



Crave: Intimacy

Ryan Miller for August 29, 2010

Hangover “Love Wolf” Clip

Oh Alan – so wonderfully awkward. Alan is a loner and it’s not entirely by choice. He has a deep longing to find other wolves to join his pack. While he has learned to operate on his own and to shield himself from the pain of loneliness by keeping others at arm’s length when he finally believes there is a chance for him to find real friends he dives in desperately. Though perhaps we’ve never been as outside as Alan, we all know the desire to fit in and the pain of being alone.

In a world so full of people it’s ironic that we often feel so isolated. Whether its pain or social awkwardness or fear or just a new place that pushes us into the intense feeling of being alone, we have all felt it. Maybe some of us are feeling it right now, even in a crowd full of people with similar interests. We all know the pain of being outside and wanting to find out way in.

My 1st year of college was intensely lonely. I went to a 6000 student public liberal arts university in the middle of nowhere, Missouri. I knew no one and when my parents and brothers left after moving me into my dorm room I was left in a building full of strangers, with a strange roommate in a strange place. As an extrovert this was very hard. In high school I had a lot of friends, I was involved in a lot of different teams and activities and even people I didn’t know where my friends. But then everything changed. Even as I got to know people and time went by I was still lonely. I longed for the deep friendships that I developed in the past which just take time to have with new people. After I

graduated I lived in a house with 3 other roommates and still discovered movements of loneliness. Over Christmas break when all of my roommates had left for home and I inexplicably hadn't left yet the silence and emptiness of my house would start to get to me. I'd become irrationally fearful of random noises that never bothered me before – but when I was alone and isolated my imagination would take flight. With just one other person there – one friend to be with it was different. Even when my wife and I were newly married and moved to Tucson, we were alone. We had each other which made the newness exciting at times but loneliness would still creep in. I know what it is to be lonely. And so do you.

Even for the introverts in the room who are fueled by time by yourself, I know that too much time alone begins to cause you to long for human contact. I know who you are – I know what you crave, deep in your soul, I know that you have known the pain of loneliness and long to be in deep, meaningful relationships where you can know others and be truly known. You long for love – you need community – you crave intimacy. In this way, Anthropology has it right. Anthropology is the study of humanity and it says that while every human being is different, every human being is also the same. There is a natural anthropology that unites us all which is what the whole field of study of people is based on.

While I believe that we are all the same in some ways anthropologically, I also believe this is true spiritually. I believe that we aren't first and foremost natural beings, we are spiritual beings. We are spirit beings with flesh wrapped around our souls. If there is a natural anthropology that unites us, it stands to reason that there should be a stronger, more powerful spiritual anthropology. In Genesis we are told that we are made in the image and likeness of God - that there is an inherent fingerprint of God on us, and while we are each incredibly unique, we are also amazingly the same.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon explains this truth in this way:

Eccl. 3:11

God has made everything beautiful in its time, he has also set, in the hearts of men, eternity, yet they cannot fathom what God is doing from beginning to end.

God has set eternity in the hearts of men and women. I know what drives you and keeps you up at night, I know because God has told me in the Bible. The fingerprint of God is all over us if we have the eyes to see and the ears to hear. The Bible can unlock the deepest truths about ourselves if we let it. What would you give if you could see inside the human soul and know what God means when he says: I have set eternity in the hearts of men, and yet we cannot fathom it?

In 2003 a film was released called *21 Grams*. In the movie the main narrative revolves around the value of a human life. Its title refers to a phenomenon that happens at the time of our death. The movie describes it this way:

“They say we all lose 21 grams at the exact moment of our death...everyone.

The weight of a stack of nickels, the weight of a chocolate bar, the weight of a hummingbird.”

The implication is that the mysterious twenty one grams is the human spirit – that there is more to us than simply flesh and blood. At our core we are spiritual being of immeasurable value. We were created by God and are invaluable to Him.

Jesus says in Luke 17:20 that the Kingdom of God is inside us, yet few of us ever explore the possibility that this might be true. What if we have a better chance of finding God in the universe within ourselves than in the one that surrounds us? In the next three weeks we want to peek behind the curtain, we want to plumb the depths of the human soul and see what there is to be found. We want to ask the question, what do I feel? Hear? Find? Inside myself? I believe that there are soul cravings inside of each of us that are powerful and even overwhelming at times. In our souls, in our deepest longings, we can find our way to God and we can help others find their way there as well. Our souls crave – we are all on the same journeys, and though they express themselves differently there is a universal nature to it that binds us all together. We are all different, but in this way, we are all the same.

