



Christ Church Sermon Series Discussion Guide

Enlarge Your Circle of Love - Pastor Tom Lowe

10 Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. 11 Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. 12 Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. 13 When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. 15 Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all! 17 Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. 18 Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. 19 Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, "I will take revenge; I will pay them back," says the Lord. 20 Instead, "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads." 21 Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

Romans 12:1-21 - NLT

One of the things that we, as Christ-Followers have to be very aware of is our propensity to build fences—to draw little circles and put little groups within that circle. If we are living from a distinctively Christian perspective - and if - as the scripture says...“We possess the mind of Christ” our circles should exclude no one and include everyone.

Even when someone is in sin. Remember, hate the sin but love the sinner.

The love of Jesus is all-inclusive.

*“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?
Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters,
nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,
nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.
And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified,
you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”*

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 ESV

The trouble with the Jews of Jesus' day was that their capacity to love excluded those, whom, God in His grace, wanted to include! The tax collector types who stole from the people. Men like Matthew, Zacheus, or people like Mary Magdalene and the woman at the well, or the woman caught in the very act of adultery! One great problem with the Church of Jesus Christ today is that **the reach of OUR love doesn't even begin to resemble the reach of HIS love!**

However, if you are willing to be salt and light in the world, God will provide you opportunities to share the same outlandish, incredible, and undeserved love with others that He has shared with you. **But you've got to look for the opportunities!** We are called to "Quantify" - not "Qualify" in terms of our love for others.

God loves even those we may deem un-lovable.

If we are going to be true expressions of Jesus Christ, nobody can be excluded---EVERYBODY MUST BE INCLUDED in our sphere of love! That means people of different denominational structures - from different doctrinal frames of reference. And that's important! If my circle is exclusive and sectarian--I'll find myself out of the larger circle--which is God's circle!

Does my circle of love include those who have wronged me?

The only one who can hurt you is the one you exclude from your circle of love.

We've come upon this mentality that the Church is a nice-cozy waiting room. **However, the church is a TRAUMA CENTER FOR THE SICK - and WOUNDED and the broken of our world!**

ENLARGE OUR CIRCLE OF LOVE! I see some of you reaching out beyond your comfort zone - to touch the hurting - the lonely - people in need. I see you picking up people for church - taking the less privileged under your wings. There is nothing that moves the heart of God more than to see His Church being the Body of Christ!

WE WANT TO INCLUDE YOU IN OUR CIRCLE OF LOVE!

Small Group Discussion Questions:

1. What part of the message resonated with you the most?
2. Who have I cut out of my circle of Love?
3. Have I made something into an idol, keeping me from completely following Christ?
4. Why has the larger church avoided being "friends with sinners" and traditionally tended to exclude those that are outside the faith?
5. Why do you believe sinners, or lost people, so often feel unloved by the church?
6. When The Bible tells us to be separate from the world, how does this contrast to being a friend to sinners?
7. Why do you feel it's hard at times to focus on our own sins and easy to point out others?
8. What does scripture say about loving those that are straying from a life with the Lord?
9. Does my circle of love include those that have stabbed me in the back, lied about me, hurt me, cheated me, or belittled me?
10. The only one that can hurt you is the one you excluded from your circle of love. Who might you be excluding right now. What unresolved hurt might you be carrying around?
11. How can I be an extension of God's love and enlarge my circle of love this week? What practical things can I do to walk out my faith in this area?