



GROUP ICE BREAKER

What quality do you appreciate most in a friend and why?

REVIEW LAST WEEK'S NEXT STEPS

What, if any, next step did you commit to last week, how did it go?

- I will resist dividing over issues and instead lean into the unity found in Christ.
- I will take on an attitude of humility and actively listen to others.
- I will act with gentleness rather than respond with outrage.
- I will practice patience with others in moments of disagreement.
- I will do all I can to preserve, promote, and protect unity in the church.

THIS WEEK'S SERMON RECAP

If we're going to live at peace with one another, undivided, we're going to have to learn how to deal with difficult people. Conventional human wisdom says to avoid these people. But Jesus says, "Now there's a better way. There's a new possibility with God's help." It's not simple, but it's the way of love, loving people "as is." There are two categories of difficult people. The first profile is the Critic. The critic tends to be a perfectionist, on the lookout for flaws. But remember, we all have a little critic inside of us. So show appropriate grace, because you've got some of that in you, and so do I in me. The second profile of someone who can be difficult is what is called the Wet Blanket. The Wet Blanket is marked by a consistent attitude of pessimism, this robs him of energy and enthusiasm. The wet blanket often seems to have a need to dampen enthusiasm in other people. This week decide to not give another person the power to determine your mood.

There is a gift we need to give to all people, especially difficult people. This is the gift of prayer. Pray for those who persecute you, who hurt you, wound you, etc. It's really hard to hang on to bitterness and resentment and hostility and judgment towards someone that you're authentically praying for. You have difficult people in your life, pray for them and learn to be patient.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think of a difficult person in your life. Without naming them, share what makes them difficult? What is your typical response to them?
2. Of the "high maintenance relationship" indicators (less energy, self-critical, anxiety, imaginary conversations, and avoidance), which do you most often experience and why?
3. Read Matthew 5:38-42. How does this passage contrast life in the Kingdom of God with conventional wisdom? What do we learn from the contrast about Kingdom living?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONT)

4. Read Matthew 5:43-48. In what ways do the difficult people in our lives reveal the condition of our heart? What example does God set for us in this passage?
5. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:3 that he cares very little about what his critics say of him, meaning he would not give another person the power to determine his worth. How do you separate words that tear down from the words you might learn from?
6. In Philippians 4:4, Paul says he will not give another the power to determine his mood, and instead he says to rejoice always. Why do negative attitudes so easily impact others? What are some ways to counter negative attitudes before they impact others?
7. Jesus says to pray for those that “persecute” you, those that wound, say bad things, cause you trouble, etc. What keeps you from praying for someone who treats you in these ways? How could you take a step towards praying for them this week?
8. What’s one thing you could pray for the difficult person you thought of in question one that would begin to change your attitude towards them? Share with the group without naming the person.

NEXT STEPS FOR THIS WEEK (COMMIT TO GROW)

Use these as a guide to take your next step and commit to what you learned this week:

- I will give up trying to fix people.
- I will love people as is.
- I will reflect on the apostle Paul’s words about critics.
- I will not give to another person the power to determine my mood.
- I will pray for the difficult people in my life.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- Matthew 5:40-47
- Luke 14:12-14
- 2 Corinthians 10:10
- 1 Corinthians 4:3
- Philippians 4:4
- Philippians 1:15-17
- Luke 22:31-32