



CONNECT GROUP NOTES

Sunday 02.04.2023

“Love one another”

Preacher

Shane Willard

Scripture

“A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”

John 13:34-35

Thought

One of the most challenging aspects of Jesus is that He was both fully God and fully Man. It's the latter that makes it challenging, because if He were 'just' fully God, we might be tempted to take some of His commands and examples as purely suggestions by a divine being who is unable to fully appreciate the limitations of our human condition.

However, this is not the case. Jesus, being also fully human, shows us through example and beckons us to follow Him, to take His Yoke (His teaching, His way of life, His example) upon us.

Jesus, the Rabbi, the Teacher, chooses to approach things differently to what our default may be. He always seeks out the lost, the downtrodden, the disqualified. In fact, His very disciples were not selected from among the prestigious religious elite, but from the fringe of society.



The yoke of Jesus Christ always qualifies disqualified people. From fishermen, to tax collectors, to prostitutes - Jesus empowers those who are disempowered, and Jesus always looks at the heart.

The big, challenging question is: Do we do the same? Or do we disqualify and rule others out based on their behaviour or perspective or opinions?

The yoke of our rabbi, Jesus, looked at someone caught in the act of adultery and said "I don't condemn you". Could our yoke do that, or have we changed it? Do we still demand repentance and change before forgiveness? Or do we mirror Jesus in saying "I don't condemn you" before mentioning anything about sin. It's the kindness of God that leads to repentance - and Jesus demonstrated this unconditionally. That is the yoke of our rabbi. But are there corners of our life where we have changed His yoke to fit within our tradition, our bias, our comfort?

We must understand that how Jesus *applied* scripture is more important than how we *interpret* scripture. Jesus, the final and full way to know God, the final revelation of God. How *He* approached people has to be central to how we understand the scriptures.

The hope of the world is in the yoke of our rabbi, and because of this, Christianity is a function of loving our world - to be known for our kindness and graciousness.

To not be known for spending all our energy on matters of opinion or arguments which have little eternal value, but to get back to the heart of Jesus, not merely by what we say, but by our deep life-changing belief in Jesus, resulting in radical, selfless, borderless actions of love to the world.

May we truly be known by our love for each other.



Discussion Points

1. Do you think it is easier to spend our energies on tangential matters rather than loving others? Why or why not?
2. How did Jesus show love to others? How does that align with the way you were raised, or taught to view love?
3. Looking outward to those around you - those who disagree with you, or are on the 'outside', what does taking on the yoke of Jesus look like for how you relate to them?

Personal application + Prayer

Lord Jesus,

May no one ever reject You because of how I'm presenting You. If there is any place where I have changed Your yoke, please forgive me, and help me to change. Help me to truly understand Your heart as one who was fully God but fully human. May I live out Your purpose and show Your love in all ways to all people.

Amen