

HARD TO LOVE

LOVING DIFFICULT PEOPLE

week 3

In the media, in our daily lives, and even in some churches, the concept of “us” and “them” is rampant. At the heart of this kind of division, there is ultimately a spirit of judgment. As believers, however, we are called to a different standard. How should we conduct our lives in a world where so many live, vote, act, and believe differently than we do?

Read: Matthew 7:1-5: Romans 5:6-11

Take a moment to objectively consider your own life through the lens of the absolute perfection and holiness of Jesus, set against the backdrop of Romans 5:6-11.

How does Romans 5 change your perspective on Matthew 7?

When you look accurately at Matthew 7:2, how might it change the way you look at others, knowing that it directly correlates to how we ourselves will be judged?

We see in the life of Jesus, from the example of who he chose as his disciples, with the woman at the well (John 4), and with Zacchaeus (Luke 19), that instead of moving away from and condemning sinners from afar, he moves toward those people.

Who in your life are you afraid to get near, or simply not interested in getting near, because of their lifestyle or their current behavior? Perhaps it's someone specific, or perhaps it's an entire category of people (LGBTQ+, Democrats/Republicans, other denominations, pagans, etc.).

Jesus already knows the heart, but it takes us some time to see someone's heart as we get to know them. What would it take for you to move toward these people/people groups from the question above to get close enough to know their heart?

(Continued on other side.)

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What would it look like for your relationships to be marked by seeking to compassionately understand the other person, no matter how different they are, or how much you disagree, instead of shaming them, trying to change them, or shunning them completely?
What might need to change?

How can we be "in the world, but not of the world," in forming relationships with people we don't agree with on what could be either minor, or perhaps major, issues in thought, behavior, or lifestyle?

Prayer:

Father, thank you for the diversity you have created among people. Help us to see others as people made in your image that we are called to love, instead of focusing on what is different or undesirable about them, realizing that we are all walking around with some kind of plank of sin in our own eye. Forgive us for adding weights and hierarchies to sin. Forgive us of our own sinfulness, and grant us your wisdom and love that we may share it with those around us who may not know you. We know that your arms are open to all people, so may ours be as well. In the name of Jesus, amen.

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