

People Who Love in a Dark World

FCC Life Group Discussion Notes

Guest Speaker Todd Zastrow

Based on the "Who God Wants Us To Be" Series of Matthew Rogers

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Summary of the Sermon

The sermon, based on Romans 12 and 13, explores the biblical definition of love as a central theme for Christians living in an imperfect world. It emphasizes that love is the fulfillment of God's law, as outlined by the Apostle Paul, and is not optional for followers of Christ. The sermon breaks down love into three key aspects: it is sincere (without hypocrisy, detesting evil, and clinging to good), active (energetic, serving others, and meeting needs), and weird (counter-cultural, blessing enemies rather than cursing them). These characteristics challenge believers to love in a way that reflects Jesus' teachings and God's plan, even in a dark world that promotes revenge and self-interest.

Ice Breaker for Discussion

To start, have everyone share a favorite love song (from any era or genre) and briefly explain why it resonates with them. This ties into the sermon's opening about love songs and helps group members connect personally before diving into the discussion.

Point 1: Love Is Sincere

Scripture Reading: Ask (Someone) to read **Romans 12:9-10** aloud:

"Let love be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters."

Summary:

Paul teaches that love must be genuine, not superficial or performative. Sincere love actively rejects evil while embracing what is good, both in ourselves and others. It's not enough to avoid harm; we must nurture goodness, like a gardener removing a snake and tending to the flowers. This kind of love reflects Jesus' character and requires us to confront our own flaws while fostering what is righteous.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some ways we might unintentionally show hypocritical love in our relationships, and how can we ensure our love is sincere?
2. How can we balance "detesting evil" with "clinging to good" in our daily lives without focusing too much on one or the other?

Point 2: Love Is Active

Scripture Reading: Ask (Someone) to read **Romans 12:11-13** aloud:

"Do not lack diligence in zeal; be fervent in the Spirit; serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality."

Summary:

Love is not passive or merely emotional; it is active and energetic, described as “fervent” or “boiling hot” in the Spirit. This love shows up practically—through serving, meeting needs, showing hospitality, and persistent prayer. It’s about rolling up our sleeves to help others, whether by visiting the sick, cooking meals, or listening attentively, as exemplified by ministries like FCC’s Impact ministry.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some practical ways you’ve seen or shown active love in your community, and how did it impact those involved?
2. How can we stay “fervent in the Spirit” when life’s challenges make it hard to keep serving others?

Point 3: Love Is Weird

Scripture Reading: Ask (Someone) to read **Romans 12:14-21** aloud:

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud; instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Give careful thought to do what is honorable in everyone’s eyes. If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for God’s wrath, because it is written, Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay, says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing you will be heaping fiery coals on his head. Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.”

Summary:

Paul’s call to love enemies is counter-cultural and “weird” by worldly standards. Instead of cursing those who wrong us, we bless them, praying for their good and meeting their needs. This love rejects revenge, leaving justice to God, and seeks peace even with those who harm us. By loving in this way, we overcome evil with good, reflecting God’s transformative love as taught by Jesus.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it so challenging to bless rather than curse those who persecute or wrong us, and how can we practically do this in tough situations?
2. Can you share a time when you or someone you know responded to evil with good? What was the outcome, and how did it reflect God’s love?

Recap of the Lesson

The sermon highlights that love is the essence of God’s law and the heartbeat of a Christian’s life. It is sincere (genuine and rooted in rejecting evil while embracing good), active (energetic and practical in serving others), and weird (counter-cultural, blessing enemies and leaving vengeance to God). By living out this love, we reflect Jesus’ example and fulfill God’s plan in a dark world.

Challenge

This week, identify one person who has wronged you or whom you find difficult to love. Take a tangible step to show them “weird” love—perhaps by praying for them, sending a kind message, or meeting a need they have. Share your experience with the group next week to encourage one another in living out this transformative love.