

### ***Warming Up***

What stuck with you from the message this weekend?

What is the strangest thing you have ever been asked to do? Or, put another way, what was your most embarrassing moment?

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### ***Digging Deeper***

Why would God be so drastic in getting his message to His people? (Ezekiel's burning his hair, Isaiah walking naked, Hosea marrying a prostitute, etc...)

#### **John 16:33**

*<sup>33</sup> "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

#### **James 1:2-12**

*<sup>2</sup> Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. <sup>4</sup> Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. <sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. <sup>6</sup> But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. <sup>8</sup> Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.*

*<sup>9</sup> Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. <sup>10</sup> But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. <sup>11</sup> For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.*

*<sup>12</sup> Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.*

What role do trials and adversity play in helping us understand God's purpose?

*God's unconditional love for Israel flowed from the covenant relationship he had established with them. Christ's death has provided for us a new covenant in which we are also recipients of this same unconditional love.*

How do the following passages help you gain a greater understanding of what God's unconditional love involves?

**Romans 8:35-39**

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**1 John 3:1**

*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.*

**1 John 4:9-11**

*This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

What difference could it make in someone's life if he/she really understood that God loves them?

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**Bringing it Home****1 John 2:15-16**

*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world.*

How can we balance not being friends with the world and our responsibility to be friendly toward the world and make a positive impact on those around us.

Do you wish you had a better understanding of God's love for you? If so, can you think of something you could do to help you better grasp it?

How are you doing at not being friends with the world? Is there anything in your life influencing your friendship with the world that needs to change?

**Pray for one another.**