The first journey, the quest we are all on, the craving that drives us, is the craving for intimacy. Everyone is on a search for community, on a search to be an insider – to move from someone who is excluded to someone who is accepted. People will do anything to become an insider – to find a community to belong to.

This is incredibly clear in high school. The whole school could be neatly divided by the different cliques. There were the jocks and the cheerleaders, the band dorks and the video game geeks, the drama types and artists and the nerds were identified by general acclaim. There were groups everywhere and finding a group to fit with was part and parcel of life. Those who couldn't find a group would start their own group of outsiders. Even the loners had their group – it was just a lot smaller. This desperate need doesn't end with high school graduation – it continues our whole lives. There are an endless number of symbols all around us that declare what communities we are a part of. We join teams, clubs, fraternities and sororities, churches, political parties, we are all joiners. We mark our communities by the way we dress, the way we cut our hair, the piercing we have, the tattoos that adorn our body, the colors, symbols, music – they are all boundary markers to make it clear who is in the club and who is not. The labels on our clothes have moved from the inside to the outside and we can identify the kind of people who shop at our favorite stores by their symbols. Polo has a polo player, Abercrombie has a moose, Lucky Brand has a shamrock, Hollister has a seagull, American Eagle has an Eagle. Something as meaningless as the labels on our clothes speak to us about who we are. We were created to belong, we are made to be in community and we long to be there. Human beings are so desperate to be loved, to be connected, to be inside, that they will absolutely lose their own self in the process. At one end of the spectrum we rebel against the social norms to express our own, unique style through various body art and end up looking like a lot of other people.

At the other end we will use Botox, collagen and plastic surgery to become what we hope others will love, what we hope we can love in ourselves. Right now there are thousands of students who will go through hazing and hell weeks just to be a part of a community. This is nowhere more clear than with gangs. Parents will say of their children: “they won’t listen to me, they just won’t be disciplined”, but then they will submit to being beat to the brink of death so they can wear a jacket, so they can be an insider, to carry a name. Human beings will demean themselves just to belong.

Even the elderly get in on the game: there’s the Shriners’ and the moose club, the rotary club and you can’t forget the Red Hat Society that bases their wardrobe on a poem that reads:” When I am an old woman I shall wear purple. With a red hat that doesn't go and doesn't suit me.” Wow – talk about sacrificing just to be a part of a community.

We are born to belong, we are created for connection, and whether we admit it to ourselves or not, we spend our whole lives trying to fit in, get in, and stay in. It almost doesn’t even matter what “in” is; we just want to belong somewhere.

This drive for community often pushes us to extremes. If people cannot find a way to be a part of a community they will move to isolation. What they do is they reject the whole world because the pain of being rejected by the whole world is so great. So they spend their lives living apart from others as a barrier to pain and end up living small lives, lives that only know as much love as they are willing to give to others, a life as something less than human because it is so barren of love.

Others, in their longing for intimacy, move to another extreme - not to isolation but to immorality. This search for community is why the line, “if you love me you will”, still works with young girls. The idols of masculinity are Don Juan, Cassanova and James Bond – all men known for their free living and free loving lifestyles. So men emulate them declaring their ability as lovers by pointing to the numerous partners they’ve had. It seems so exciting and great but these great lovers grow up to be sad, lonely old men. While we give a pass to the young womanizer, when we meet one who is in their 50s or 60s we know there is something very wrong. They have never had real love – maybe they were too scared to be loved, too afraid that if a woman actually knew him he would be rejected, perhaps he didn’t love himself enough to receive love, for whatever reason, it’s very clear that they don’t understand true, deep love, because when you find it, you will never let it go.

Women will trade their bodies in a hope to secure love, because they think this is what men want and fear that it’s the only way to secure commitment – but this is not the path to true love. It is the path to emptiness and guilt and loneliness. This is entirely understandable – we are on a quest for intimacy – and that quest is so vital to us we’ll give our bodies and pieces of our hearts and souls to others. We’ll move from relationship to relationship running away before they become real and we’ll remain in abusive relationships because there is no greater fear in the human heart than of being really, truly, utterly alone. We were made for love.

