

THE MISSION

The Mission Week 1 - Love God in Community

Monday: Read Galatians 6:1-10. The apostle Paul writes this letter to a predominantly gentile churches in Galatia. The whole letter is a god one to read, but today focus on the verses that begin chapter 6. What do these verses say about living in community?

Tuesday: Read Psalm 133, Matthew 18:20, and Acts 2:46-47. Community should be fun. Community should never feel boring or forced. In fact, it should be the exact opposite. What image does Psalm 133 give you about a community? And a community attracts the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 18:20, and Acts 2:46-47 describes the early church community. How are these images of community appealing to you? What about them is unsettling? Is God nudging you to be a part of a community of faith? What steps can you take to join, or start, a community?

Wednesday: Read Colossians 3:13-14 and Romans 12:4-5. Community fosters love. We've probably all been to a wedding where the officiant recited the familiar words of 1 Corinthians 13, which ends with, "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." Paul held love above *all else* in his letter to the Corinthians. And he did the same with his letter to the Colossians. How does the reading in Colossians describe the community of believers? And then in Romans it describes that we're better together than we are alone. It can be hard for some of us to commit to community, especially if we're guarded or prefer solitude. But community is God's desire for us—and a sign of a mature faith. Because at the end of the day, when we grow in our relationships with others, we're growing in relationship with Him!

Thursday: Read Matthew 22:34-40. Pastor Ben reminded us of this moment when Jesus is asked which commandments were the most important. And his answer comes from the Hebrew scriptures found in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. What does it look like to "love the lord your God" with all of your heart and being? How do you show that love of God? Maybe today it's time to sat a simple prayer of asking for help to love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. Maybe for the first time, or the twentieth time. Take time today to simply pray and sit in silence so that you may find that love of God Jesus talks about.

Friday: In Sunday's message, pastor Ben told the story of lifeboat 14 from the sinking of the Titanic. As the famous ship sank into the water, twenty lifeboats were lowered into the water. Of those twenty, most had room for a lot more people. And even though the people in those lifeboats could hear other people crying for help in the water, they didn't go back for those people because they were afraid that those people would overload the lifeboats and be swamped. Nineteen of those boats rowed away from hundreds of people floating in the water crying out.

But in Lifeboat 14, Junior Officer (Fifth Officer) Harold Lowe reacted differently. He knew the purpose of the lifeboat as it was designed. So, he transferred most of the people in his boat to other lifeboats and went back to the sinking ship to pick up more survivors. He couldn't save them all, but he saved a lot from the sea that night. A survivor rescued survivors. He wasn't content with the people in his lifeboat, he went back to find others.

What does this story tell you about God? About the church? About yourself? What might you do this week to better love God in community? What might you do to enable others to live God in community? Where do you need to make room in your lifeboat? What are your first steps?

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The Mission Week 2 - Love People

Pastor Ben spoke about the second part of the mission of Keystone by pointing pictures about what it means to love people. He said love is more than a feeling, it's an action. What we do for others is how love is lived out.

Monday: Read Matthew 22:37-40 again. These words of Jesus is where Keystone gets its mission. The second half of the statement says that loving your neighbor as yourself is equal to the love go God. The way you love others is in direct relation to how you love others. Where have you seen the love of others by people of faith? Where has someone showed you the love that Jesus talks about? Where have you done the same for others?

Tuesday: Read Luke 10:25-37. This is the classic story that Jesus told to demonstrate what the love of neighbor looks like. It's easy to love the people who act like you, think like you, vote like you, and worship like you. It's more difficult to love people who do not. How does the church love like this story of Jesus? How do you love like Jesus describes?

Wednesday: Read John 7:37-38. What does this passage say to you today? What might it say to people in the community? Who do you know that needs to hear these words?

Thursday: Spend today thinking about the people around you. Your family, co-workers, classmates, friends, neighbors. Who is the one that is difficult to love? Who is the one that is difficult to get to know? What might you pray about to help you love those people who's names have come to mind? Now read **Romans 1:1-6**. Pay attention to verse 5. If you are a follower of Jesus, what does this verse say about your identity? Do you see yourself the way that Paul does in his letter to the Christians in Rome? If so, what does this demand of you in your love of people, especially people who are not Christian?

Friday: Sunday, pastor Ben told the story of the cattle industry in Australia, and the difference between bounded-sets and centered-sets. A bounded-set is about fences, boundaries. He said:

You are either in this set by these criteria, or you are out. If you believe like I believe then you are in, if you don't you are out. That's a bounded-set system. A centered-set way of thinking, way of living, is not about belief, it's about orientation or direction of moment. It's working toward a common goal, it's about movement toward that goal. And any movement in that goal includes you in that set.

When we look at Jesus and how he lived and interacted with people, it was never about bounded sets, "you've got to believe this way and you're in." It wasn't ever about fences of who is in and who is out. In fact he was pretty clear that a lot of people who thought they were in, because they had "right beliefs" were really out, because they did not have right *relationship* to the God who made them. In cow-speak, Jesus was a well, that people were drawn to. Especially people who had been abused by legalistic thinking, people who had been told, "you're out."

When it comes to how we live out our mission as a church, we prefer to dig wells that people are drawn to, rather than building fences and say, "are you in or are you out?" I believe that in order to really love others, our job is not to put out the call that says, "Come believe like I believe," but instead, "come and point your life toward what I am trying to point mine toward." Belief is important, but that happens as we move closer to the center, to Jesus.

How does this image resonate with your view of the church? How does it resonate with you on a personal level? When have you lived life with a bounded-set viewpoint? What are the next steps you might take to live a life in a centered-set way?