

The Sermon Connection

Connecting Sunday's Teaching to Everyday Living

Volume 5 Issue 1



The Sermon Connection is a weekly handout to help you apply Sunday's sermon content to your everyday life. It is designed to give you additional insights and practical tools for applying the teaching throughout the week.

The application, reflection and connection questions may also serve as a springboard for discussion in your small group, your family time, or in one-on-one conversations.

NEW YEAR'S ESSENTIALS

Essential #2: Experiencing Christ-Like Relationships

Bob Ross

January 6, 2019

Pastor Bob continued our series marking the New Year with a message on Christ-like relationships. At Destiny, we believe that a growing disciple of Jesus will be marked by what we call "5-E's." They are: embracing intimacy with God, experiencing Christ-like relationships, exercising our God-given gifts, extending our grace stories and engaging our circle of influence. While there are many ways to gauge whether or not one is growing in their discipleship, we believe that these capture a well-rounded growth. In his introduction, Bob pointed out that the first E is foundational to the other 4. If we are not embracing intimacy with God, the others cannot and will not happen. Bob started the message by asking people to write down words that they think describe a Christ-like relationship. After hearing some of the answers, he pointed to two words that Jesus used to define what our relationships with each other should like: love and unity.

There are several places in the New Testament where we are exhorted to love one another, but in John 13:34-35 Jesus explicitly commands us to love one another 3 times – 3 times in 2 verses! That should make us sit up and take notice. He goes on to say that it is that love that will tell the world that we are His disciples. Fortunately Jesus gave us a model for what that love should look like. He commanded us to love one another as He loved us. That certainly ups the ante. Bob had people name ways that Jesus loved us. Some of the words were completely, perfectly and sacrificially. The obvious question to ask is: is that how we love each other? IF we don't, then something is wrong – and the result is that the world does not see disciples of Jesus Christ. As a modern illustration, Bob borrowed from Francis Chan. He talks about gangs and their ferocious dedication to each other. While making it clear that he does not advocate gangs and their crime, Bob used the love and devotion seen in gangs to challenge the Church. All too often, "church" is a place that people go to for an hour instead of a body that they are a part of. For gang members, the gang is their ultimate commitment – what about us?

Bob then moved on to John 17. In the final part of what is known as "The High Priestly Prayer," Jesus prays for us. He prays that we will have the same unity that He has with His Father! Twice, He says in His prayer that this type of unity will allow the world to know or believe that God sent Him. The Godhead is such an example of unity that we had to create a word to describe it: trinity, or three in one. Believers are to be united first and foremost in Christ. When we are Christians united in Christ, our differences (culture, ethnic, economic, education, geography, gender, etc.) serve to weave a glorious tapestry called The Church. That unity provides a compelling statement to the world that God sent Jesus. Unfortunately, all too often believers allow the differences to define who they unify with and end up divided. As an illustration, Bob used the life of Richard Overton – an African American who passed away December 20th at the age of 112. Overton served in WWII in a segregated unit – but in the battles on Okinawa and Iwo Jima he said that color lines quickly eroded: "When we got out to the war, we were all together. There wasn't no discrimination there. We were hugging each other --- darn near kissing each other – because you could save some of them's life." The challenge to Destiny Church is that we are in a battle, the fiercest battle that will ever be fought. Are we hugging the person in the fox hole with us, or trying to shoot them?

E-CHECK: Experiencing Christ-Like Relationships

READING AND REFLECTION:

Read John 13. How did Jesus love His disciples this passage? What is His commandment? Why is it important that we obey that commandment?

Read 1 John 4:7-12. What does John say about loving one another?

Read John 17. What was the focus of Jesus' prayer? Specifically, in vv. 17-20, who was He praying for? What did He pray? Why did He pray for this?

Read Philippians 1:27-28. How does Paul echo what Jesus prayed?

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

List out ways that Jesus loves you. When was the last time that you loved another believer the way that Jesus loves you? Has an unbeliever ever commented that they can see that you are a disciple of Jesus because of your love for other believers?

Has there ever been a time where your lack of love for another believer has hindered the Gospel?

Look at the unity that Jesus describes in John 17. Do you have that type of unity with other believers? Why is it important?

Bob talked about the danger of allowing differences (or actually commonalities) to become the basis for our unity instead of Christ alone? Have you ever done this? Are you doing it now?

COMMUNITY CONNECTION:

As you meet with your small group or family this week, discuss John 13:34-35 and John 17:20-23. Does your family (real or small group) love each other as Jesus loved us? Are you unified? When was the last time someone outside your family or group saw Jesus because of your unity and love?

KEY POINT:

Mary was prepared when God showed up.

RESOURCES:

[One-Year New Testament Bible](#) (Available at the Information Table on Sunday mornings)

[Letters to The Church](#), Francis Chan

Become a part of one or more of the various Bible studies and small groups at Destiny Church.