Our longing for love drives the music, literature and film industry – if we didn't long for love we would have quit consuming pop culture a long time ago. Every generation writes about love. From *Pride and Prejudice* the Jane Austin Novel, to *Pride and Prejudice* the British miniseries, to *Pride and Prejudice* the Hollywood production, to *Bridget Jones' Diary* (for those who don't realize they like *Pride and Prejudice*) to *Bride and Prejudice* the Bollywood version to *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* which brings us the same story with a dash of the undead for the next generation.

Without love there wouldn't be much to sing about and music seems to present a variety of views on love. The Foo Fighter's "Everlong", MuteMath's "You Are Mine" and James Blount's "You're Beautiful" communicates the all-consuming power of love. Depeche Mode's song "The Meaning of Love" asks that very question – what is the meaning, the purpose of love? Death Cab for Cuties "Someday You'll be Loved" and the classics by Gloria Gaynor and Tina Turner, "I Will Survive" and "What's Love Got to Do With It" remind us that there may be no more dangerous place to be than in love.

We know the truth of these songs. We understand the consuming power of love. We understand the confusing nature of love and in our soul we know that loving others is dangerous, but we still do it. When I was a freshman in college I was convinced that I had met the perfect woman. It didn't matter that she was a senior and unattainable, I got to know her and pursued her and by the end of the year she finally gave in and agreed to date me. Those first months I could think of nothing but her and it was pure magic. It was great and life changing and transformational – until it wasn't. It ended and my heart lay bleeding on the floor. And this is the problem with our longing for love – it calls to us like a butcher leading an animal to the slaughter. It seems too good to be true and we try to withhold our heart, but we can't and we discover that all too often - it is too good to be true.

Our longing for love is why the people that we care about the most can hurt us the deepest. The people that wound us the most deeply are the ones that we allow to get deep within our souls. When you give your heart away, you entrust it to someone else's care and they can do anything they want with it.

Given the pain of love why do we still long for it? Why do we put ourselves through the pain? You would think we would learn. Perhaps you think love is merely biological and it is all about the propagation of the species, but we both know love isn't needed for reproduction, just sex is – and we see the results of new life birthed out of sex and not love all around us. It is devastating people's lives – both the parents and the children. In fact, infants whose physical needs are met but aren't given expressions of love like human touch and interaction can literally fail to thrive and eventually die. How is it with all of our scientific advancements and intellectual prowess that we still need love? With the pain that it brings wouldn't it be great if we could just erase it? If we free ourselves of the pain of love – if we could erase those memories, would we our minds be filled with eternal sunshine? If we could delete the memories of our loved ones who hurt us deeply – would we do it? In some ways it seems tempting but trading away love for a freedom from pain saps life of its meaning. I would never have

known the pain I've experienced without knowing the incredible love I've been given by my wife, my family and my friends. I don't want to live without that love. I don't think you want too either. The truth is, we are addicted to love. Love is why all of us need to walk into a 12-step meeting and declare: hello, my name is Ryan, and I am addicted to love. I'm a loveaholic.

Love is why we hurt so deeply when the people we care about die – it's hard to make sense of love in that moment but even in the midst of the pain the momentum of love can't be stopped. Grief is proof that love truly transcends death. You cannot kill love. I'm not talking about the counterfeit loves we pursue with such passion only to find them wanting – I'm talking about the type of love that all the great stories talk about: the kind of love that fills your soul when you have it and rips your heart out when you lose it.

Love is the most powerful force in the universe. 1 John 4:16 tells us "God is love" and he is everywhere.

