

ICE BREAKER

When have you experienced someone loving you enough to sacrifice their time, energy and/or finances on your behalf?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What part of the message was most encouraging to you? What part do you find challenging?
2. What did You notice about God in the passage? What did you notice about yourself and other people in it?

GOSPEL EXCHANGE (REDEMPITIVE WORK)

Jesus asks us to give Him our burdens (Matthew 11:28-29), whatever they may be (a lie we have believed about God or ourselves, our hurt or negative emotions, or even our concerns for loved ones), so He can carry them for us and give us His peace (wholeness and completeness) in exchange.

What do you want to exchange with Jesus today?

What is the burden? “Lord Jesus, I give you my...”

What’s His gift? “Lord Jesus, I receive your...”

ACTION QUESTIONS

1. What is one step of obedience you can take this week, based on what you’ve learned today? *(NOTE – You might consider stopping and prayerfully asking God to answer this question for you, taking 30-45 seconds to listen in silence for an answer, then write it down.)*
2. During the coming week, who is someone with whom you can share what you learned today? *(NOTE – Consider repeating the same step with this question as the previous question.)*



Sermon Study - Conversation Guide

October 29, 2023

“The Love of God”

Ephesians 3:14-19

This guide is a discipleship tool for personal reflection, family conversations, for home groups, and for Table Talk on Sundays @10:40 am and 12:15 pm on the Lowell Patio

Coastal Community Church
mycoastal.org

The heart of today's message is simple. Paul prays people would experience Jesus' love for them. In the previous verses, Paul says the dividing wall of hostility between us, which we use to separate and exclude each other, is gone because of Jesus. He is our life and the source of our love and strength. Thus, Paul starts today's passage with his final word on our unity in Jesus.

3:14 *For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.*

Paul made a name for himself being a rabbi better than any other. He was willing to do anything for God's honor, even if it meant using violence. Then Paul met Jesus, and everything changed. Saved by grace, redeemed in love, given mercy he could never earn or deserve, Paul came to understand God's love is for the undeserving. God's grace is for the weak. God's mercy is for the blinded, stubborn, rebels who have no chance. *That's all of us.* Paul, humbled into the dust, prays this:

3:16 *I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,*

What's our inner being? That's our soul, our heart of hearts. Why does our soul need to be strengthened? There is a battle raging for your soul. The enemy of this world wants it dead, and Jesus wants it alive. Alive, you are glorious, dangerous, powerful, a wrecking ball to evil and a builder of heaven on earth. If your heart is dead, then you're numb and blind to everything God wants to do in and through you.

Why does Paul want our inner being strengthened by the Holy Spirit? A strong soul can begin to see the battle raging. For example, you are not your emotions or the thoughts in your brain. Why? Because you can observe them, and the observer is not the thing that is observed. Yes, your thoughts and emotions are part of you, but they are not YOU.

Why is this important to understand? What weakens and kills our hearts are the lies we believe, about who God is and who we are. Your identity is not in your habits, wounds or even your successes, but in the One who bore your wounds and succeeded for you. You are a child of God, His beloved, His most beautiful creation, His masterpiece!

You need strength in your soul to create enough space between you and the lies; to see what it is you've been believing, and then have the strength to hold onto the truth and discard the lies that are killing you.

3:17 *...Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.*

Our heart of hearts is a place where something or someone can dwell. Paul prays Jesus would dwell there instead of something else. Salvation happens the moment I believe and invite Jesus into my heart. That's when the work begins – to understand and remove all the things dwelling in my heart of hearts which are killing me. That's called sanctification.

I discover all that time that I'm not trusting Jesus because something else is dwelling in my heart of hearts, like a lie or a wound. I get to choose whether I'm going to trust Jesus with that part of my heart or not. You and I get to choose who or what dwells in our hearts. That's the battle for our hearts. The continual journey of inviting Jesus to dwell in my heart of hearts is the best thing that's ever happened to me. I want this for you. So, I pray the same prayer for you that Paul now prays...

3:17 *And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,*

Paul prays you would be rooted in love. Established in love. That you would know in your heart and mind, the vastness of God's love for you. We need our soul's foundation in God's love for what we must do next.

3:19 *and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

The word 'to know' in Greek means a lot more than just knowledge. It's like a full body experience. It's soul knowledge. Paul wants us to be filled up with the fully body experiences of God's love. That's the whole point. Jesus loves you. Everything else is taken care of.

The world is screaming in agony right now. Everyone is desperate to be loved. They are wounded, broken, isolated, and desperate for love. Here we are, this little church, filled with all our broken stories, and yet together we're loving each other back to life. It's all about Jesus and His love. His is a love that sacrifices, that listens, that doesn't fix but comes alongside. Jesus' love overcomes evil with good rather than more evil. So, take a moment to receive God's immense love for you. Right now.

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINES: Tips for great conversation

- We aren't here to teach/fix each other, but to share our experiences.
- Show respect by listening to one another, asking clarifying questions.
- If you're quick to share, allow space and time for others to speak up.
- If you're slow to speak, your experience is valuable so please share.