

life groups' sermon guide

extreme moves – extravagant love



Life Groups exist at Kingsway to provide authentic relationships for the life application of the Core 4 elements of worship, grow, serve, and share.

“When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! I will go home to my father and say, “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as your hired servant.”’...” So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him”.

Luke 15:17-19, 20

“The art of love is largely the art of persistence.” ~Albert Ellis

This year when spring came, my young children were ready to play outside. They were excited, but I was nervous. I laid out the ground rules very carefully: 1. Stay in our yard. 2. Don't go past the sidewalk. 3. Always stay where I can see you. I found myself frequently saying, “That's too far!”. Most of the time, the kids listened to my warning, but once in awhile, I had to run toward the street giving physical redirection as I reminded them, “THAT'S TOO FAR!”. We only had to play outside a few times until they understood the parameters clearly. Then came the day when my son was determined to break the rules, and eager to learn the consequence. My job as a parent became careful consistency, persistence, determination equal to my son's, and a pursuit to ensure his safety.

Q: Identify a time when you have been persistent with someone, or someone has been persistent with you. What came about as a result of that persistence?

There are challenges for us daily as people striving to love and serve God. We have the ground rules, but occasionally we find ourselves nearer the boundaries than we planned. There are also times when, admittedly, we fail to heed those rules for our lives that protect us and give us God's best. It is often easy to see when others are pushing the limits, but more challenging to see our own shortcomings.

Q: Think about the rules or boundaries you observe in your own life, according to Scripture, or otherwise. When you find yourself outside those boundaries, what feelings does this evoke?

Q: Have you experienced feeling unforgivable? If yes, what are you learning about forgiveness?

We all have something in our lives where we identify God calling to us as we look back, “That's too far!”. There are times when we have run from God, intentionally, toward something else for some specific purpose. Other times we have wandered so gradually that we didn't even notice. When we come to realization about our separation from God, Satan wants to take hold of our thoughts and convince us that God can't or won't reach out and accept us in our return.

John 8:44 calls Satan the father of lies. He even uses the Scriptures to plant doubt by misinterpreting them and challenging our thoughts (as in Luke 4:9-11). Satan is waging a war with our thoughts. He plants doubt, discouragement, and defeat within us. He distracts us from our best intentions and delays the good we plan to do.

Q: Which of Satan's tactics is most challenging for you? Why? What do you use to refute such attacks?

The Bible repeatedly shows us examples of God and his people. We see throughout Scripture times when people have wandered, failed, and even run in rebellion from God's leading. Each of these examples shows us the nature of God.

Consider Jonah. Jonah was God's prophet who deliberately disobeyed. Jonah 1:3 tells us, "Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the Lord". The people of Ninevah were not Israelites, and Jonah did not want to proclaim God's message to them. He didn't want them to have the chance to be saved. But Jonah's running fulfilled God's purposes.

Read Jonah 1:9-11, 16 and Jonah 2:1

Q: What happened as a result of Jonah running?

God was powerfully working through his prophet's failure. Unsuspecting sailors worshiped the living God, and a powerful storm and mighty provision for Jonah led him to repentance. God accepted that repentance from Jonah, and gave him another chance to do what was right. As a result of Jonah's obedience, another great move of God was accomplished.

Read Jonah 3:5, 10

Q: What happened as a result of Jonah's obedience?

Jonah knew that God was merciful and compassionate with unfailing love (Jonah 4:2). In pursuing Jonah as he was running, God showed his amazing power, his great forgiveness to those who repent, and his desire for the saved to extend compassion to others (Jonah 4:4).

Paul is another example of God's power and love in the midst of horrific circumstances. We learn in Acts that Saul (Paul) was a Jew, one of God's chosen people. He was actively seeking to destroy the church (Acts 8:3). Raised as a Pharisee, and a citizen of Rome, Paul was politically positioned with power to arrest and imprison Christ-followers. God could have hardened his heart, so that he would not understand or accept Christ. He could have punished him harshly for his terrible treatment of Christians. Instead, God called Paul as a pivotal witness for Christ to both Jews and Gentiles. He was God's enemy, but not too far for God to reach.

The nature of Satan is deceit and hatred. He would have us believe that we are unreachable, or that others we judge are unreachable. But the power of God is his ability to reach us, no matter how far we have run, and to use the circumstances for his ultimate glory.

Read Romans 5:8; Romans 8:35-39; Ephesians 3:18

Q: What do these Scriptures show us about the magnitude of God's love?

God is everywhere. He knows everything. He sees our hearts. He loves us anyway. He loves us with extravagance. He paid a price, more than we deserve, so that we could be in relationship with him. We are loved without measure, and because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we are God's own children. God is patient with us, and he is persistent. His nature and his love are unchanging, they are reliable. They are worthy of everything we can offer.

Q: What do you need to do in response to God's great, unchanging, persistent, reliable love? Have you accepted it? Are you sharing it?

