

ULC Sermon Study Resource

Non Negotiables // Foster Genuine Relationships

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Prayer: Pause for a few moments to go to the Lord in prayer. Ask that He would draw near to you in this time, and open your heart and mind to hear His Word.

Icebreaker: Tell a funny story of a time you met a friend.

Readings: John 15:12-17

Outline:

- I. Love Reflects
 - a. Jesus offers his disciples a straightforward command: love each other as I have loved you. This is an active love, and when we do this, we reflect Jesus to one another.
 - b. Without genuine relationships, and when pride or arrogance reign, people are more likely to leave the church. We must foster deep relationships to demonstrate Jesus' love to the world.
Q: *When is it difficult for us to love others as unconditionally as Jesus loves us?*
- II. Love Frees
 - a. Friendship with Jesus means we are set free from obedience to God out of compulsion and instead get to obey out of love for God. Compulsion leads us to begrudge obedience, love leads us to delight in it.
 - b. There is a freedom in being a friend of Jesus. But this is a great freedom we can offer to those around us. When we make it clear that our love is not conditional, we can invite people to see a God whose love is not conditional.
Q: *How does God's love free us from compulsive obedience and allow us to be ourselves?*
- III. Love Empowers
 - a. The love that invites us to friendship with God is not one that is intended to belittle us. It empowers and honors us.
 - b. It is easy to miss the way the love of the Gospel functions because we are so used to the way the world's love works. God does not first find something loveable in us. God simply loves.
 - c. We foster relationships with one another and those who don't know Christ, not as something to be checked off a list, but as expressions of love of the God who calls us friends.
Q: *How can our relationships with one another strengthen our relationship with God?*

Reflection/Application Questions:

- 1) What are some things that get in the way of building authentic relationships with others?
- 2) How can we overcome feelings of pride/arrogance and learn to love others unconditionally?
- 3) How can we feel empowered knowing that we are lovely simply because God loves us?
- 4) How does God's unconditional love compare emotionally with the love of the world that asks us to prove ourselves first?

Suggestions for further study:

- Colossians 3:13 **Q: *When is it difficult for us to forgive in the way that Jesus forgives us?***
- 1 Peter 4:8 **Q: *How can authentic relationships help to overcome our insecurities and shame?***

Closing Prayer:

Father God, we are lovely because you love us. Even though there was nothing worthy, even though we are broken and sinful, you loved us so much that you sent your Son for us. We ask that you would work in our hearts so that we would genuinely believe that we are lovely because you love us. Strengthen us to go out and love others as extensions of your love for us and for the world. Amen.