

How to love difficult people 05-24-31

Welcome to wk 3 in our series 'What's Love Got to do with it?'

We have considered that love starts with God and then God desires our love; and the way we love God is by loving people and following Jesus' commands. Today, How do we love difficult people? Some Questions we may have:

- What do you do when it's hard to love?
- Can you love when you've been wounded?
- Do you find it hard to set boundaries in your relationships?
- **Some people are just hard to love!! Right?!**

Good news and bad news when love gets hard:

Bad news: We are always going to have difficult people to love in our lives! If one leaves another is standing in line to take their place.

Good news: Though most people can be won over by our love, God doesn't expect us to win everyone. Not even Jesus could!

Difficult to love people grow us

- Think about Jesus. Persecuted to no end, betrayed, falsely accused...yet he NEVER prayed for them to be removed from his life! Wow. He kept on loving.
- Listen to his teaching (it's in your notes)
Matthew 5:43-47, ERV

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies. Pray for those who treat you badly. If you do this, you will be children who are truly like your Father in heaven. He lets the sun rise for all people, whether they are good or bad. He sends rain to those who do right and to those who do wrong.

If you love only those who love you, why should you get a reward for that? Even the tax collectors do that. And if you are nice only to your friends, you

are no better than anyone else. Even the people who don't know God are nice to their friends."

Rhetorical question: "If you only love the easy to love people, are you really Loving?"

So what about MY difficult person?

- When we get hurt we want retaliation, to inflict harm equal to what we felt
- Natural feeling that Jesus says we can overcome by love.

Types of difficult people to love

1. **"Different"** people

- Values, desires, passions, music, parenting ideas
- They aren't bad, aren't evil...just Different!
(how are becky and I different? Get permission)
- When people are different, our 'preferences' go on guard and we begin to judge...which leads us to draw a line with that person
- How do we love them?
Practice **acceptance**. Prepare your heart in advance by praying to God to make you more accepting of others. But listen: he will do this by allowing you to interact with different people in order to let you grow in love!

2. **"Difficult"** People

- Their Core values are very diff than ours
- They may be needy, insecure
- Maybe they have gossiped about you...
- It's draining to be around them
- They occupy too much of your time...you find yourself praying about them over and over and over...ever been there before?! Raise hands

Romans 12:18 says,

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

God says it starts with me. Live at peace.

How do we love difficult people?

Live in God's peace.

How?

- Stop thinking of them as enemies. Tell yourself this!
Conscious decision.
- In this relationship is God trying to teach you something?
- Do an inventory that begins with you, then the other person. We usually start with the other person! *(Well, if they wouldn't be so obnoxious I could love them....)*

Set boundaries of your love with difficult people:

Physically

- Limit how much time you are around this person.
[If they stop by to chat, tell them "I only have a couple of minutes" or "I can't talk right now" if you are filled up]

Mentally

- Have a 'mental plan' in place
[When your thinking too hard about them, listen to worship music. Fill your thoughts with God!]

Start to Pray for the person.

- Jesus commanded this.
- When we pray it reminds us of our relationship with God
- Jesus did it, Stephen and others in the Bible.
- Pray for them to know God, for financial provision, for peace in their life. It will begin to change your heart which will help the relationship.

3. "Damaging" People

Romans 12:21 says, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

- People who have caused harm (through their addictions, lifestyle choice, self-centeredness), manipulative, users
- Maybe they have controlled you, emotionally hurt you

How do we love them?

Be sacrificial (love like Jesus)

- Remember, God's purpose is to restore and forgive
- Continue the journey, calling upon God's strength for your life. Reality is this: the person may never leave you!

Keep your distance (boundaries, knowing when to call it off)

- We may need outside help: a counselor, a friend
- Set real boundaries
- Allow your relationship to end

Jesus said there is a time to cut relationships off.

Luke 9:5: "If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."

- The challenge is to know when to shake the dust off! Don't be premature...

I have learned how to 'release' difficult people here at church:

- I am learning how to **release** people
- It's hard emotionally, relationally
- Let God be God!

Pray:

1. Think of your difficult person
2. Let's pray for them. Try it.
 - May I be more accepting
 - Help me to have boundaries
3. Bring healing where there has been hurt, let me see a new day with your help