVE ME...man...its happening all the time.

And then we teach that counterfeit love- that always disappoints to others around us.

You know, Jacob is in this spot where he is using Rachel and Leah- because he learned from his Father- who selfishly loved Esau more than Jacob...because Esau was a hunter and could feed his belly.

This is the way counterfeit love goes. It disappoints us and hurts others in the process.

And hurt people...hurt people.

And the cycle continues.

Competitive Counterfeit love always disappoints...and always gets passed along to keep hurting more people.

Did you see how it kept going to Leah?

Jacob gets schemed by Laban- who gets another 7 years of work out of him...and he marries Rachel...while he's also married to Leah. Which is NOT the way its supposed to go.

And he loves Rachel more than Leah.

v 31

Which breaks Leah's heart- so she tries to outdo her sister. And she does that, by having kids..not in a Genesis 1 be fruitful and multiply...not as an overflow of love between her and Jacob...

...no...as another attempt to be saved from her loneliness and lovelessness.

v 32

Now- she is creating life out of competition with her sister. She is creating life to get something that she is lacking. Love. She names the first baby Reuben- and says "Surely my husband will love me because I can give him sons...and Rachel can't.

v 33

She has Simeon and says "OH, this child will help me feel not as neglected."

v34

Then she has Levi- and says "NOW with 3 sons- surely he'll see that I'm lovable because I can doe something for Him that RACHEL NEVER COULD!"

Back to 2)

The Competition just keeps going. And now her kids who are being used as competitive bargaining chips for love...they will break too. They will eventually be in competition with each other for their father's love. The cycle keeps going.

Counterfeit love that you have to work and compete for will never satisfy you.

And here's what ends up happening. Most of the time- when disappointment from counterfeit love strikes...you'll do one of 3 things.

You will either

Blame the thing (or person)

"Oh, he wasn't the right one."

Blame yourself

"I'm not good enough." "I'm ugly. Unlovable. A terrible person"

Blame the world/universe/God (if you still believe in Him)

“I hate this godforsaken place” My stars are crossed. God doesn’t love me because my soul is empty! He’s just out to get me!

OR... finally- you can

Blame your perception of love and salvation

You’ll say “Perhaps I’m looking in the wrong place for salvation. For wholeness. Perhaps I should look to the creator to satisfy my created souls longing...instead of looking to other created things”

And when you will finally admit that. That all along you have had the wrong idea about what saves you...about what satisfies you... You will begin to break the cycle.... You will have done what the Bible calls “Repentance”=

Turning away from counterfeit love of incapable competitive gods... and you will begin looking for that love from God himself.

Transition: Which is when you’ll finally see that....

3) Real Love always cultivates.

From the first pages of the Bible- God’s love is overflowing to cooperate and cultivate.

He creates humans in his image to CULTIVATE the earth in COOPERATION with HIM and EACH OTHER.

And at the heart of What God wants from us...is not something that he needs.

God didn’t create us because he was bored or lonely.

He has everything he needs within himself.

He created us because Real Love always overflows. Real love is always Generous. Real love always Cultivates.

To Cultivate means to “bring Life”.

If you have been around City Church any length of time, we talk often about being Cultivators, not consumers.

Because at the heart of consuming- is you. You using others. At the heart of consuming is the love of power. Competition.

But at the heart of cultivation- is love. Which is shown most clearly in Sacrifice.

See, what Jacob or Leah couldn't find..is someone that would see them at their worst.

That would know Jacob as a cheater. A liar. A swindler...and still love him.

Or that would see Leah- in all of her physical imperfections...and love her.

When you cultivate- you have a vision for what something or someone could be- with unconditional, sacrificial love...and you commit yourself FOR THEIR SAKE— to be the one to give that love.

And out of that love- that generous overflowing love- LIFE SPRINGS FORTH.

IN fact, when John describes love in 1 John 4- its never in terms of a feeling...always an action.

1 John 4:9-10

Here is the beautiful truth about the Gospel of Jesus.

Even though we moved away from God to find love and significance from someone or something else- he didn't give up on us.

In fact- God knows you to your core. He sees the very worst of you.

So- In Jesus- the firstborn of creation through whom the whole world was created out of love...he became human- and on the cross- he took the heartbreak, the penalty, the absolute death that comes from selfish consuming and sin...and he died in your place.

Thats what it means that he is the atoning Sacrifice.

He did what was necessary to bring you back to God.

Love consists in this...not that you loved God- but that HE LOVED YOU FIRST....and KEPT ON LOVING YOU all the way to sacrificial death on a cross.

All the love that you need...everything that we try to squeeze out for parents, and friends, and lovers, and boyfriends and girlfriends and husbands and wives...all that love is already fully yours- given freely to you by the God saw how ugly your sin has made you...and still committed himself to cultivate life in you.

Because Jesus died in your place. You can now have the life that he cultivated.

You can live your life confidently knowing that no matter who rejects you...the one who matters most in the universe hasn't.

And you know what that does?

1 John 4:11

It allows us to love others unconditionally. And it makes a beautiful family of cultivators...which is what the church is.

Its who we are called to be at City Church.

It doesn't matter if you're a freshman in college, or approaching retirement- you have a place to cultivate life in this family...and in this community.

And you know what that feels like? Leah tells us.

Gen 29:35

Leah finally gets to a point with her 4th child where she realizes- that no amount of having kids will save her...and no attention that Jacob pays her will really satisfies her...so she turns her attention to the LORD.

She names her fourth child JUDAH- THIS TIME I WILL PRAISE THE LORD.

And it was from the tribe of JUDAH- that Jesus would come. The very incarnation of God himself- to die and raise us all to life in him.

Matthew 11:28-30

28 "Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."