Author and speaker Erwin McManus tells a story in his book *An Unstoppable Force* about standing in front of a crowd of 150 Muslims in Palestine who had asked him to speak to them about Jesus. He was a bit terrified but he decided to do his best to identify with them. He started off telling them that he has rejected the evil religion of Western Christianity. He said that Western Christianity is immoral and they nodded along with him because in their minds Western Christianity is Playboy and MTV and the whole thing. But he declared to them – there's good news. There's been a revolution. There's a new Gospel that is toppling Western Christianity. It's a revolution of faith, and hope and love. What is this new Gospel you speak of they wanted to know? And this is what he said: "I once met a girl named Kim and I fell in love." Naturally his translator was just as confused as you are now, but he continued. "I once met a girl named Kim and I fell in love and I pursued her with my love, and I pursued her with my love and I pursued her with my love and when I thought my love had captured her I asked her to be my wife, and she did not say yes. I was unrelenting, so I asked her again, pursuing her with my love and I pursued her with my love until she said yes to my love. In issues of love I did not send a friend I did not send my brother. In issues of love you must go yourself. This is the True Gospel. God has pursued you with his love and pursued you with his love and pursued you with his love and though you have perhaps not said yes, he pursues you still and asks you again so that you might respond to his love. It was not enough to send an angel or a prophet or any other, you must go yourself. And so God has come.

This is the story of Jesus, that God has walked among us and he pursues us with his love. He is very familiar with rejection but it undeterred. And he is here even now, still pursuing you with his love. In issues of love God had to come himself and this is why God came into history in the person of Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man."

The revolution of love that Jesus started 2000 years ago wars against every major religion in the world, including Christianity. It is a revolution of the soul that isn't about earning our way to God but

about faith and hope and love and the God who doesn't expect us to come to Him but that passionately pursues us.

The problem with this is that most people see following Jesus as just another empty religion and we know that religion is often a merciless killer. Because of religion we have run from God when he has been the only one there ready to save us and stand in our defense. How would we guess that God is a friend to the lonely, the broken, the outcast, the guilty? It seems like religion is focused on performance and doing the right things to be accepted and love.

There was a moment in Jesus life when one women was surrounded by the merciless killers of religion:

But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

"No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

John 8:1-11 (NIV)

If the religious elite are the closest to God why are they so often the furthest from love? If God is love wouldn't you think the people who know God would love the best?

Jesus said in John 12:47

*For I did not come to **judge** the world, but to **save** it. (NIV)*

Why is it that so many who claim to represent him are so quick to judge and so slow to love? All her accusers saw was a woman who deserved to die for her sin but there is always so much more to a person – she has a history and a family and dreams that have gone astray. Jesus encounter with this unnamed adulterous woman teaches the startlingly truth that the safest place for a broken, sinful person to go is to God. HE will neither condemn us or leave us in our brokenness. He loves us right when we are and invites us to become the people he has created us to be. This woman discovered that religion couldn't save her but when she was alone and surrounded by condemners she found

that God wanted her. God was her place to belong and this reality was the beginning of a new life – not of religion but of intimacy with God. Love can give us a fresh start and a reason to live.

It may be hard to accept, but you are the object of God's love. You were created out of love by him, and though you may not yet realize it, your soul longs to know this love. But it goes way beyond that. You are a creature of love. You are designed to love and be loved. Our search for intimacy explains our need for community, relationship, friendship, and acceptance; it is expressed most deeply in our need for romantic love. It's all interconnected.

God made us for relationships and we only begin to experience life fully when we move toward healthy relationships and healthy community. Your soul will never be satisfied by anything else. Jesus summed up the heart of following him by explaining:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matt. 22:37b-40)

This is the center of following Jesus – loving God and loving others and growing in that love every day. This is what we were made for and why Jesus came to earth.

We all long to belong. We are created to know love and to give love. Our need to love, though rooted in God, is not limited to him. Love is not a limited commodity. Love expands as we give it away. Love dies when we do not. Without love there is no life. To love is to be fully human.

God has written this on your soul and it isn't some idea I just came up with one day through observing human nature or listening to the radio - the Bible tells me this about you and it has unlocked these truths about me in my heart as well. In 1 Cor. 13 Paul says there is something more powerful than all the spiritual gifts, more powerful than the things we can do in life –Paul says at the end of the day there are only three things that remain: faith, hope and love – and the greatest of these is love. God has told me what is in your heart. I know what drives your life. You are on a journey toward community, on a quest for intimacy, you crave love. We all crave love and that craving can only be met on a soul level in God. St. Augustine put it this way: *"Our hearts were made for You, O Lord, and they are rest-less until they rest in you"*. It's time for your restless, love starved heart to find its home in God and then discover the joy in giving the boundless love of God away to others.

Our souls crave.

We crave love.

God is love.

Let's Pray