Ever had a broken heart? Does this hurt come because you were strong or because you were weak? The hurt probably came because you had sold out and given yourself over to this person. Love is strong but it is lived out in its vulnerability.

Love is a risky, painful challenge that calls for the courage to be weak. Love doesn’t need to be right or brag, doesn’t need to ring like a school bell dividing this from that. Love is the same kind of weak as patient and kind are. Love doesn’t hold on to resentments, it let’s go.

Frail love looks like a candle flame that could perish in a breath. Frail love looks like a baby born in a barn. These two religious symbols of the season show us the way. These examples point to the deepest kind of love. And yet, they are essentially frail and weak. Yes, the strength of our love can be measured by our willingness to be vulnerable.

In our coupling, in our committing to the other, we are challenged to experience love as vulnerable and risky. Maybe you remember the fear and trepidation you had when first approaching your significant other. Remember the silly, giddy anxiety of asking for a date or presenting a gift?

Were you ever so much in love with your partner as when they were sick? Childbirth, injury, hardship, or trauma draws us closer together. What’s going on here? I thought love was about strength and happiness. Well of course it is, but we cannot forget to value the other side of the coin.

I’ll show you how this works. We always work out our character defects within the context of a committed relationship. In the safety of our coupling, we explore the depths and boundaries of our worst traits. You may respond to your wife like she was your mother. You may cringe before your husband waiting on the slap of your father. We generally act out our bad childhood habits in our Coupling. Just because you got married doesn’t mean you grew up!

Hopefully, our fears and selfishness can be contained long enough to find a better way. We do this by learning how we are wrong, by allowing ourselves to be corrected. Our powerfully judgmental and selfish self gets confronted with loss and we had better learn forgiveness and giving or end up alone.

We can’t learn when we are right because we already know the answer. We learn when we are wrong and this is painful but growth happens. Love deepens because we allowed ourselves to be weak.

A quick story involves a wife wanting to join a church but her husband is not a church person. Though he usually did not go, on this day he attended with her. At the moment of decision she waffled, things weren’t quite right. She looked to him for direction. With his eyes, he told her, ‘whatever you want to do.’ But from a spot way out of his comfort zone he joined her standing in front of the church. From willingness, not a strong will, he gave her his love.

We find redemption in this fragile bond.