

Week 6: Love, Not Control

Key Verses:

Matthew 5

²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Mark 10

²¹ Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

²² At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Idea:

"The sin underneath all our sins is to trust the lie of the serpent that we cannot trust the love and grace of Christ and must take matters into our own hands."

Martin Luther

From Brian's Message:

- Jesus' approach to discipleship was invitational.
- He could have taken control either politically or through force, yet He has chosen to bring His kingdom in through disciples making more disciples.
- Not everyone will take up the invitation to follow Jesus, but our response must be to continue to show love and trust God; not to control, guilt or manipulate.

Reflect:

- As you reflect on the issue of love versus control, have you had any experience of being in a church or a Christian environment where control was the predominant mode of operation? What was the result?
- Conversely, have you had any experience of being in a church or a Christian environment where love was the predominant mode of operation? What was the result? Do you know of any stories of people who have come to faith as a result of their experience of the love of God through the actions of his people?
- Read Genesis 2:16-17. Why did God give humans free will when he knew that they would inevitably disobey him? Why didn't he remove the possibility of choice from us?
- Read Matthew 11:28-30. How does this passage illustrate Jesus operating from love rather than control? What aspects of Jesus' character do you see in this invitation?

- Read Romans 2:1-10. How does this passage describe the choices and consequences that mankind is faced with? What are the two paths we can choose, and what are the consequences of both? Most importantly, notice verse 4. How does this verse describe God's interaction with our world throughout history and the approach that Jesus also took? What practical implications does this have for us today?
- How are we as the Church engaging with the secular society around us? What effect do you think it is having- positive or negative? Is there a better approach?

For reflection, from the book:

"In our current dialogue with the world regarding society's shifting moral values, are we arguing, badgering and bullying? Are we, at times, attempting to coerce and control our sinful society, rather than love the sinners? Are we attempting to legislate and enforce compliance to God's moral standards, instead of demonstrating the love of God to lost and confused people?"
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Pray:

Pray for wisdom as we seek to love a lost and confused world. Pray that God will help us to follow the loving path of Jesus rather than the controlling path of the Pharisees. Pray for our Christian leaders as they seek to lead in love rather than from a position of control. Pray for people in your community, that they might come to experience the love of Jesus and be transformed by it.