

WEEK 7 - How does Jesus interact with the people we jump to judge?

Spring Emphasis 2024 // Canopy Guide

Love Your Neighbor

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Use the questions below to kickstart a community building, all-play conversation that connects to our weekly topic. If your group meets for dinner, these might be great questions to share around a table.

- What role do stereotypes play in our interactions with others?
- What is the difference between judgment (judging) and discernment?
- What is your initial response when you disagree with someone? Are you vocal about it or do you prefer to keep it quiet?

STUDY GUIDE

The year is 2020. A global pandemic has rocked the world and has caused a deep divide in how it has been handled. Masks and mask mandates pit people against each other in ways we haven't seen before. Vaccines and their production and testing become a hot topic causing even more division. A presidential election rife with conflict has caused rifts in families, friends, and congregations.

Fast forward to 2024. While the global pandemic has calmed down some since 2020, it is another presidential election year. While an election is not the only thing that causes division in a congregation and community, it is one that causes strong, loud divisions. It is likely that you sit in a pew with someone who will vote differently than you. You probably have family members who you cannot talk about politics with because it will lead to arguments or estrangement. You certainly live in a neighborhood where you will see signs for candidates that you don't agree with.

So how do we love these neighbors - the ones we don't agree with, the ones we jump to judge based on the signs in their yard or their posts on social media? How did Jesus and His followers love those they disagreed with?

Jesus had the advantage of being God - He knew what was right and what was wrong. It

wasn't about opinions or gray areas (especially with the Pharisees), but that doesn't mean that He still didn't love them. He rebuked them, but still loved them. He was judged, beaten, and put to death by them, and still on the cross said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing."

Paul and Barnabas had a sharp disagreement over John Mark, who had deserted them. This disagreement was so difficult that Paul and Barnabas ended up going their separate ways and the Gospel was spread farther than it would have been had they stayed together. Even in difficult disagreement, God still works. They did eventually come back together in forgiveness and love.

Disagreement can be a hard place to love our neighbor, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't.

Scripture to Read

- Luke 19:1-10
- Matthew 23:13
- Acts 15:36-41

Deeper Discussion Questions

1. When we come up against someone we disagree with, what should our response as Christians be? How has this played out in your relationships?
2. How different are your responses to disagreement when the person is one you have a relationship with? A person you just met in the checkout line? A family member? A nonbeliever?

PRAYER

Make sure to claim some time as a group each week to pray specifically for each other.

EXTRA RESOURCES/ARTICLES/RESEARCH

1. YouTube TEDx [“How to Deal with Difficult People”](#)
2. YouTube, Our Daily Bread, [“A Christian’s Response to Politics - Daily Devotion”](#)
3. See Jesus Podcast: [Judging vs. Compassion](#)

***LEADER NOTE**

You may notice that this week the video and canopy guide have different emphases. The video zooms in more on snap judgments/gut instincts we tend to make upon a first impression while the discussion guide opens the door to include differences of political

opinion. This was intentional on our part to offer you the ability to take the discussion down the road that your group needs to travel as you grow to love your neighbor in a more Christlike way. You're welcome to tackle both or either as you see fit - but we certainly encourage you not to actually tackle each other. The space you're creating is one where we hope Christians can engage in healthy dialogue without agreeing 100% with each other, but you also know how your group is wired at this point so guide them accordingly. -KW