Get Involved with Us as We Pursue Excellence, Value ALL People, Fuel and Display Passion, Choose a Good Attitude at ALL Times

LOVE ACCEPTANCE FORGIVENESS

Is the Gospel for Everyone by Peyton Barker

Follow up to last week's call to action.

Choose one passage of Scripture and sit with it until God unveils something you could not see before. Ask Him to open the curtain — to reveal His character, His ways, and His activity in your life. Then respond by aligning one decision, one attitude, or one action with what He reveals. Let His revelation move you from guessing… to seeing.

Theme: We often say the Gospel is for everyone, but in practice, we tend to reserve it for those we deem "worthy" or "worth the effort." Jesus dismantles our self-centered barriers and calls us to love and share Christ intentionally with all people.

Introduction: The "Gift Box" Dilemma

We readily affirm that God's love is unconditional, yet our actions often contradict this truth. Followers of Christ can easily put God into a "neat gift box" that is only opened for people who seem agreeable, safe, or deserving.

- **Key Question:** Do we share the Good News as if it is meant for one person as much as the next—even those who have hurt us or whom we do not know?

Part 1: Four Reasons We Withhold the Gospel (and How Jesus Responds)

Reason 1: We assume they won't want to hear it.

- **The Heart Issue:** We fear rejection, or we decide someone is a "waste of time" before even trying.
- **How Jesus Responded:** Jesus called disciples not based on their status or readiness, but on what He could do through them. He approached fishermen (**Mark 1:16–20**) and a despised tax collector named Levi (**Mark 2:13–14**), offering a simple invitation: *"Follow me."* Furthermore, Jesus constantly taught large, diverse crowds without hesitation, never letting fear or cynical assumptions stop Him from proclaiming the Kingdom of God.
- **How do we respond?**

Reason 2: Loving broken people is hard, and we aren't willing to do it.

- **The Heart Issue:** Engaging with real brokenness requires effort, emotional investment, and personal risk. Like the Pharisees, we often act like doctors who avoid sick patients to protect ourselves from being "infected" or losing social standing.

- **How Jesus Responded:** Jesus intentionally ate with tax collectors and sinners (**Matthew 9:10–12**), declaring that the healthy do not need a doctor—the sick do. He also physically touched an outcast suffering from leprosy (**Matthew 8:1–4**), crossing ceremonial and societal boundaries to enter directly into human brokenness and shame.
- **How do we respond?**

Reason 3: The hurt we feel is bigger than the love we can muster.

- **The Heart Issue:** Those who have wronged, criticized, or mistreated us are naturally the most difficult to pursue with grace.
- **How Jesus Responded:** Jesus explicitly commanded His followers to love their enemies, bless those who curse them, and do good expecting nothing in return (**Luke 6:27–36**). On the cross, Jesus endured persecution, false accusations, and execution from those He came to save, offering Himself up as the righteous for the unrighteous (**1 Peter 3:18**).
- **How do we respond**

Reason 4: We forget what we were brought from.

- **The Heart Issue:** We become hyper-focused on our present redemption and forget our own spiritual origin. We hold unbelievers to standards only possible for a "new creation," growing self-righteous while ignoring the "log" in our own eye (**Matthew 7:3–5**).
- **How Jesus Responded:** Jesus viewed lost people not with judgment, but with deep compassion—seeing them as *"harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd"* (**Matthew 9:35–38**). He actively pursues the one lost sheep (**Matthew 18:10–13**), reminding us that we, too, were once lost and undeserving.
- **How do we respond**

Part 2: Object Lesson & Reflection

The Comfort Trap (The "Candy Bar & Apple" Lesson)

When we prioritize our personal comfort over the good of others, we refuse to sacrifice even a little to see greater flourishing around us.

- **The Parallel:** Just as holding onto a preferred treat keeps everyone else's overall satisfaction low, hoarding our spiritual comfort prevents others from hearing the Gospel. Our preference for personal ease directly hinders our mission.

"The Least of These"

We must stop viewing "the least of these" as a distant, pitied group. Before Christ, **we are all "the least of these."** None of us can save ourselves, and every single person requires the exact same grace of God.

Group Discussion Questions

1. **Self-Examination:** In what ways do you tend to put God in a "neat gift box"? Is there a specific type of person you find yourself assuming won't care about the Gospel?
2. **Overcoming Fear:** Jesus called Levi (Matthew) and touched the leper without worrying about his reputation or safety. What personal fears or comfort zones hold you back from stepping into broken situations?
3. **Grace for Enemies:** Reading Luke 6:27–36, how can we rely on the Holy Spirit to show love toward someone who has genuinely hurt or offended us?
4. **Remembering Redemption:** How does remembering who you were before Christ change your expectations and patience toward non-believers?

Personal Challenge for the Week

Choose at least **one** of the following actions to put into practice this week:

- [ ] **Reach Out:** Contact someone you have avoided because you feared rejection or assumed they wouldn't listen.
- [ ] **Forgive & Pray:** Pray intentionally for someone who has hurt you, asking God to soften your heart and grant you the willingness to forgive.
- [ ] **Extend Grace:** Recognize a non-believer in your life who is struggling, and extend grace rather than judgment, remembering where Christ brought you from.
- [ ] **Share Boldly:** Tell someone about Jesus this week—loving fiercely and without conditions.