

Queries review...(Theme Slide)

**(Queries Slide)**

As followers of Christ do you love and respect each other?

Do patience and consideration govern your interactions; and when differences arise, do you resolve them promptly in a spirit of forgiveness and understanding? Are you careful with the reputation of others?

We hear “love and respect each other” and expect that it should be followed with, and keep your hands to yourselves, eat your applesauce, and go to rest time on your own carpet square (**Kindergarten Nap**)....

But this is the foundation of what it means to be God’s people, to see God’s kingdom realized....and we have to move past our sense of obligation of rule following or that this is somehow just what they say on Sesame Street and Mr. Rogers(**Mr.Rogers**) and recognize the centrality of living life this way.

This is what Jesus means when he says “love your neighbor as yourself.”(**Love thy neighbor**) This is the bedrock of right relationship that brings about shalom. Arguable, if scripture has one message, it would be “be right with God, be right with each other” and this query goes straight to the pragmatic application of trying to live life that way.

Clarity of Scripture...

Love your neighbor as yourself is just the beginning of the biblical witness...

1 John 2:9-11 Anyone who claims to live in God’s light and hates a brother or sister is still in the dark. It’s the person who loves brother and sister who dwells in God’s light and doesn’t block the light from others. But whoever hates is still in the dark, stumbles around in the dark, doesn’t know which end is up, blinded by the darkness.

Ephesians 4 :32 - Be kind love one another, tender hearted forgiving one another...

use your freedom to serve one another in love; that’s how freedom grows. For everything we know about God’s Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself. That’s an act of true freedom. If you bite and ravage each other, watch out—in no time at all you will be annihilating each other, and where will your precious freedom be then?

We’re conditioned by our culture (Christian and otherwise) that it’s more important to be right rather than kind.(**Kindinsteadofright**) Gifts of the Spirit

(there's nothing here about the gift of being right), Our value, both to ourselves, and often to others is in competency, and in control.

We feel compelled to look better than others, (**better than you**) cause at least I'm not as bad as those people. Our political systems, our arguments of legitimacy, even our entertainment is often based on making others look bad.

Facebook sermon (are you careful with the reputation of others)...of course Facebook isn't the beginning of being less than careful with the rep of others. (**Awkward**)

We're conditioned to discount people and reputations, we've turned relationship into competition, rather than team. (**better than you**)

But there's not really room for that from a scriptural view. (clanging gong or a crashing cymbal) (**Cymbal monkey**) and we see that in our culture right now... why do we as Christians often not have a voice, or find violent rejection from our culture? It may not be because we have an intolerable faith, but because we present it in intolerable ways, because we are often neither respectful or loving, patient or considerate, or careful with others, never mind their reputations, both inside and outside the church.

Maybe the query could be asked this way (**1 corinthians**)...Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Can you say that with your name there? (**blank is patient**) Nate is patient, Nate is kind, He doesn't envy, doesn't boast, isn't proud. Nate doesn't dishonor others, he's not self seeking, not easily angered. Nate keeps no record of wrongs....

Part of our response to this in our spirituality is to make it about me and Jesus... (Wemmicks?) We want to say "it's just me and Jesus"(**Jesus and Me**)...but it's not. When we ignore the input of other people, by definition we are sociopaths...

But on a certain (false) level, it's safer to not involve the community with our spiritual journey (as if we can really achieve this). Vulnerability is hard (**Vulnerability**), and particularly when we've been hurt before.

Love and respect are easy when we keep it all at arms distance, they're much harder the more intimate we get...(Ilovemankind)

We're designed to be in relationship with each other (**Cogs**)...it's not right for us to be alone....more often than not we are the hands of feet of Christ to each other..because we're intended and designed to be.

The problem is that this demands real, measurable sacrifice. It means sacrificing my ego, it's means awareness of my feelings and measuring my response. It means living Philippians 2:, (**Phil2**)

“If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you *care*— then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.

This means taking seriously that we pick up our cross, that we set aside our lives, not just in a rote and obligatory way, but in our actual day to day interaction and with our real lives, the things we really care about, our moment to moment response to each other..

This is at the heart of shalom...a realization of the vision of Isaiah 2 ?  
**(Peaceable kingdom)**

God will teach us his ways,  
so that we may walk in his paths.”

The law will go out from Zion,  
the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

4

He will judge between the nations  
and will settle disputes for many peoples.

They will beat their swords into plowshares  
and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword against nation,  
nor will they train for war anymore.

5

Come, descendants of Jacob,  
let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Shalom begins in our personal interactions..we can't jump to communities or nations...it begins with creating right relationships between each other. (**Trust**)

“I not only have my secrets, I am my secrets. And you are yours. Our secrets are human secrets, and our trusting each other enough to share them with each other has much to do with the secret of what it means to be human.” - Buechner

We don't will ourselves to love others, we will ourselves to allow God to transform us...or in other words, we unwill ourselves. **(Release)** Instead of gripping tighter we let go.

The characteristics that are required to love and respect other people well, oddly enough, are the same characteristics that Paul says come out giving the Spirit control of our lives. **(Fruit of the Spirit)** love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Are we willing to let go of our lives so that we can live them?

**(Query slide)**

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