



## Wednesday Meeting

7:30pm, 22nd April, 2020

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### Meeting Topic:

## PART 2: WHAT IS YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE GOSPEL?

Please read the following edited excerpts from Paul Ellis' book "The Gospel in 10 Words" in preparation for the meeting:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son ... (John 3: 16)

"So, what did you learn in Sunday school, Sweetie?" We were driving home from church and my question was directed to my six-year-old daughter. "We learned about the Ten Commandments." "Did you now? Tell me something— will God love you more if you keep the Ten Commandments?" There was a long pause in the back seat. My daughter could smell a trap. "Er, yes?" she said hesitantly. "No," I replied. "God loves you when you're good, and he loves you when you're naughty. He loves you all the time. Just like me," I added with a smile. Like most parents, I love my kids regardless of their behavior. If my little girl was to grow up and break all Ten Commandments, she would still be my little girl and I would love her dearly. Yet many think God is not as loving as we are. They have been taught that his love is filtered through an anger management problem. "Sure, God loves you, but he's also mad at you. So you'd better watch yourself." Just as it's rare to hear sermons on the unmixed gospel, seldom do you hear the love of God preached without hooks and qualifications. It's unconditional love— with conditions. How is it that we think we love our kids more than God loves us? God is not mad with you. He loves you with an everlasting love. God was angry at your sin, in the same way I might get angry at the sicknesses that afflict my children, but he dealt with your sin once and for all 2,000 years ago. God showed us his great love while we were sinners. He did not wait for us to get cleaned up or repent or make a fresh start.

Earthly, human love is a response to loveliness, but divine love is spontaneous, arising in and of itself. God does not love us because we are lovely but because he is love. It is his nature to love us. Since God always acts in accordance with his nature, his wrath, along with



everything else he does, should be seen as an expression of his love. Why does God do what he does? Because he is love and he loves us. Love is his motive for everything. God loved you into existence and he loved you when you were a sinner. His heart's desire is for you to know and enjoy his love for eternity. The cross declares that God is good and that he cares for you. The cross is the cure for any doubts you may have about the love of God.

Religious types get nervy whenever the gospel of grace is brought up. They worry that this "latest fad," this "new teaching," will lead people into dangerous places. Well, if the love of God is a dangerous place, there is no better place to be. God is love and love that stoops is called grace. The gospel of grace is really the gospel of his love. Grace is what God's love looks like from our side. Grace is love come down. God loves us. He does not love us like a king but a father. This is the supreme revelation of Jesus who is grace personified. God came down that we might go up. Jesus became like us so that we might become like him— whole, healthy, blessed, and completely secure in his Father's love.

### **Love looks like grace.**

When you receive his grace you receive his love. There is no difference. This means if you have no time for grace, perhaps because you are striving to please the Lord with your sacrifices and offerings, then you have no time for love. Reject grace and you reject love. Learning to walk in the love of God means learning to walk in his grace. Under the old covenant you loved God because you had to; it was the law. But love doesn't work that way. Love cannot be legislated; The law was not given to manufacture love among the loveless but to reveal our need for a Lover. From the beginning, God desired a relationship with us but we preferred rules. The reason some prefer the clear-cut rules of religion to the confusing freedom of relationship is because they do not know they are God's dearly loved children. They are fearful and look to the rules to give them the security and identity we all need. The religious spirit panders to this fear by saying, "Do this and don't do that and just maybe God will be pleased with you." A preference for the rules is a sure-fire sign that one is not standing secure in the love of God.

When you know the love of God, when you begin to realize just Who loves you and how committed he is to your success, it gives you confidence. Your faith is energized and you begin to release his love to those around you. Life becomes a supernatural adventure. But lose sight of his love and faith is diminished. Something like this happened to the Ephesians. They got so busy with their church work they drifted from their first love. Jesus had to come and correct them (Revelation 2: 1– 7). Who is our first love? It's him! He is the light. He is the source.

God invariably deals with our problems by giving us a greater revelation of himself and his love. Our part is to choose whether we will continue to operate in the inferior reality of our



circumstances or walk in the higher reality of his love. This choice is the difference between success and failure. The choice of every successful son or daughter of God is the choice to live loved.

### **What is the One Big Truth you cling to when all is lost?**

Some say it is obedience: “The most important thing is to obey God no matter what.” Others say it is attitude: “The main thing is to make a good effort; God knows your heart.” Still others say it is sacrifice: “Give God your best; he has already given you so much” — or fruit: “Prove yourself as his disciple.”

The difficulty I have with beliefs such as these is that they rely on me— my obedience, my attitude, my sacrifice, and my fruit-bearing— and I just don’t have that much faith in me. So what is my One Big Truth? It is this: God loves us with an unfailing love. This is simply mind-blowing to me. Every form of love you and I will experience in this world is failing love— it breaks and it bruises, it disappoints and ultimately it dies. But God’s love never, ever fails. Not ever. Not even death can stop his love.

The love of God is transformational but it will not change you unless you know it in your heart. The truth doesn’t set you free; it is knowing and being convinced about the truth that sets you free.

Ellis, Paul. The Gospel in Ten Words

### **Further reading suggestions:**

1 Corinthians 13:

The Parable of the Prodigal Son: Luke 15:11-32

Ephesians 3:14-19



## Questions for discussion:

### 1. How do we know that God loves us? Where's the proof?

Complete this sentence: God loves me because...

### 2. Have you ever thought God would love you more (or less) if you acted a certain way?

Make a list of things you believe would cause God to love you more...

Have you ever believed your heavenly Father might stop loving you? If so what would cause God to love you less?

### 3. What does the parable of the prodigal son reveal about the love of God?

What stopped the elder son from experiencing his father's love?

### 4. If you fully grasped the breadth and depth of your Father's relentless love for you, what might change in your life?

### 5. Discuss this statement:

*"The only thing that can come between you and his love is your refusal to receive it. The only thing that can separate you from the love of God is you."*

How does this relate to how we present the Gospel?