

VVCC CORE VALUES Check Up:

Talk It Over
Staying Strong and Healthy
Through the Pandemic

#1: LOVE GOD WHOLEHEARTEDLY

1. On a scale of **1 to 10** (**1 is:** I'm really not doing well at all, and **10 is:** I am doing fantastic!) how would you rate yourself in **one** of the following areas and explain why you think that is: Anxiety level? Frustration level? Sense of well-being Emotionally? Physically? Mentally? Spiritually?

#2: DO FIRST THINGS FIRST

2. Jesus said to "remain in me and my words" (John 15:7); what is your plan for doing this? How is this plan working for you? What is God teaching you these days?

#3: DON'T DO LIFE ALONE

3. Who have you connected with this week (besides your household)? What creative way have you connected this even while practicing physical distancing?
4. Pause a moment and ask God to bring to mind who you might reach out to this week. After a the prayer, did anyone come to mind?

#4: SAVED PEOPLE SERVE PEOPLE

5. Some of the regular ways we have served has been disrupted, in what ways have you been able to serve others at this time?

#5: FOLLOWERS SAY, "FOLLOW ME."

6. Has any VVCC online content been something you have been able to share with a friend? How did that go? If you already have been mentoring someone, how have you stayed connected and supportive?

May 3, 2020

BARRIERS—4

4-How could a loving God send people to Hell?

Thank you for joining us today for church online. If this is your first time with us, welcome. I'm glad you are with us today as we have been looking at typical Barriers to faith in God. This series is an effort to remove barriers to faith. During a pandemic we are filled with questions. Our faith can grow stronger through this time to be sure, but doubts can also come. Questions like these can cause barriers. I hope to take these barriers that come between us and God answer them so the same barrier can become instead a signpost pointing us toward God.

4 BARRIERS

1. How could a loving God allow so much suffering?
2. How can you say there is only one true faith?
3. Hasn't science disproved the Bible?
4. How could a loving God send people to Hell?

The subject of hell is my # 2 least favorite subject in the Bible. Now I have your attention. You want to know what my #1 least favorite subject of the Bible is.

James 3:1 (CSB) Not many should become teachers, my brothers, because you know that we will receive a stricter judgment.

I don't like this one. It is an uncomfortable reminder to me. But it causes me to hit a subject like this even when it is disturbing, and distressing, and uncomfortable for me.

I don't believe I have any other option than to believe what Jesus believed.

Since I believe Jesus was the Son of God who claimed what he did, predicted his own crucifixion, and resurrection and pulled it off, I believe these are powerful reasons to believe he knows what he was talking about. And he thinks it is important for us to know.

One of the reasons this topic is so difficult is that we twenty-first-century Westerners hate *judgment*. We fear being judgmental in any way. We will even go to great lengths to avoid judging and excuse bad behavior on extrinsic factors by blaming horrific crimes on mental health problems, or religious extremism, or on educational deficits, and such. Now, these can be contributing factors, but I think most of us think there is something deeper going on, something from within people. And we believe inexcusable acts need to be brought to justice! Right?

When it hits close to home it is no longer theoretical. We get it. **When I was a sophomore in High School** my family learned that my aunt had been brutally murdered. I remember the awful day that my parents came back from identifying her body at the morgue. Whoever murdered her was never arrested or prosecuted for her murder. My aunt was my mom's little sister, and this affected her far more deeply than I had realized, for the rest of her life.

Without justice even this world becomes a HELLISH picture. And so we have a judicial system that sentences people, and takes them out of circulation. So, since people are eternal beings, isn't Hell a necessary correlary to Heaven? If hellish people are not removed from heaven, heaven isn't heaven.

We will look at only 2 points today based on the question:

How could a loving God send people to Hell?

I didn't have time for the 4 points I thought about presenting.

1. What do you mean by God?
2. **What do you mean by loving?**

3. **What do you mean by send?**

4. What do you mean by Hell?

I'm only going into 2 of those. The middle 2.

