

Basic Training

Part 1: Wage Love on Everyone Always

Discuss your “mission for this week.” Who has completed it? What happened?

This week’s mission:

Write a note or card expressing appreciation to someone you have a disagreement with.

- **The disagreement may be over any issue, including but not limited to - politics, religion, life choices, morality, family matters, social issues, personal issues, etc...**
- **The note or card should ideally be hand-written, but email and other forms of electronic communication are acceptable.**
- **Include not only what you appreciate about them, but also things you admire about them.**
- **Pray before writing the note asking God to give you the words to say.**
- **For those seeking the medal of honor: Do an “act of service” for them.**

Without getting into a discussion on these issues (at this time), list some of the issues that divide people **globally** today. (*Only list global issues, such as global warming, human rights, terrorism, conservation, poaching of whales and endangered species, etc...*)

What are some of the major issues dividing people in the **US**? (*Immigration, gun control, abortion/reproductive rights, the death penalty, same-sex marriage, animal rights, etc...*)

What are some of the issues that divide **families** that have not been mentioned already? [*Encourage people to try to think of issues or situations unique to families, such as financial issues, how to deal with a family member’s substance abuse, an out-of-control behavioral issue, co-dependence, inheritance distribution, etc...*]

Do all the things that tend to divide people have anything in common?

Assuming that most people are *relatively* good, descent, fairly intelligent, compassionate people, what are some reason why people might be divided on these kinds of issues today?

Jesus had both a “zealot” and a “tax collector” in his inner circle of 12 disciples. Why is this significant?

Based on Pastor Jim’s description of those two ideologies, which side would you have favored? Why? (Below is the excerpt transcribed from the sermon)

“In Jesus own day there were deep ideological divisions among those living in Israel. The country was under Roman occupation, and on one side there were those who were committed to doing everything they could to fight against Rome. They hated the fact that they were under the thumb of these godless heathen Roman oppressors who abused them, took advantage of them, and forced them to pay outrageous taxes. They couldn’t imagine how anyone could be a decent person in their right mind and not think the way they did. The people who were most passionate about this became an organized faction known as the Zealots. They were in one ideological camp.

In another ideological camp there were those living in Israel who were of the opinion that if they didn’t give the Romans so much grief they might ease up on them a little. After all, virtually the entire civilized world was under Roman rule and living quite happily. The Romans brought about the Pax Romana - the peace of Rome - and offered protection, increased trade, and generally granted them freedom. So, they tried to find ways to cooperate with their Roman occupiers and try to assimilate.

Among the people who thought this way were the tax collectors. (If we were living in the first century we would have heard an audible hiss from the crowd and a murmur of disgust at the very mention of the words “tax collector.”)

Two polar opposite ideologies - Zealots and tax collectors. Interestingly, Jesus had at least one zealot and one tax collector in his inner circle - his twelve closest followers. They were with each other almost continually for the better part of three years! I can imagine that must have made for some fairly lively conversations around the camp fire at times. Imagine if Jesus had chosen both Jimmy Kimmell and Sean Hannity to be in his inner circle of disciples who basically went everywhere together. Fun times.

Which side did Jesus favor - the side of the zealots or the side of the tax-collectors?

At the end of the message, Pastor Jim said *“In order for a bird to fly it has to have a left wing and a right wing. Otherwise it will just go around in circles.”* What do you think he was referring to? Do you agree or disagree?

READ Romans 14:1-4

“Accept other believers who are weak in faith, and don’t argue with them about disputable matters - what they think is right or wrong. For instance, one person believes it’s all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables. Those who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those who don’t. And those who don’t eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them. Who are you to condemn someone else’s servants? Their own master will judge whether they stand or fall. And with the Lord’s help, they will stand and receive his approval.” Romans 14:1–4 (NLT)

What are some **indisputable** matters for a Jesus follower?
What kinds of issues are disputable for a Jesus Follower?

What is the “Greatest Commandment?” [Reference Luke 10:25-37]

According to Jesus, who is your neighbor? [See above, parable of the Good Samaritan. Samaritans were despised by the Jews.]

According to Jesus, what’s the difference between your neighbor and your enemy?

READ Luke 6:27-37

*“But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don’t try to get them back. Do to others as you would like them to do to you. “If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much! And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get credit? Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return. “Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate. “Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven.”
Luke 6:27–37 (NLT)*

Has someone every been judgmental toward you?
Describe a person who is “judgmental”.
Have you ever been judgmental toward someone else?

Has there ever been a time where you have worked so hard to make a point that you lost your opportunity to make a difference? If you could do it over again, what would you have done differently?

Fill in the blank: **Our primary objective as Jesus followers to to help people _____ the truth.** [Answer - “embrace”] Do you agree or disagree? Why?

What insights does the following verse provide about the war we are called to engage in as Jesus followers (including it’s reference to “the truth”)?

READ: Ephesians 6:10-17

“A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on every piece of God’s armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God’s righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Ephesians 6:10–17 (NLT)