



## SERMON BASED | SMALL GROUP NOTES FALL 2017

Message Series: Unlearning Religion  
Message Title: Love Causes Change  
Speaker: Pastor Kevin Myers  
Date: November 5, 2017

### Icebreaker

If you have kids, what is it like to go out to dinner now vs. pre-children? What changed the most?

If you are married, what change in you has been the most obvious?

### Message Overview

This series has focused on the section of the Sermon on the Mount beginning with "Do not judge. . ." PK has been unpacking Matthew 7:1-12 over the past three weeks. In week one, he used the illustration of a high jump bar. By adding to the law, the Pharisees raised the bar, which is condemning. The world wants to remove the bar, doing away with the law, which is condoning. But Jesus lifts you over the bar, which is transforming (vs. 1-2). In week two, we heard that God is asking us to aim higher. We don't learn from the Bible for information, so that we can hold it up as a standard that is unreachable, but we desire to learn more about God and grow in our relationship with him because we know that God wishes to transform us as a blessing. We learned that religion based on knowledge *about* God implies arrival, but a relationship *with* God is in flight—a process of being transformed (vs. 3-5). Week three revisited these verses and added to our understanding of Jesus' teaching through verses 6-12.

### Discussion

#### **When you come to faith in Jesus, you don't change the bar, you change yourself!**

Read Matthew 7:7-12. Jesus tells us that we should ask God for what we need, because God gives us good gifts. God does not treat us as our sin deserves. He loves us like no one else. God's love is extravagant.

Read Luke 15:11-32. The prodigal son went out on his own without his father, not realizing that his father loved him more than he ever knew. When he came to his senses, he returned home, hoping to at least be a servant to his dad. The father (representing God in the story) did not judge, but showed extravagant love.

- When we are loved so extravagantly, what should our response be? What obstacles keep you from feeling God's extravagant love?
- What keeps you from sharing God's extravagant love to others?

PK highlighted the law of love over the law of selfishness. PK described how he learned to share with Marcia. When their shared bagel was cut in half, he would always give her the

bigger half. This is the law of love: giving more than you take. Jesus said God knows how to give good gifts. He doesn't hold back. He gives us the best of what he has to offer. Like the father of the prodigal son, He welcomes us when we come to Him. The world often operates under the law of selfishness: getting more than you give. God operates under the law of love, and He wants us to have the same extravagant love for others. When we love others, we can then celebrate when they understand the truth and receive God's best for them in life.

- What are some practical areas where you can give more than you take?
- Is there someone you are currently praying for to receive the Truth of God? (Pray as a group for individuals who are named.)

As the father said to the prodigal son's jealous, judging brother, "we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:32). He corrected this son who was upset that his prodigal brother got good gifts from his father by reminding him that when someone finds the truth, we don't judge, we celebrate!

- The church can sometimes be the judgmental brother. Have you had experiences, before you were a Christian (BC) or as a young Christian, of feeling judged?
- Do you ever feel yourself judging others, holding them to a higher standard than they understand?

Read John 14:6. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." The "bar" is set by Jesus, because He didn't just tell the truth, He *is* the truth. When we become followers of Christ, we adjust our lives to Jesus' teaching and life. We make Him the new standard in our life. And we adjust our lives to love like He loves, giving more than we take.

- Jesus said, "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matthew 7:12). Who gets the best you have to offer? Do you examine what you have and give of yourself in this sacrificial way? Which half of the bagel are you sharing with others?
- How can you start giving more than you take?

### **Don't expect the world to change to God's laws before they have been changed by God's love!**

There are four parts to the teaching in Matthew 7:1-12:

1. Don't judge.
2. Do discern.
3. Pray.
4. Love others.

Read Matthew 7:6. "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces."

We need to discern where people are and what they are able to understand. If they do not yet know the Truth, how can they know where the bar is that you are expecting them to rise above? PK said sometimes the church is demanding that the world live up to a moral code, before they are changed by God - "expecting redeemed behavior from unredeemed people." What they need first isn't the moral code, but the love of God. PK warned people in the

church to not give so much grace to each other that we never become the light, and so much grief to the world that they never see God's love.

- When we are reaching out to people who are not yet Christians, are we shining the light and giving more than we take, or do you find yourself holding them to a moral standard that they are incapable of achieving on their own?
- Of the four parts of PK's teaching on this part of the Sermon on the Mount listed above, which of the four would you say is the most challenging to you?
- Do you find yourself judging others?
- Do you need help discerning where others are at spiritually so that you can lead with love?
- In the midst of life, between not judging others and loving them, Jesus encourages us to pray. Is prayer a challenge for you? How might your relationships with others change if you prayed more?
- How well do you model the golden rule? Can others see the light in your interactions with them? How can you better practice giving more than you get?

#### Wrap Up / Close

PK said, "Love makes you change." We see it in our relationships with others; do you see it in your relationship with God? Do others see change in you as you are "in flight" with Him? Pray together to set aside judgment in order to discern where others are spiritually, that you will be able to love others and give to them what you would want them to give to you.

#### Throughout the Week (Optional)

Next week, Operation Christmas Child boxes will be available. As you plan how your family might give to this and to the Christmas offering, think through this week's teaching. Who gets the bigger piece of your bagel? How extravagant is your love for others?