

I. Intro

II. ME

- A. A lot of voices right now.
 - 1. It's an emotionally charged time with many challenges AND there's A lot of animosity
 - 2. Being pulled in two directions on a lot of issues.
 - 3. Polarized chaos.
 - 4. Talk in circles over each other.
 - 5. Same arguments over and over just different faces saying them.
 - 6. Since there is so much going on, it feels good to focus in on a voice that already agrees with me and keep going that direction.
- B. There's a better way. Jesus' way.
 - 1. Individuals choosing to love others with the love of Jesus... that accepts and makes room for everyone.
- C. Last week... Starts with allowing God to change our thinking... it's not us v. them...
 - 1. If you win, I lose.
- D. What does love look like?

III. WE

- A. Helpful question, Simple idea... then we try to apply it.
 - 1. Realize it's simple... but it is not easy.
 - 2. We try to love people... but often they make it difficult don't they?
 - 3. And we still have opinions and causes and ideas we are passionate about and that we're sure EVERYBODY needs to hear about...
- B. So what is this love? What does it REALLY look like?
- C. Love has been part of our vocabulary in this country for a while... thanks 1960's hippies.
 - 1. And many people have given up on it b/c it doesn't seem to work...
 - 2. Just love them? But what if they are wrong? What if they won't listen? What if they keep attacking and won't let it go?
 - 3. Can we destroy them then?
 - 4. I have the right to speak freely. Can't I just exercise that right and tell them off, tell them how it is and how I really feel? When do I get to do that?
 - 5. Really, Jon- Love is nice and sweet and all but it doesn't get things done. That's not how the real world works...
 - 6. **Maybe we don't understand love.**
 - 7. Let's take some time and try to see what we might be missing...
 - 8. **Real love is the strongest force for good in the world.**
- D. Not Jf... Gonna do a lot of talking to Jf's... B/c often we forget to act like Jesus... want you to see what we are meant to be...
- E. All- Gonna want to think of THEM... take the next 30 min and think of YOU.

- F. Heads-up! You're going to kick against this at some point in some way... it's extreme/ counter-intuitive... but it's also the only proven method of changing the world for the good... So we welcome you to try it since we know from experience that it DOES actually work. Even if you don't want to follow our "religion" and/or don't consider yourself X-tian, we would ask you to consider hearing how you can try out Jesus. Hassle-free return- if it doesn't work for you, you can just go back to living the way you did before. Hear what is being asked, THEN you can dismiss it if you want.

IV. GOD

- A. Paul/Roman's pics of Rome- 20 yrs after Jesus... Like talking about Y2K or the Bush/Gore election. (hanging chad glasses guy)
- B. Writing to JF's... explaining what it means to follow Jesus b/c they are getting some stuff right but are off on some other things; have drifted "off-message".

C. V. 9a

1. Pretend to love.
 - a. The kind of love most of us think of
 - b. Love based on feelings... comes and goes...
 - c. Just words... no proof
 - d. When push comes to shove you will leave or attack
 - e. That's the love we've tried... it doesn't work b/c it's just a show.
 - f. Other translations... hypocrisy = mask. (Greek theatre mask) Saying one thing doing the other
2. Really love them... sincere/genuine.
 - a. Not trying to feel it more.
 - b. Agape!
 - c. But putting that new thinking from last week... into real action.
 - d. **True love is active.**

D. V. 9b

1. Hold tightly/cling/cement yourself to.
2. So hate what we think is evil and hold onto what we think is good? YES! I can tell those people off now, phew...
3. Just more polarization.
4. Your thinking is being transformed by God... How? "Give your bodies as holy and living sacrifices"-- Give up your right to be right? Give up my tendency to judge, categorize others?
5. It's Seeing people through his eyes...
6. Seeing them as having worth, value, care for them as you care for yourself.
7. Our measure of what is good doesn't come from shifting culture... comes from the Law of Love.
8. **A JF's definition of good comes from Jesus...** not our moralism, feelings, culture, political party.
9. What he loved, what he hated.
10. What did he love? People! What did he hate? When people were mistreated and kept from knowing their worth to God.
11. Gospels- Read it- John

E. V. 10

1. What does real love look like?
2. Genuine... Be devoted to **one another**
 - a. Usually devoted to our side/party/view
 - b. That person who disagrees with you is still a person that Jesus died for... He died for those he disagreed with, different race, vastly different views, downright evil intentions and actions, intent on killing him.
 - c. The same death he died for you...
 - d. Why? B/c of Agape-Love. B/c people matter to Jesus.

