

LIVING CHOICES

Class 2 – One-On-One


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ONE-ON-ONE

1. Recognition Over Tolerance
2. Empathy Over Distance
3. Grace Over Retribution
4. Service Over Self



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RECOGNITION OVER TOLERANCE

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“... a Christian should always be, loving, understanding, forgiving, forbearing others, making allowances for them, and giving them the benefit of the doubt, for true love 'bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things' (1 Cor. 13:7).” (John Stott)



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TOLERANCE

Tolerance is a patience toward a practice or opinion one disapproves of.

(Brad Stetson and Joseph Conti)



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CONTEXTS OF TOLERANCE

- Law and courts
- Social – treating others with dignity and respect
- Personal – patience with quirks, taste, and minor failings

(Brad Stetson and Joseph Conti, and John Stott)



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BEING TOLERANT PRESUMES

- Belief that a "real" right and wrong exists, if not, there is nothing to tolerant
- One values another as a person, even when disagreeing
(David Couchman quoted by Brad Stetson and Joseph Conti)
- One must have objections or there is nothing to tolerate
- The least tolerant person is one who accepts everything

(Daniel Taylor)



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INTOLERANCE IS NOT:

- Failing to endorse or affirm the opinions of others
- Explaining why you believe another's position or actions are flawed
- Confronting people with destructive behavioral habits
- Discussing reasons for your point-of-view, while listening to reasons for another's point-of-view

*These demonstrate your respect for
the intellectual agency of the other*

(Brad Stetson and Joseph Conti)



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TOLERANCE RIGHTLY APPLIED CAN:

- When building and maintaining civic order:
 - Grants broad rights of self-determination outside the law
 - Encourages cultural criticism and a free exchange of ideas in making public policy
 - Recognizes some deeds as too bad to countenance
- Address only conduct and opinion. The person is not rejected.

(Brad Stetson and Joseph Conti)



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EASY FALL INTO JUDGEMENTALISM

- Being more concerned with being right than being righteous
 - Focusing on issues rather than people
 - Forgetting we are all imperfect people in need of grace
 - Judging those with no representation within the people we love and welcome into our lives.
- (Margaret Feinberg quoted by David Kinnaman)
- When judgmental we are showing contempt for God's kindness, tolerance, and patience. (Gary R. Osborne regarding Romans 2:1-4)



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RECOGNITION GOES BEYOND TOLERANCE

- An individual we tolerate is the other because we disagree
- An individual we recognize is another because:
 - He/she is a person like me even though we disagree and
 - Deserves respect (Margaret Visser)



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RECOGNITION

- Acknowledges the worth, dignity, and humanity of all
- Remembers that all are made in God's image
- Remembers we are called to love all, as God loves all
- Acknowledges we owe others an effort to understand (Roger Nicole referenced by Timothy George)
- Asks us to be prepared to learn that the other person is correct (Roger Nicole referenced by Timothy George)



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RECOGNITION IN SCRIPTURE

- Be gentle and humble (Philippians 4:5)¹
- Do not insist on your own way, be irritable, or keep a record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5)¹
- Answer questions and challenges to your faith with respect toward the questioner (1 Peter 3:15-16)¹
- Do justice and love kindness (Micah 6:8)
- Be understanding, forgive, make allowances, and give the benefit of the doubt (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)²
- Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you (Luke 6:27-28)

(¹Brad Stetson and Joseph Conti, ²John Stott)



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CHRIST'S EXAMPLE

- Jesus speaks to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-29)
- Jesus invites himself to the home of Zacchaeus, a tax collector (Luke 19:1-10)
- Woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11)



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SMALL GROUPS

- Consider one or two of the three examples of “recognition” by Jesus listed below:
 - Jesus speaks to the Samaritan woman at a well (John 4:1-29)
 - Jesus invites himself to the home of Zacchaeus, a tax collector (Luke 19:1-10)
 - Woman caught in adultery and the law (John 8:1-11)
- Consider the following questions for the two women and Zacchaeus:
 - What were the reasons behind the culture's intolerance?
 - What evidence do you see of Jesus treating each person as “Another” rather than “The Other”?
 - What was the outcome?
 - What similar examples in our culture of reluctant recognition or intolerance come to mind?



