

LOVE IS ALWAYS THE RIGHT CHOICE

John 13:15, 34-35, 1 Corinthians 14:1

1. **In our SMART CHOICES series we've been learning that while God has great plans for our lives (Jeremiah 29:11), the choices we make determine the direction and destiny of our lives (Deuteronomy 30:15-16).**
2. **Making good choices requires being led by God's Spirit, surrounding ourselves with godly people, having the right beliefs and values, and choosing the "right doors of opportunity" to walk through.**

To make the right choices we also have to always have a heart of love.

3. Jesus - *"I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you."* (John 13:15)
4. Jesus - *"So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. <u>Just as I have loved you, you should love each other</u>. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are My disciples."* (John 13:34-35)
5. **We can't fully understand how to love others until we understand how much the Lord loves us.**
6. ***What does it take for us to love others the way Jesus loves us?***

Loving Others Like Jesus Loves Us Requires:

<u>ACCEPTING</u> OTHERS THE WAY JESUS ACCEPTS US

- **Followers of Jesus must be the most "accepting" people in the world, because people's deepest wounds are the wounds of rejection.**
- **Most of what we attempt to accomplish in life results from trying to overcome rejection and trying to experience acceptance from others.**
- **The myth is that "if we can be perfect others will love and accept us" – but Jesus was perfect and people rejected and hated Him.**
- Jesus – *"The Father gives Me My people. Every one of them will come to Me, and I will always accept them."* (John 6:37)

- **When we don't feel loved and accepted by the Lord it's because we've had "unpleasable family members," or we've believed the lies of the Devil.**
- **Most of us grew up with "conditional love" rather than unconditional love.**
- *"Even if my mother and father forsake me, the Lord will receive me."* (Psalm 27:10)
- *"Jesus treated us much better than we deserve. He made us acceptable to God, and gave us the hope of eternal life."* (Titus 3:7 CEV)
- W**e don't have to focus on making people feel guilty, because most people already feel guilty about who they are or what they've done.**
- Jesus – *"God sent His Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through Him."* (John 3:17)
- **"Accepting people" is not the same as approving their lives or lifestyle.**
- *"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you."* (Romans 15:7)
- **We demonstrate acceptance to people when we listen to them, look at them, seek to learn from them, etc.**

Loving Others Like Jesus Loves Us Requires:

<u>VALUING</u> OTHERS THE WAY JESUS VALUES US

- Jesus – *"What is the price of five sparrows - two copper coins? Yet God does not forget a single one of them. And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows."* (Luke 12:6-7)
- **Our value as a person depends on *Who Made Us*.**
    - *"Everything God created is good . . ."* (1 Timothy 4:4)
    - *"For we are God's masterpieces, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."* (Ephesians 2:10)
- **Our value as a person depends on *What Someone Will Pay For Us*.**
    - *"He (God) paid for you with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God."* (1 Peter 1:19)
    - **We can tell how much we matter to God by looking at Jesus on the cross of Calvary.**
    - The Lord - *"Can a mother feel no love for the child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you! See, I have written your name on the palms of My hands."* (Isaiah 49:15-16)
    - **The Lord wants us to treat everyone with the same value that He has ascribed to us – because He loves everyone else in the same way.**
    - *"Respect everyone, and love the family of believers."* (1 Peter 2:17)
    - *"Jesus looked at him and loved him."* (Mark 10:21)

Loving Others Like Jesus Loves Us Requires:

<u>FORGIVING</u> OTHERS LIKE JESUS FORGIVES US

- The Lord – *'I am the God who forgives your sins, and I do this because of who I am. I will not hold your sins against you."* (Isaiah 43:25)
- *"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 8:1)
- **Once we understand how much the Lord has forgiven us, we are better able and willing to forgive others.**
- *"You must make allowances for each other's faults, and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others."* (Colossians 3:13)
- Jesus – *"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will come back upon you. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."* (Luke 6:37)
- Jesus – *"Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant just as I have had mercy on you?"* (Matthew 18:33)

Loving Others Like Jesus Loves Us Requires:

<u>BELIEVING</u> IN OTHERS LIKE JESUS BELIEVES IN US

- **People all around us struggle with low self-esteem and a lack of self-worth.**
- *"Love never gives up, <u>never loses faith</u>, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance."* (1 Corinthians 13:7)
- **Jesus constantly affirmed the people around Him – because He saw not just what they were, but what they could become.**
- Jesus – *"As you sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world."* (John 17:18)
- Jesus – *"Anyone who believes in Me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father."* (John 14:12)
- *"Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."* (Hebrews 10:24)

- **This week I will show ACCEPTANCE to _____.**
- **This week I will AFFIRM the value of _____.**
- **This week I will offer FORGIVENESS to _____.**
- **This week I will demonstrate BELIEF and TRUST in _____.**
- *"May you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His (God's) love really is."* (Ephesians 3:18)