

SERMON NOTES

SUNDAY 15.09.24

PREACHER: PS JOSH PLUMB

GROWING & LOVING

BECOMING CHRISTLIKE

BEING, THINKING & DOING

Conviction of a Disciple: As we develop a heart after God, we begin to bear the fruit of the Spirit, loving others better.

OVERVIEW

Loving others better comes from a place of not simply knowing about God, but truly *knowing* God. His love becomes the lens we see through and the heart we feel through, and as a result, we change to become more like Jesus.

ACTION

Step 1: Reflect: Has my “head knowledge” about God made its way into my heart, and does it impact the way that I treat others?

Step 2: Commit: How can I commit to truly knowing God in my own life, so that His goodness and love begins to flow out of me to those in my world?

Step 3: Act: What steps can I take this week to actively love those around me better?

THOUGHT

SCRIPTURE: 1 JOHN 2:3-11

Life with Jesus is far from boring. He doesn't invite us into a static set of beliefs, but rather into a dynamic connection with Him. This relationship with Him leads to abundant life and to knowing Him fully.

A popular question that we often ask ourselves as Christians involves head knowledge vs heart knowledge. Has what we believe in our mind moved to what we know to be true in our heart, and, by default, been translated to how we act? This kind of question is one that we've been asking ourselves since Jesus walked the earth. John encourages us to wonder if we are living as people who simply know about God, or if, in fact, we are living as people who *know* God.

So, how do we know that we *know* God? Simply put, when we know God, we change to become more like Him. It's something similar to the natural arc that a romantic relationship might follow. Before a couple begins dating, they know about each other. They are probably aware that the other person exists, and there is a good chance they are already friends. The friendship then becomes a relationship, and at some point, boyfriend and girlfriend become husband and wife. The couple goes from simply knowing about each other to truly knowing each other—the ins and outs, the beauty and the pain. They begin to share each other's interests and care about the things that matter to the other person. They value the things that the other person values and they want to bring pleasure and joy into their partner's life, not hurt and pain. They're not only changing because they're spending so much time together, but because they love each other. It's not just words written on paper, but it's a conviction in their hearts. Like this, as we truly begin to know God—not just in our heads, but in our hearts—we begin to change. When we remain in Him and abide in Him, we begin to bear the fruit of the spirit and the way that we love others changes. That's because when we know God, we don't just change in any direction; specifically, we grow in loving people well. Our spiritual maturity isn't measured by how well we know the Bible, how often we attend church, or how close we sit to the stage on a Sunday, but it can be measured by how well we love people.

Salvation doesn't mean simply being rescued from the consequences of our choices. Salvation is defined by agape love: the faithful, committed, unconditional kind of love backed by action. As we become a reflection of the image of God, we become more of who we truly are. 1 John tells us several things that love is not. Unsurprisingly, love is not hate. But there's another more sinister thing that slips into our lives and inhibits our ability to love: indifference (or *rhaka*, in the traditional text). A lack of concern or care, viewing someone as senseless, also isn't love. When we engage with others in these ways, we know we're not loving them well.

The good news is that it's easy to check in on how well we're loving others. How do we go when we're confronted with someone who rubs us the wrong way? Moments like these are opportunities to press into God, seek help from Holy Spirit, and continue to ask God to share His heart with us and to change ours. As this happens, his love becomes the lens we see through and the heart we feel through, as we live out our lives and become more like our Saviour.

DISCUSSION

1. How has your relationship with God changed the way that you love the people in your world?
2. How can we create a culture of love within our small group and church community?
3. How does the assurance of God's love for you change the way that you love those who you don't get along with?

PRAYER

Lord,

Thank You that You first loved us, completely and unconditionally. Please take us from a place of simply knowing about You to truly knowing You, so that we can love more like You do.

This week, please would You continue to shape and change our hearts to reflect Yours, so that we could love those around us better.

Amen.