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EMPATHY OVER DISTANCE

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14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

(John 1:14)



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DEFINITIONS

▪ Empathy is the ability to connect to someone else's feelings by imagining:

- What it would be like to be in that person's situation
- How you might act if you were in the other's position

(Maia Szalavitz and Bruce D. Perry & Brené Brown)



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DEFINITIONS

- Distance can be reflected in:
 - Apathy and indifference
 - Insensitivity
 - Grim duty (Maia Szalavitz and Bruce D. Perry)
 - Arrogance
 - Scorn
 - Callousness (unkind)
 - Cruelty
 - Dehumanization



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IMPORTANCE OF EMPATHY

- Underlies virtually everything that makes society work
 - Few problems can be solved without empathy
 - We can love because we can empathize
 - Essential to interdependence and oneness
- (Maia Szalavitz and Bruce D. Perry)
- Christ introduced a sweeping revolution—empathy for victims (Rene Girard referenced by Phillip Yancy)



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CHALLENGES TO EMPATHY

- Our culture is declining in social capital [networks of relationships] (Robert D. Putnam, and Maia Szalavitz and Bruce D. Perry)
- Contributions to declining social capital include:
 - Affluence
 - Two-career families
 - Mobility
 - A complex and confusing culture
 - Media
 - Fearmongering and lying in politics
 - Fraud
 - Real or perceived elitism
 - COVID-19



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CHALLENGES TO EMPATHY

- We are not learning how to be empathetic
 - Skills in empathy are caught beginning in infancy (Maia Szalavitz and Bruce D. Perry)
 - Nurturing limited by distraction and chaos in parent's lives, e.g. drug addiction, jobs/careers
- Because of the expansion of social media, no escape from bullying or ridicule
- In the church (Frederica Mathewes-Green)
 - Adopting our culture's sarcastic, smart-alecky, jabbing, and self-righteous tone
 - Considering as enemies those with which we disagree



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EMPATHY SKILLS

- Listening to others and believing them
- Being non-judgmental
- Understanding the feelings of others generated by a negative experience
- Communicating that you understand others' feelings
- Paying attention and then being present to another's pain

(Brené Brown)

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EMPATHY MISSES

- Sympathy: *I feel sorry for you.*
- Judgment: *You should 'feel' shame!*
- Disappointment: *You've let me down.*
- Discharging discomfort with blame: *This feels terrible. Who can I blame? You?*
- Minimize/Avoid: *Let's make this go away.*

(Brené Brown)

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EMPATHY MISSES

- Competing: *You think that's bad!*
- Comparing: *Your complaint is trivial compared to people who are starving by the millions in _____.*
- Speaking Truth to Power: *I can't believe you said that to your boss!*
- Advice Giving/Problem-Solving: *I can fix this and I can fix you*
(Brené Brown)
- Dismissing: *You're smart, you figure it out. Just do it! Find other friends. I hope you learned your lesson. Things are tough all over. Nobody likes a complainer.*



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EMPATHY

- Story of a shot and two memories

**GETTING
A SHOT!**



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EMPATHY & DISTANCE IN SCRIPTURE

- Christ came to earth (John 1:1-18)
- Jesus wept over Lazarus' death and raised him from the dead (John 11:28-44)
- Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-3)
- Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46)
- Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)



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SMALL GROUPS

- Identify examples of empathy and distance in one or two of the scripture passages listed on the previous slide
- How is God and Christ's empathy for humanity seen in these passages?
- What does God and Christ expect from us?
- What consequences do you see for those who distance themselves from those in need, for those who are distanced, and for those who practice empathy?
- What lessons in these passages might apply to the way we think about and act towards others?



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GRACE OVER RETRIBUTION

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Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32)



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THREE TYPES OF JUSTICE

1. Vindictive justice—Retaliation

- It's personal
- It seeks self-vindication and vengeance
- It is neither equitable nor fair (Genesis 4:23-24)

(Based in part on material written by Robert Nozick
presented in an article by David A. Crocker)



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THREE TYPES OF JUSTICE

2. Retributive justice—Proportionate

- It is administered by law and the courts (John Stott)
- Applied via impartiality of a neutral party (judge and jury)
- Punishment no more than what is deserved (Derek Tidball)

(Based in part on material written by Robert Nozick
presented in an article by David A. Crocker)



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THREE TYPES OF JUSTICE

- Restorative justice—Reconciliation through grace
 - It restores community by mending the broken relationship between the afflicter and afflicted (Desmond Tutu)
 - Grace is unmerited (Marilynne Robinson)
 - The afflicted opens the door by an act of sacrifice, forgiveness of the debt (Gary A. Anderson)
 - Relationship can be restored when the afflicted repents (Gregory Jones quoted by Christine A. Scheller)
 - Forgiveness and repentance can be individual or corporate, contemporary or ancestral (D.L. Mayfield)



