

Take It To The Streets Loving Unbelievers & The Great Commandment

Mark 16:14-15 - Jesus Has Risen - ¹⁴ *Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.*

¹⁵ *He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.*

Matthew 16:18 NIV

¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Matthew 22:35-40 NIV

³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

³⁷ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

We need to **pursue love in all of the relationships** God has ordained for our lives.

I would like to focus on **the relationships we have with unbelievers** and how **God wants us to have a passion and a love** for them as Jesus had.

- God's love knows no boundaries.
- He **doesn't** wait for us to acknowledge and believe in Him before He sets His love on us.
- He **loved us** while we were still in our sins.
- **Our love** for sinners and unbelievers should be the same, since ***we are called to love as Christ loved.***

Romans 5:8 *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Ephesians 2:4-5 *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (***by grace you have been saved***)...*

I. The Example of Jesus.

When we consider what it means to love unbelievers and sinners and how to go about it, ***we must look at the example of Jesus***, who expressed perfect love to those who were lost in their sins.

- **Jesus was very comfortable in the presence of sinners.**
- He wasn't intimidated by them nor was He judgmental of them.

Luke 15:1-2 NIV - The Parable of the Lost Sheep

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

There are many examples and illustrations throughout the gospels that **show Jesus being very comfortable** in the presence of sinners and unbelievers.

- I believe one of the reasons **he was so comfortable** was that -
- He had nothing but love and compassion for them.
- He did not come to them with a judgmental and condemning attitude,
- But rather one of love, compassion and mercy.

Jesus in the Home of Tax Collectors and Sinners - Matthew 9:9-13.

Matthew 9:10-11 *And so it was, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"*

What was it about Jesus that made sinners very comfortable in His presence?

- To the extent that they wanted to be with Him
- And desired to hear what He had to say?

Matthew 9:12-13 *But when Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."*

As we look at this passage of Scripture there are several things that jump out at us concerning **the attitude that Jesus had towards sinners**:

- **He recognized His calling** to call sinners to repentance.
- **He expressed** mercy and compassion towards them.
- **He accepted and received them** as they were without condemning or judging them.
- **He showed** a real and genuine interest in them.

This is how Jesus loved sinners.

- **He had a passion for them**, because His purpose and destiny was **to seek and save those who were lost**.
- **He poured His heart and soul into them** and it was very recognizable and obvious.
- **Just as when you pour your heart and soul** into something, it is very obvious to all who are around you.
- **Sinners recognized this quality in Jesus** and were attracted to Him as a result.

The Samaritan Woman at the Well - John 4:5-26.

John 4:16-18 *Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' "for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly."*

Here we find **Jesus simply speaking the truth** to this woman in the most simple and natural form **without condemning or judging** her.

- This opened her heart to her inner convictions
- Caused her to **respond to Jesus' love** in a powerful way.
- ***Love conquerors all*** -
- Even the souls of those who are lost in their sins.

Jesus at the Home of Zacchaeus - Luke 19:1-10.

Luke 19:4-7 So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house." So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. But when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner."

The story of Zacchaeus reminds me of the story of a man who fell into a pit and couldn't get himself out.

- A Christian Scientist came along and said: "You only think that you are in a pit."
- A Pharisee said: "Only bad people fall into a pit."
- A Fundamentalist said: "You deserve your pit."
- An IRS man asked if he was paying taxes on the pit.
- A Charismatic said: "Just confess that you're not in a pit."
- An Optimist said: "Things could be worse."
- A Pessimist said: "Things will get worse."
- Jesus seeing the man, **took him by the hand and lifted him out of the pit.**

This is what Jesus did for Zacchaeus.

- I believe Zacchaeus **hated the person he had become**
- But **did not know how to change**
- Or get himself **out of the mess he had made** of his life.

Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector or a publican

- Which meant that he was **regarded as a traitor**
- Who was being used **as a willing tool of the oppressor.**

Tax collectors were classed with sinners, harlots and the heathen.

- Yet here we see **Jesus reaching out in love** to this sinner of whom Jesus said **He came to seek and save.**
- **Zacchaeus needed Jesus' help** to be **lifted out of the pit** he had dug himself into.
- He needed **Jesus' ability** to condescend to his lowly state.

Jesus had a divine ability to condescend to the lowly estate of man. Even though He was high and lofty, **He was able to regard the lowly.**

Psalms 138:6 *Though the LORD is on high, Yet He regards the lowly; But the proud He knows from afar.*

II. We Are To Love Sinners As Jesus Did

As we have seen, Jesus gave us many examples of how **we are to love those who are outside the camp.**

- We are to **follow Jesus' example** in all things
- Especially in this area of **loving those who do not know Him.**

Hebrews 13:13 *Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.*

In Jesus' examples there were a number of ways in which **He has shown us how to love unbelievers and sinners.** Let's review them

Jesus showed us how to love unbelievers and sinners:

Jesus identified with His calling to seek and save the lost. **We are called to do the same.**

2 Corinthians 5:18,20 *Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation... Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.*

- **He expressed mercy and compassion** towards them.
- **He accepted and received them as they were, without condemning or judging** them.
- **He showed a real and genuine interest in them.**
- **He spoke the truth in love and allowed the person's inner convictions to convict them.**
- **He had the divine ability to condescend to the lowly estate of man, even though He was the son of God.**

CLOSE:

Jesus loves sinners no matter what sin they have committed.

- He is no respecter of persons.
- He loves everyone just as much.
- Jesus came to save sinners from their sin
- In doing so He comes to them on their level of reacceptance and gives the invitation.

His desire is that we as His disciples would learn this valuable lesson of being able *to be a friend to sinners* as well – that we would be relatable ***without appearing self-righteous or pious.***

How many of us can honestly say that we really have a genuine love and concern for those who are lost in this world?

I believe, if we really loved sinners the way Jesus did, we would learn how to relate to them in a way that would ***provoke them to an interest in the gospel.***

We would also ***devise ways to go out of our way*** to become friends with them.

The problem with most Christians is that we become ***isolated and to Christianized*** to relate to sinners.

God bless you as you go forth outside the camp **loving those who do not know Christ.**

Matthew 16:18 NIV

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