- e. All people, races, religions, nationalities, genders, orientations.
 - f. Paul is inviting us to be devoted to one another like that! that's love! AND...
3. Delight in honoring each other
- a. Give preference.
 - b. "If good happens to you then it's like it happens to me."
 - c. You, b/c of who you are to God, are worthy of honor, has value...
 - d. that's love too... There's more!

F. Love means putting people over viewpoints.

- G. Yeah but... how do we do that when they are just wrong... when they are seriously against you?
- H. How do we cling to what is good?
- I. Three steps :) Simple but not easy. Takes strength & courage.

J. V. 14

1. Pray for them.

- a. Not that they will change their mind... actually pray FOR them.
 - b. Ask that God will do good things in their life and that they will see God doing good things in their life.
2. "But they don't deserve it"... nope.
3. God causes the rain (always good in bw's) to fall on everyone- the good and the bad... does good to people before they are for him...
4. Just like he has for you.
5. Don't curse them... not magic- Harry Potter?... don't talk bad about them.
6. Don't insult, attack, dehumanize them... applies to what you TYPE too.
7. Not JF- still try it.
8. Interesting thing happens... when you pray for the good of someone who is against you... your heart starts to change... and it allows you to do something that often seems impossible beforehand...

K. V. 15

1. Exercise empathy

- 2. Empathy- not always agreeing but attempting to UNDERSTAND their thoughts, feelings, where they are coming from. Why they are so angry/upset/heartbroken/concerned?
- 3. We often read this and think, "ok if my friend is sad I need to go be with them..."
- 4. NOT TALKING ABOUT FRIENDS!
- 5. Talking about someone who purposely persecutes you. Who is ACTIVELY against you.
 - a. **I don't have to approve of a person's actions in order to be FOR them.**
 - b. I can disapprove and even hate what they do and still be for them, understand where they are coming from and desire the best for them.
- 6. Only one way this is truly possible...
- 7. The transformation that comes from Jesus changing your heart.
- 8. When God changes your thinking he changes your categories... people aren't enemies... they are fellow human beings JUST like you.
- 9. Jesus- "Forgive them. They don't know what they are doing."
- 10. Those who we disagree with are people who share the same fears and hopes we do.
- 11. They have a background that has shaped them just like we have... and the more we understand that the more we empathize...
- 12. The less conversations become battles but chances to share, change, and come together.
- 13. Takes work/practice/EXERCISE
- 14. And as we begin to empathize we start to see the number one enemy of peace and unity start to lose its power... PRIDE

L. V. 16

1. Practice humility

2. "Don't think you know it all" ... ouch.
3. Usual- "You're wrong, I'm right b/c I see it more clearly, I have more/better information, you're blinded by your politics, limited view and experience, etc."
4. We are all biased in our opinions... that's why we have opinions... it's our viewpoint based on our thinking, history, experiences, etc.
5. Maybe you are letting your biases get in the way?
6. **Maybe it's time to give up your right to be right?**
7. Ask questions... not to oppose but to understand. Try saying things that take the focus off yourself and put it on the person you're talking to, like "What do YOU think/How do YOU feel about /what is YOUR experience with... or if you really want them to elaborate- Tell me more..."
8. Be willing to listen instead of forcing our way, our perspective on everyone else.

9. If we are going to find a better way, we ALL have to be willing to admit that we could be wrong in some way.

10. Takes courage. According to "cognitive dissonance" psychological theory, you will be more uncomfortable considering that you might be wrong or apologizing for being so in the short term than you will be sticking with thinking you're right even when you're not. Be brave!
11. The best way might not be YOUR way.

M. By the way... all of this was unheard of in Ancient Roman Culture... this was brand new.

1. But people tried it... and it changed the world.

V. YOU

- A. Pray for others / Work to empathize / Have the humility and courage to re-evaluate your viewpoint / Stop talking and just listen for a bit / Seek to truly understand where someone else is coming from
- B. Takes practice. It's uncomfortable. Start a little at a time. Celebrate progress.
- C. You'll want to give up and go back to fighting...
- D. Fighting feels good... but it gets you right back where you started. It's easier to dig in where you are familiar than it is to venture out into territory that's unknown and new for you.
- E. If you trust that God loves you and cares for you... you don't have to fight for your opinion...
- F. You can change your usual script and start seeing different results.

G. If you want to see change in the world... change how you love those in it.

- H. Be amazed at what happens.
- I. Invitation to read Romans 12

VI. WE

- A. There's a better way
- B. It's simple. But it's not easy
- C. It's difficult but it's effective.
- D. It transformed every culture it has come into contact with.
- E. Patrick of Ireland. Pic
- F. It continues to empower real change in real people's lives.
- G. So much at stake. New way, better way, better results...

H. Real love is the only way to change the real world

IX. OUTRO