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GRACE IS THE HEART OF CHRISTIANITY

- Let your speech always be gracious (Colossians 4:6)
- Forgive; just as the Lord has forgiven you (Colossians 3:13)
(Ephesians 4:32)
- Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. (Matthew 5:7)



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GRACE IS THE HEART OF CHRISTIANITY

- Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another (Zechariah 7:9-10)
- The ultimate offer of grace, justification, and reconciliation is found in Christ’s sacrifice (Romans 5:1-2, 6-11)
- “. . . the word above all words is grace.” Grace makes Christianity beautiful. Departure from grace makes Christianity repellent. (Marilynne Robinson)



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LACK OF GRACE IN SOCIETY LEADS TO:

- Self-Justification
 - Absolving the weight of guilt by assuming the role of victim (David C. Brooks)
 - Personal retaliation
- Destruction
 - “There is no future without forgiveness” (Desmond Tutu) because forgiveness breaks the cycle of violence and recrimination for real and perceived wrongs suffered.
 - Grace is “the reason why ourselves and our world are not yet thrown into utter self-destruction.” (Paul Tillich)



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WON'T OUR GRACE PERPETUATE INJUSTICE? —NO

- As private individuals we are called to:
 - Love and serve our enemies (Luke 6:27-28)
 - Not pass judgment
 - Also being sinners (Matthew 7:1-5)
 - Lacking adequate knowledge to judge another (1 Corinthians 4:5)
 - Despising the grace God has given us (Matthew 18:23-35)
 - Despising God's kindness and forbearance and patience (Romans 2:1-4)



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WON'T OUR GRACE PERPETUATE INJUSTICE? —NO

- Not take the law into our own hands and punish offenders (Romans 12:19)
- “The punishment of evil is God's prerogative, and during the present age God exercises it through the law courts.” (John Stott) (Romans 13:1-5)



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CONFRONTING INJUSTICE

- Martin Luther King
 - “Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has consistently refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue.”
- Ghandi
 - A group attempts to stop production at the Dharasana Salt Works
 - Rows of men walk slowly into the British lines, where they are clubbed and beaten
 - A foreign correspondent, called the *New York Times*, and said: “Whatever moral ascendancy the West held was lost here today. India is free. She has taken all that steel and cruelty can give and she has neither cringed nor retreated.”



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WHAT IF SOMEONE I FORGIVE DOES NOT REPENT?

- Forgiveness releases us from the resentment, bitterness, and stress of on-going animosity
- “We think that we are harming others by holding these grudges and hates, but the deeper harm is to ourselves. This is a sorrow that will overwhelm and consume us in the end.” (Linda L. Belleville)
- “Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies.” (Nelson Mandela, although not originator of the concept)



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WHAT IF SOMEONE I FORGIVE DOES NOT REPENT?

Story of a woman protesting in Chicago



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SELF-GRACE OVER SELF-RETRIBUTION

- We often do not love ourselves
- Self-grace includes:
 - Being kind and charitable to oneself (Brené Brown)
 - Accepting compliments gracefully (not making crumbs out of offered cookies) (Earl D. Wilson)
 - Remembering one cannot do more than one's best (Don Miguel Ruiz)
 - Remembering that a failure does not mean that one is a failure (Earl D. Wilson)
 - Remembering God made us enough (Earl D. Wilson)



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SELF-GRACE OVER SELF-RETRIBUTION

- “God’s love is not, and has never been, contingent on us having done enough or done well enough. We proclaim again the gospel of Christ: God’s love is a free unmerited gift.” (Eric McLaughlin)



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SMALL GROUPS

- Read these scripture verses.
- Consider these questions:
 - What is attractive about grace; what are its benefits?
 - When is it easy and when is it hard to forgive?
 - When is it easy and when is it hard accept grace?

- **Colossians 4:6**—Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.
- **Colossians 3:13**—Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
- **Ephesians 4:32**—Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.
- **Matthew 5:7**—Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
- **Zechariah 7:9-10**—Thus says the Lord of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.



