

Who is Love?

[TEACHER NOTE: Tell a story about something you love.]

“Love” is a word that is used a lot these days. Like...

I love CHICKFILA!

I love Rock n Roll

Or

We see someone and are like... “Oh I love those shoes, or Oh I love that purse, or Oh I love that song!”

Some of you love a different boyfriend or girlfriend each week! Your Netflix binges lasts longer.

Sometimes the way that we talk about love is really talking about emotions very different from ‘love’.

Over the next few weeks we are going to talk about the love of Jesus. For some of us, that is weird. You literally think, how can a dead dude love me? A complete stranger, loving me? That is very stalkerish, very creepy. Well we are going to talk about that tonight. In order for us to get there we first have to understand who He is.

1. Who is Jesus?

Matthew 16:13-16 (ESV)

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” 14 And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

So, Jesus has been preaching and teaching for a few years already. He has been all over. There has already been healing of people through the communities in which he was part of! He sits down with his crew and asks, “Who do people think that I am?” They give him all of these crazy answers. Naming all but Jesus. Then Jesus said, “Who do you think I am?” Peter says, “You are Christ, you are who you say you are!”

People saw healings, miracles, and supernatural things. Many even heard Jesus teach but didn't really know who he was.

Peter, the man who spent time with Jesus, knew exactly who he was. Why? He spent time with Him and got to know Him.

Think about when you hear of a friend of a friend. Your one friend tells you how awesome their other friend is. They tell you all the awesome things they do, how funny they are, how nuts they are, how you would just get along so well. You think to yourself, "WOW I THINK I COULD REALLY LIKE THIS PERSON," but until you encounter them yourself you will never know.

This is the same thing with Jesus. You may have heard of Him and that He loves you. But that's all that you know. Well as you go forward in this life **You can know of Jesus or you can know Jesus.**

So many people know of Jesus but they have no relationship. Knowing of someone and being in relationship with them are two different things.

2. Why does Jesus love me?

Many people have wondered if Jesus really loves them. The Bible is clear that no matter what we have done, Jesus does love us. In fact, He promises to both forgive us of every wrong we have done and provide us eternal life if only we will believe in Him.

John 3:16 (ESV)

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

Okay, I get it. We're horrible jerks who don't deserve God's love. Doesn't that mean it's even more likely God would hate me?"

Right now, you may be asking yourself that question (or some variety of it). Many a broken soul, shattered at their state of being has asked this question. The answer is boiled down into three breathtaking words: God is love.

I John 4:8 (ESV)

"Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love."

God chooses to demonstrate His love by lavishing it on us; undeserving people who are in active rebellion against Him. Now, to clarify, God's love is not a romantic love. It is an *agape* love—self-sacrificing love. True love is not based on emotions or feelings, or a moving soundtrack. It is in choosing what is best for another person every day.

God chose to show His love by sending His Son to the cross to pay for our sins (1 John 4:10), by drawing us to Himself (John 6:44), and by sending His Holy Spirit to dwell within us, giving us the ability to love as He loves. None of this was because we deserved it or He felt sorry for us but because He loves us and because He *is* love.

Jeremiah 31:3 (ESV)

"I have loved you with an everlasting love"

Yes, God loved us *before he even created us*. It's impossible to get our heads around that idea, but it's true. That's what "everlasting" love means. God *is* love. It is because of that love and his wonderful creativity, he made us so we can enjoy all that he is and all that he's done.

Simply, **God loves you because he created you to be loved!**

3. Do you believe in Jesus?

Matthew 16:15-18 (ESV)

¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock^[a] I will build my church, and the gates of hell^[b] shall not prevail against it.

Some of you are probably sitting here today thinking, "I don't need Jesus to be a good person... I'm not THAT big of a jerk."

The thing is, Jesus was being compared to other good people. He was being compared to John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, and other prophets. He was seen as a good and Godly person. But apparently, the fact that He was a good person wasn't the answer He was looking for.

It was not enough for Jesus to be seen as a good person. Who He is was going to make all the difference moving forward. He is the son of the living God. This is a crucial identity of Jesus that we cannot move past, and in Jesus' eyes, was a foundational fact that we need to come to individually.

You see, people are going to say a lot of things about Jesus, but He wants to know, "who do *YOU* say that I am?" **Their decision is not your decision.** Jesus is more than just a good, courageous leader—He is THE Messiah.

Why is this so important? Well, if Jesus is not the Son of the living God, then we will simply never know true love. If He isn't the Son of God then He has no authority over death. If He didn't claim authority over sin and death, 1 Corinthians 15:17 says it best:

1 Corinthians 15:17 (ESV)

"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."

Basically, **Jesus changes everything.**

John 14:6 (ESV)

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

As we close up tonight, the question that each and every one of us has to ask ourselves is, "who do *YOU* say that Jesus is?" Your answer to this question is one of the most important answers you will ever give. Is He just a good person, is He a jerk, or is He the Son of the Living God?

If He is just a good person or teacher, then our faith is pointless and meaningless.

If He's a jerk, may I encourage you to continue to come back these next few weeks as we learn about how He is by far the opposite of a jerk? My hope is that you would be pleasantly surprised as to what Jesus is actually like.

But if He is the Son of the Living God, then this should change everything about your life. You have encountered love itself. You have encountered the Living God Himself. And He desires to be in relationship with all of us! Everything that He commands, everything that He teaches, should change so much about us that we can't help but not be in awe of the one that IS love...

Have you encountered this kind of love that would give Himself for us? If not, then **who do you say that He is?**