I. **What do you mean by LOVING?**

If God is loving, what does that mean. What does his love look like?

Is God a “teddy bear” kind of God or a “Momma bear” kind of a God? Or can he be both?

Some people only want God to be comfortable, always forgiving, always merciful. Where is his justice if that is the case? Is everyone treated exactly the same then? Something recoils inside at that.

Some people want God to be only like “Momma Bear”? I think Pharisees were a bit like that, but they had a wrongful idea about their own self-righteousness.

Maybe you can see the tension there.

God has revealed himself as both “Tough” and “Tender”.

It makes sense to us if we think about it. We see good parents as both tough and tender don't we?

- “Teddy Bear” only parents raise rotten spoiled self centered kids.
- “Momma Bear” only parents (with regard to rules and consequences) often cause their kids to rebel and run from their parents values as soon as they can.

The concept of consequences should be more obvious to us since it is in nature.

Galatians 6:7 (CSB) Don't be deceived: God is not mocked.

For whatever a person sows he will also reap,

This is the general principle. We get that even in our world there are consequences to choices and habit patterns.

God's love is both tough and tender. Jesus came to help us see what God is really like.

John 1:14 (CSB) *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Although we usually think of grace when we think of Jesus, Jesus taught about Hell more than anyone else. Here's a passage that affirms this where the word Hell isn't even used.

John 5:27-29 (CSB) *And he has granted him the right to pass judgment, because he is the Son of Man. {28} Do not be amazed at this, because a time is coming when all who are in the graves will hear his voice {29} and come out — those who have done good things, to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked things, to the resurrection of condemnation.*

Nobody wants a God who says, "Hitler? You know how it is...boys will be boys?" And then treats Hitler and Mother Teresa exactly the same way.

Besides, if there really is a God, I want to know what the real God is really like. I'm not interested in making up a God from a do it yourself feel good kit. God calls this kind of thing idolatry and is offended by this. God is who he is, not who we make him out to be.

God revealed his plan to set things that are wrong, right again. God didn't reveal himself and his plans in abstract terms but through relationships, conversations, history, and events.

Romans 3:22-26 (CSB) *The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe, since there is no*

distinction. {23} For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; {24} they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus... {26} God presented him to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so that he would be just and justify the one who has faith in Jesus.

What we discover is that at the cross God's love and justice intersect!

The judgment comes in a way that satisfies justice while allowing for God's grace to truly transform us.

We kind of get this on a small scale. If your child disobeys house rules, say by throwing a ball in the house and breaks your window. What do you do when your child feels terrible about it? What if your child is 5 and feels terrible, big crocodile tears, sorry. What do you do? You might decide to say, "I forgive you." Where's the justice in that? The justice is this. If you truly forgive your child, guess who pays for the replacement window. You do...if your child is only 5. Now, if they are 15, and with an attitude...there may be some consequences. Right? God decided to make things right inside of us and between us, by forgiving us even though we disobeyed. His undeserved grace shifts something inside. To do this though, he paid for his holy broken window that we broke.

What I mean by a "loving God"? Tough and tender, full of grace and truth.

[How could a loving God send people to Hell?](#)

II. What do you mean by SEND?

We get that our judicial systems in one sense are not really the ones sending people to prison as if by arbitrary decision. The

judge isn't *sending* someone but *sentencing* a guilty someone who chose to do what they did knowing it was wrong that if caught there were consequences.

Our eternal destination is determined at the intersection of decision.

God chose to make a way for us, but he does not force us to choose which way we go.

How could a loving God send people to Hell?

Jesus already answered the question this way.

Matthew 7:13-14 (CSB) "Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. {14} How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it."

Decision Is The Key To Destiny

People: "How could a loving God send people to Hell?"

God: "I will not send you there, but if you choose to go there, I could never lock you out."

The question is, do you know God well enough to want to be with him forever. Many don't care to know him at all. They don't want him. They never have. God makes a way for them too. He invites them too. But he does not force them.

God was tough and tender enough to be just and the justifier for my sake on the cross.