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SERVICE OVER SELF

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¹² After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had reclined again, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Very truly, I tell you, slaves are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷ If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

(John 13:12-17)

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SERVICE

“It is very clear that he lives the best and holiest life who lives and strives for himself as little as he can, and that no one lives in a worse or more evil manner than he who lives and strives for himself alone, and thinks about and seeks only his own advantage.”

(John Calvin)



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ORIGINS OF SELF-CENTEREDNESS

- Genesis 3:1-13 tells us that:
 - God allowed humankind, as represented by Adam, to choose to abide with God or not
 - Adam and thus all humankind chose:
 - Self-sufficiency
 - Self-love
 - Self-importance
 - Self-justification
 - Self-enslavement



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SIN

- The essence of sin is self-centeredness (John Stott and Peter Adam)
- The 13 evils listed by Jesus in Mark 7:21-23, are all manifestations of self-centeredness:
 - Evil thoughts
 - Sexual immorality
 - Theft
 - Murder
 - Adultery
 - Avarice (Greed)
 - Wickedness (Malice)
 - Deceit
 - Debauchery
 - Envy
 - Slander
 - Pride
 - Folly



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SIN

- Doctrine of total depravity
 - Every person is inclined to serve their own interests over those of their neighbor and to reject the rule of God (New World Encyclopedia)
 - We find even our good and unselfish actions are tainted in some way by self-service (Reinhold Niebuhr quoted by Alan Jacobs, and John Calvin)



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SERVICE

- The essence of holiness is dying to self (D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones)
- Service is a part of interdependence, looking out not only for one's own interests but seeking what is best for others.
- 1 Peter 4:10— ¹⁰ Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.
- Romans 13:8— ⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.



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SERVICE IS NOT POPULAR

- Our culture “Defines greatness in terms of power, possessions, prestige, and position.” (Rick Warren)
- In Mark 10:35-45 James and John asked to sit to the right and left of Jesus in his kingdom.
 - They coveted:
 - Honor but Jesus offers self-sacrifice
 - Power and authority but Jesus offers service and humility
 - Security and safety but Jesus offers suffering
 - They wanted to “get and rule.” Christ came to give and serve. (John Stott)



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SERVANTS ARE MARKED BY:

- Availability (Luke 10:25-37— The Good Samaritan)
- Indiscriminateness (Mark 9:33-35— Servant to all)
- Continuity (A lifestyle)
- Humility (Philippians 2:1-4— Think more of others than self)
- Hiddenness (Matthew 6:1-4— Not seeking honor or recognition)
- Delight (Satisfaction with no expectation of reciprocation)
- Sacrifice (Romans 12:1— Living sacrifice in thanksgiving for God’s mercy)
- Burden-bearing (Romans 15:1-3— Supporting and building up the weak and dependent)
- Reliance on the gifts and strength that God provides (1 Peter 4:10-11)



(Based in part on material by Richard J. Foster)

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BUT WE WANT TO BE FREE NOT SERVE

- “One is never “free” from a master”
 - Our choice is not “Should I retain my freedom or give it up and submit to God?”
 - Our choice is “Should I serve sin or should I serve God?”
- (Douglas Moo)
- Freedom defined as doing anything one wants does not consider the effect of one’s actions on others and always results in sin



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TRUE FREEDOM

- God made us for loving and self-giving
- True Freedom is not:
 - Freedom from responsibility to God and others
 - Freedom to indulge our fallen nature but to control it
- True freedom is freedom “from a preoccupation with my silly little self to be free to love God and my neighbor”
- Only in self-giving love is an authentically free and human existence to be found

(John Stott)



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IN SERVICE WE ARE:

| Freed from | Instead find: |
|----------------------------------|--|
| The need for self-fulfillment | Contentment |
| The need for status | A place from which we can best serve |
| Self-indulgence | Self-control and simplicity |
| The compulsion to exploit others | Interdependence in mutual service |
| Fear of loss | Confidence in God and neighbor |
| Isolation of self-love | Giving in love for God and others |
| Fickleness of our culture | Certainty in the doing the will of God |



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SMALL GROUPS

- Share examples from you own life or people you know that illustrate:
 - That self-centeredness is slavery to self
 - That true freedom is found in service
- What lessons do you find for your own life in Jesus’s washing of his disciple’s feet (John 13:12-17)



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These materials are based on a concept by and were prepared by John Page (of Cary, NC) in consultation with The Rev. Dr. Paul H. Lang for *The Pilgrimage*, a ministry of the Presbyterian Foundation’s The Institute of Church Renewal, Presbyterian Church (USA)

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