

Jesus calls us to turn from what is normal and dare to be like Him. Jesus' way is loving, caring, giving and generous. It is not contentious, rude or judgmental (see 1 Cor 13:4-7 to see love defined).

*18 Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." - Matthew 28:18-20 NLT*

*When Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, He demonstrated an attitude of humility and service. We might typically equate that with weakness. How does Mark 28:18 refute that idea? What are we commanded to teach new disciples to do? Have you recently encouraged others through your love and sacrifice to do likewise? If you have allowed your energy and passion to be spent on your cause, your team, your candidate, or your "tribe" (whatever that might be) this is a good time to repent and remember that you are a child of the God and a disciple of the servant-king. He exemplified love and unity, and He calls us to follow Him.*

### **WRAP-UP**

It is easy to get caught up in the fervor of the causes we feel strongly about. But that can lead us to viewing anyone who disagrees as those "others", and our "enemy". The results are wounds, fractured relationships, and divisions that are the opposite of what Jesus taught. Rather than building bridges and walls, Jesus broke down walls and barriers. He came humbly as a servant to draw all men unto Him and He calls us to do the same as we follow Him.

### **MEMORY VERSE**

*So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. - John 13:34 NLT*

*Challenge – Ask yourself if you've allowed the culture or popular opinion to interpret God's word for you where Jesus' teaching is challenging. If so, spend some quiet time asking God to give you His heart and perspective as you wrestle with things that challenge you.*

## **Seeing Image Bearers as Enemies**

Known For It #2

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is impossible to ignore the division lines being drawn in 2024. Be it globally, nationally, or locally, the sides are being defined and we are finding our way to the ones that seem to fit us best. We see nation against nation, Republican versus Democrat, even 49's taking on whoever (Ravens?). People are choosing sides. And when we choose a side, there will be people on the "other" side. Who are they? Do we see them as the enemy if they disagree with us, speak a different language, vote for a different party, or even follow a different religion? How would Jesus treat them if He encountered them today? We need to redefine our "tribe" so that it is not dictated by the culture surrounding us, but rather, by the viewpoint of God exemplified by the life of Jesus. We are all created in God's image, and we are called to treat one another differently than the world treats "others". We are called to love one another, and even to love our enemy.

### **Ice Breaker**

If you are a sports fan, what is your favorite team?

### **Key Passage**

*43 "You have heard the law that says, 'Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy. 44 But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! 45 In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike.*

*- Matthew 5:43-45 NLT*

### **STUDY QUESTIONS**

#### **1. Shaped by the Cultural Narrative**

The way we choose to live our lives is shaped by many competing voices. As a Christian, we want to be shaped by Jesus and God's Word. But we live in a culture that doesn't always line up with that.

*43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, - Matthew 5:43-44 NIV*

In our key verse, Jesus begins with “You have heard... “and concludes with “But I say...” Even in His time, people were listening to the voices around them as a guide as to how they should live. Here is what the voices around us are saying today that might shape your thinking in ways that don’t line up with what Jesus taught us:

“Protect “Our Tribe” at all costs.”

*Who do you identify as your community or communities (“tribes”)?* Our “tribe” tends to be people who are a lot like us. There is something, or many things, that we agree on. Our values align and that makes us feel comfortable around them. But, then there are the “others” who really don’t belong in our group. The closer we bond with “our people”, the more we are distanced from the “others”. In fact, if we view the others as a threat to “us”, we may see them as the enemy.

*What does Jesus tell us is commonly said about how we treat our enemy, and what does He teach us to do instead? Can you think of some “others” you may have considered to be your “enemy” and what it would mean for you to love and pray for them?*

This is counter to all our natural instincts, and in our own power, frankly it is impossible. But we have a power available that makes this possible. It is only by allowing the Holy Spirit to live and love through us that we can love our enemy. And that’s what Jesus commanded.

## **2. The Cost to You**

*18 Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. 19 We love each other because he loved us first. - 1 John 4:18-19 NLT*

*6 So we can say with confidence, "The LORD is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?" - Hebrews 13:6 NLT*

Where we see enemies, we find fear. When we listen to conventional wisdom and believe the characterization of those “others” by the

name-calling and dehumanization that is so prominent in our time, it may cost you your closest relationships- family, friends or neighbors who are from a different tribe. We stop seeing the individual and only see their ideology, race, or religion. We can find ourselves anxious about what “they” might do that will harm “us” and so we fear “them”.

*What does 1 John 4:18 tell us is the antidote to fear? If we trust God and His love for both us and them, we have no need to fear.*

*There is another source of anxiety and fear that comes from disagreeing with your “tribe”. What happens when we speak God’s truth to “our people” even if it is unpopular? How much do you fear being rejected, ridiculed, or even targeted as a traitor to your side?*

## **3. Unity and Love in God’s Family**

*26 For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. 28 There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you. - Galatians 3:26-29 NLT*

*34 So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. 35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." - John 13:34-35 NLT*

Jesus’ tribe is open to all who will come, and the hallmark of Jesus’ family and God’s kingdom is love and unity, not strife and division. Jesus’ followers come from different economic classes, ethnicities, even different political persuasions. We are citizens of God’s kingdom first, and anything else should be a distant second.

*In Galatians 3 what barriers did Jesus specifically mention that were removed when we became His followers? How are they represented in our culture (e.g. we don’t have slaves)? What other barriers divide us from fellow believers?*

*14 And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. 15 I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. - John 13:14-15 NLT*