

Talk It Over

Love Them Anyway

(Week 1)

They disagree with you... **LOVE THEM ANYWAY**

SMALL TALK

1. Have you noticed more disagreements lately? What disagreements are dividing people these days?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Matthew 24:12.** Do you think this describes the times we are living in now? In what context did Jesus make this statement?.
3. **READ Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:19; Ephesians 5:1-2.** What does "Love Anyway" look like?
4. **READ John 17:1, 11, 20-23.** How do you love someone who disagrees with you?

GETTING PERSONAL

5. If someone disagrees with you do you find it difficult to love them? Have you ever been able to be friends with whom you "agree to disagree" on some matters?
6. What struck you most about any of the truths you read from questions 2, 3, or 4?
7. Does being one with other followers of Jesus seem impossible when we have so many disagreements over many matters? On what basis can we supernaturally demonstrate that we are one?

MAKING PROGRESS

8. One of our core statements is: "Don't Do Life Alone." What are some ways you can reach out, love and connect with people this week just because Jesus first loved you?

July 19, 2020

**They disagree with you...
LOVE THEM ANYWAY**

I can't remember a time when stress has run this high across the board, and across the nation. It also has created a greater divide, over so many things.

We are divided over how to deal with a pandemic. We are divided over whether this is really, really, bad and getting worse, or nothing but overblown fear tactics in an election year. We are divided over whether church should meet in person yet or not. We are divided over whether masks should be required or not! We are divided over how to deal with racial tensions. We are divided politically. And it seems like it doesn't matter what you are talking about, everything you say is a political minefield that can set off an unintended explosion!

How do we deal with so many volatile issues, and stressed out people who are on the brink of volatile overflow? The emotions are running so very high for so many.

You would think this is only out there in the world, but if that is what you think, you would be wrong. The divided volatility is within the church as well. It is within our church.

After one such spill over that I was privy to, I woke up to spend some time with God, processing this. I am spending time memorizing scriptures these days, I'm was on day 226 of a reading and memorizing plan called F260, on foundational scriptures.

Here is what strangely comforted me.

2 Corinthians 4:7-11 (NIV2011) {7} But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from

*God and not from us. {8} We are **hard pressed on every side**, but not crushed; **perplexed**, but not in despair; {9} **persecuted**, but not abandoned; **struck down**, but not destroyed. {10} We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. {11} For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body.*

Hard pressed on every side... From within the church, and from outside the church. A number of people are angry that we are not yet open, and they are making that a test of faith. Thinking we don't have faith because we are fearful of the virus. Let me assure you that our leaders are not making decisions out of fear. We are making these decisions based on love, and not primarily love for our own wishes, but love for the community, and the love of the gospel, and to protect our hospital capacity to save lives, and the perceptions of our community that we are for them.

Perplexed, but not in despair... There are many complex issues we have never navigated before. Do we know exactly what we are doing? Is it really clear? No. Not really. It is very difficult to navigate in the fog, through circumstances and obstacles we have never encountered before. Part of that fog is the divided interpretations of the entire population, and the divided interpretations and perceptions that carry over right into our ranks. How do we navigate these waters? If we opened soon, people will be mad. If we don't open soon, people will be mad. It is perplexing. We don't see with the clarity that God sees. But we are not in despair.

Persecuted... To be honest, this is a strange one because the persecution is usually from the outside, but the persecution we feel is coming from within the ranks of believers, not from the world.

There is nobody outside of the church that is mad that we are not meeting.

I've talked to some local pastors who have resumed in person church services and they have received angry phone calls from the community who are persecuting them for being open right now.

Struck down...

Jesus was struck down by "his own". He came to his own, but they rejected him.

Now let's add this:

Matthew 24:12 (CSB) Because lawlessness will multiply, the love of many will grow cold.

You have watched outbreaks of lawlessness on the news that is disheartening and quite disturbing. What is that doing to the love in your heart? We must be very careful not to let our hearts grow cold.

We are going to look at how to keep our love from going cold. Up to this point, here is what I've planned.

- 1. They disagree with you... LOVE THEM ANYWAY**
- 2. They oppose you... LOVE THEM ANYWAY**
- 3. They hurt you... LOVE THEM ANYWAY**

Jesus tells us to love one another. Jesus tells us to love our neighbors. Jesus also tells us to love our enemies. Sometimes all three categories apply to the same people. Love them anyway!

They disagree with you... LOVE ANYWAY

I. What Does This Look Like?

It looks like God's love.

Romans 5:8 (NIV) But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Were we in agreement with God, when he demonstrated his own love for us?

Did we deserve his love when he demonstrated it to us?

No!

He brought us into agreement with him BY his love.

Though we did not deserve it, Jesus became the bridge to span the gap between us and God. By his love, by his reaching out to us while we were away from him, he brought us back.

1 John 4:19 (NIV) We love because he first loved us.

He did not wait for us to reach out to him first before he reached out to us. We responded to him when he reached out to us.

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II. This requires Humility

Ephesians 5:1-2 (NIV2011) {1} Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children {2} and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Humility means it isn't about you. You are not living for you. Jesus gave himself up for us, now we give ourselves up for others to bless the other person.

AFFIRMATION

I am "FOR" people because God gave himself for me, I am "FOR" people even people who are far from God, or people who are against me.

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Love Like God Loves

Picture Charles and Susan walking down a beach hand in hand at the end of the academic year. The pressure of the semester has dissipated in the warm evening breeze. They have kicked off their sandals, and the wet sand squishes between their toes. Charles turns to Susan, gazes deeply into her large, hazel eyes, and says, "Susan, I love you. I really do."

What does he mean?

Well, in this day and age he may mean nothing more than his hormones are talking...about how she makes him feel, and what his hormones want...

But if we assume he has some moral virtue, he may mean something like: "Susan, you mean everything to me. I can't live without you. Your smile captures me from 50 yards. Your sparkling good humor, your beautiful eyes, the scent of your hair—everything about you transfixes me. I love you!"

What he most certainly does not mean is this: (now this is going to sound offensive, but there is a point coming) "Susan, you have

bad breath, your nose is quite large, your hair is often not quite right, your knees make a camel look elegant, and your personality could use a lot of help, but I love you anyway!

So now God comes to us and says, "I love you." What does he mean?

When he says he loves us, what does God mean? Does he mean, "You mean everything to me. I can't live without you. Your personality, your witty conversation, your beauty, your smile—everything about you transfixes me? Does he mean, "Heaven would be boring without you?" Does he mean he would be in a dreadful state unless we say yes to him? No.

Doesn't he mean more of the I LOVE YOU ANYWAY kind of statement not because of our virtue, but because it is his nature to love us, and he knows what his love will do for our future? He sees that.

"It is my nature to love, so much so, that by my love, if you will have me, I will make you lovely, I will make you fit for heaven. Would you please allow me to bring the kingdom of heaven into your life. Will you allow me to put my spirit in you to transform you. I will work heaven's will into you, but you must want me to do so, and you must also learn to "work out", what I "work in". Do you want this? Do you want to be made lovely? Will you have me? Will you let me be King of your heart and life? I have made this possible through my Son's gift to you, you must trust what he has done for you, and trust him enough to turn from your ways and follow him? Will you do that? I gave you him, and He gave his life, will you now live for him?

We loved you anyway, now enter into our love and love them anyway.