



Our Easter program this year is called, "Love Lives."

John writes that God has lavished his love on us by calling us his children. God includes us in his family and then transforms us to become more like him. In this message we will look at how we can love others through sharing our faith and including them in God's family.

Week 4 May 2 - May 8

SUNDAY

In any relationship, there are multiple ways in which rifts can occur. Some rifts come from misunderstandings and communication breakdowns. Others come from disagreements and different perspectives. Still other rifts result when one member of a relationship accidentally lets another person down.

When rifts occur, love looks to repair the relationship by making peace.

If those rifts are not addressed, they will get bigger and bigger until they become a chasm.

Pray today for the grace to be the first to bring peace to a relationship when there is a rift.

MONDAY

While they were still speaking about this, he stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."
Luke 24:36

In any relationship, there are multiple ways in which rifts can occur. That's why the third week of "Love Lives" is all about making peace. If those rifts are not addressed, they will get bigger and bigger until they become chasms.

One of these rifts happened around the passion of Christ. The apostles are gathered in Jerusalem, probably in the same room where they had had the last supper, and they are trying to make sense of what is happening. They feel shame because they had abandoned their leader in time of need. Peter, James and John couldn't even stay awake long enough to pray with him. Peter had denied Jesus three times after promising he would die for him. And all except John had run away when Jesus was arrested.

There was a rift in their relationship and Jesus shows us what love does, what love in action looks like: He offers peace. Jesus went to the apostles the very night he rose from the dead to make peace with them. He didn't wait.

Rifts in relationships can quickly turn into chasms. Pray today for the grace to always think about making peace first.

TUESDAY

And he said to them, "Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things." Luke 24:46-48

When the world turned its back on God, when we had turned our back on God, he didn't abandon us, he didn't give up on the relationship. Instead, he sent his Son to re-establish a relationship with a broken world.

Jesus does not show anger or disappointment with the apostles. Instead, he extends peace to them. The olive branch is used to mark a new beginning, even a new era. In the Book of Genesis, a dove brings back an olive branch to the ark after the flood, and in ancient Greece and Rome olive branches were used at weddings and as a symbol to end conflicts.

Jesus is not only making peace with the apostles by appearing to them. He makes peace by giving them a job to do. He tells them that they are going to be the ones that preach about the forgiveness of sins. He says, "Not only are we good in our relationship, but I am trusting you to bring my message to all people, starting right here in Jerusalem".

Don't forget that you are God's peaceful ambassador. Pray for the strength to extend the olive branch and be love in action.

WEDNESDAY

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:17-19

Paul tells us that we are new creations in Jesus Christ. As new creations, Christ has reconciled us to himself. We have peace with God and are in a right relationship with him. God doesn't hold our sins against us. Instead he trusts us by giving us the ministry of reconciliation. God reconciles with us; we have peace with others and then we connect God to people.

Pray today that God will use you to bring others into a relationship with him.

THURSDAY

So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:20-21

We are Christ's ambassadors. He makes an appeal to others through us. God build relationships with people through us. This is why it is so important that look to bring peace to all our relationships whenever possible. When we have peace with others, we can lead them closer to God. When there is a rift, we can't. As Rick Warren says, "You can't lead your enemies to Christ, you can only lead your friends."

Pray today that you would be Christ's ambassador, bringing others into a relationship with Christ.

FRIDAY

If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself. 2 Tim 2:13

Here's the good news: Even if we try to, we cannot lose God's favor. No matter how hard we try, he will always be there, waiting patiently for our return into his grace.

Easter has opened the path of salvation to everyone. Jesus went all the way down, journeying into pain, despair, alienation, even godforsakenness. He went as far as you can go away from the Father. Why? In order to reach all those who had wandered from God. In light of the resurrection, the first Christians came to know that, even as we run away from the Father as fast as we can, we are running into the arms of the Son.

Ask God to help you remember that you have peace with him through his Son and ask him to give you the right attitude towards your friend, spouse, mom, dad, co-worker, or whoever is on the other side of the relational rifts you are currently facing. Be love in action.

SATURDAY

How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good he has done for me?

How shall I make a return to the LORD

for all the good he has done for me?

The cup of salvation I will take up,

and I will call upon the name of the LORD

How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good he has done for me?

My vows to the LORD I will pay

in the presence of all his people.

Precious in the eyes of the LORD

is the death of his faithful ones.

How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good he has done for me?

O LORD, I am your servant;

I am your servant, the son of your handmaid;

you have loosed my bonds.

To you will I offer sacrifice of thanksgiving,

and I will call upon the name of the LORD.

How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good he has done for me?

Psalms 116

Group Discussion: Week 4 of "Love Lives"

Questions:

1. How did Jesus demonstrate true love?
2. What does it mean to you to lay down our lives for one another?
3. How did John want his readers to love?
4. How did he not want them to love?
5. Consider a few verbal ways you have shown love to others recently. What actions can you take to reinforce those loving words?
6. When you are "in need", how can others love you?
7. Can you share a time you felt the presence of God when someone loved you well?

Scriptures:

- ❖ "The way we came to know love was that he laid down his life for us; so we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers." -1 John 3:16
- ❖ "If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him?" -1 John 3:17
- ❖ "Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth." -1 John 3:18
- ❖ "Now this is how we shall know that we "belong to the truth and reassure our hearts before him." -1 John 3:19