


Jesus—Outside the Lines

Part 4: Pursuing Others in Love

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —*Psalm 145:11*
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —*Joshua 22:5*

Questions for Reflection

Read Matthew 26:31-35. How many of the disciples did Jesus predict would abandon him (v. 31)?

How many of the disciples disputed Jesus' prediction (v. 33)?

How many of disciples did Jesus predict would deny him (v. 34)?

If you were Peter and Jesus said this in front of the rest of the disciples, how would you feel?

Read Luke 22:55-65. Peter was a tough fisherman, and the undisputed leader among the disciples...

How intimidating was the person who provoked Peter's first denial (see v. 56)?

OK, pretty embarrassing, but now Peter gets a do-over (v. 58-60). How did he do?

How would you feel if you were Peter and Jesus looked over at you (v. 61)?

Would you have responded any differently than Peter did (v. 62)?

Peter spent the next couple of weeks with the rest of the disciples. Read John 21:1-14.
This event occurred about two weeks after Peter's denials.

How do you think Peter felt for those two weeks (especially in light of his former bravado)?

Now read John 21:15-17. What did Jesus ask Peter?

Why do you think Jesus gave Peter **three** opportunities to reaffirm his love?

At first this seemed crushing to Peter—as if Jesus didn't believe him.
But how does the repetition actually reveal Jesus' loving, persistent pursuit of Peter?

Who do you think really needs
a reaffirmation of love from you?

Need help learning to love your neighbor?
For free hope and help, write to:
counseling@tcc.org

Application-Challenge

- Begin praying: "God, which of your sheep do you want me to feed or care for today? Allow me to recognize my opportunities throughout the day to show my love for you by loving your people well."
- In preparation for **TCC's "5:14 Journey"** together this June, read Galatians 5:14, and begin asking God to develop in you the desire to grow in love toward others.

Take One Step: What is one small, concrete step of obedience you will put into practice this week?



Sermon Summary

Today we wrap up our series, “Jesus Outside The Lines”. In week one, we looked at how a proper understanding of grace causes us to view the world around us not as morally inferior or unenlightened, but as people who, like us, are candidates for God’s grace. The next week we talked about our habit of placing people inside or outside the lines based on factors from lifestyle and behavior to financial status or skin color. Last week we considered the concept of disgust, and how damaging it can be when we view other people as contaminated and retreat from them out of fear, rather than pursue them with the confidence that maybe the hope and peace of Christ living in you can overpower the darkness of the world. But I want to ask one more question: “Why bother?” If we take these messages to heart, we won’t be able to turn a blind eye to the pain and brokenness around us. It’ll be inconvenient, messy—often painful. Why go through the trouble? Why not just focus on my personal relationship with God? If I spend lots of time reading the word and praying and avoiding sin, shouldn’t that be good enough?

As many of you know, I’m a huge sports fan, especially UNC football. Then I married Anna—and she’s not a football fan. But guess what. Anna started scheduling her work so she could go to games with me. She didn’t magically become a football fan; Anna loves me and so she made an effort to care about the things I cared about. And why should we put forth the effort and risk getting involved in the messiness and chaos that comes with pursuing other people? Because it isn’t possible to love God and not care about what he cares about most... his children (see John 21:15-17). Jesus asked Peter if he loved him, and then told Peter that the true mark of loving God is to take care of his people. One of the ways we demonstrate our love for God is by caring for His children.

I think we often try to limit our spirituality to the vertical plane of our relationship with God (how much time and the quality of the time we spend in the scriptures and in prayer). These are necessary, important aspects of a healthy relationship with God—but they aren’t the whole story. There also is horizontal plane, our relationships with people. Success in this plane includes how we love and serve others, how hospitable we are, how often we share the gospel with others, and being plugged in to a community of believers. To many people, the vertical plane seems safer and less messy. Carving out 20 minutes in the morning to read a chapter of the bible takes intentionality, but it’s pretty safe. It’s not likely to disrupt your whole day. The horizontal plane on the other hand... it can become a major inconvenience. When you ask a neighbor how things are going and they open up about marital difficulties, you’ve been invited into a mess. When you open up your home to someone who needs a place to stay, you’re welcoming some inconvenience. When your antenna are always up for the pain and brokenness of the people around you, when you don’t just go through life with blinders on, you are basically accepting that every day may bring the unexpected, the chaotic, and the messy right to your doorstep! But God doesn’t leave room for a healthy vertical spiritual life and an unhealthy horizontal one or vice versa (see Matthew 22:36-40 and Mica 6:8). The vertical and the horizontal are woven together. Doing justly and loving mercy are horizontal and walking humbly with God is vertical, but it’s not an either/or proposition. A healthy spiritual life isn’t a balancing act between the two, it’s doing both together (see 1 John 4:7-8, James 1:27, and Hebrews 6:10).

I know all too well what a convenient Christianity looks like. One day I was running late for a ministry appointment. As I walked to my car a homeless man called over to. But I was in a hurry and he didn’t fit in to my schedule. I just kinda waved at him, looked away, and walked the other direction. I don’t know what he needed, but my love of convenience and comfort won out over my love of neighbor that day. But sometimes I get it right: I was returning from a camping trip with students at Jordan Lake. I was running late—again—when I saw a car pulled over with a flat tire, with two college age guys just standing next to it. The convenient thing to do would have been to keep going. But I pulled over and started to help them change the tire. They were driving back from a party where they had been black-out drunk and smoking pot. When they asked what I do, I hesitated. But when I told them I’m a pastor, one of them laughed, but the other guy started to open up to me. He’d loved youth group as a kid, but he fell into a group of friends who partied a lot and he battled through several years of addiction and was now clean from heavy drugs. He got really emotional and kept saying he was sorry and he knew he had to get his life back together. When I shared with him that he actually didn’t have to get his life back together, that He could give his life to Christ and let Jesus work on changing Him, he started crying and gave me a hug!

Pursuing other people isn’t an add-on to Christianity that we can choose to decline. It’s the very nature of Christianity. God saw our mess, and our chaos, and our brokenness and He sent Jesus right in the middle of it. The God of the universe didn’t shy away from the inconvenience of loving people. He didn’t reject us because it looked like it would be a lot of trouble to help. Jesus took on our burdens, he took on our shame, He took on our sin, and He took on our cross. He asks us to do the same (Galatians 6:2).

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Five Question Bible Study" (see the form below) is a simple way to study any passage. Let's try it out with some passages in which we see Jesus loving his neighbor...

Monday— Mark 2:1-12

Tuesday— Mark 5:1-20

Wednesday— Mark 10:17-45

Thursday— Mark 14:53-72

Friday— Mark 15:16-39

Saturday— ***In preparation for worshipping your risen Lord tomorrow with your church family,*** study Mark 15:40—16:14

Need blank copies for doing more
"Five Question Bible Study"?
e-mail: Dan.Clement.TCC@gmail.com

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) is it found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text?