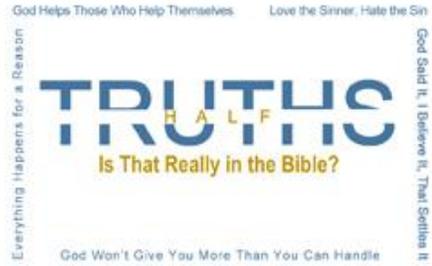


Crossroads Daily Guide
Week of May8, 2016
Love the sinner, hate the sin



Sunday May 8, 2016

Romans 3:23 (CEB) – All have sinned and fall short of God’s glory.

Reflection: The general meaning of “sin” as used in scripture is missing the mark, or living outside of God’s loving intention for our lives. No matter how much we want to live by the example of Jesus we will “fall short” of that mark. It is important for us to remember this when we are tempted to label or judge others as “sinners”. Jesus encouraged people to examine their own lives first. Judging and hating the “sins” of others can blind us from seeing our own shortcomings. Is it easier for you to see “sin” in other people’s actions than in your own? Can you really love someone if you are judging the person?

Breath Prayer: Inhale: *Let the rule of my life...* Exhale: *be love - period.*

Monday May 9, 2016

Mark 12:28b-30 (CEB) “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus replied, “The most important one is Israel, listen! Our God is the one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

Reflection: People in Jesus’ time lived by a complicated and extensive set of religious rules or commandments. His followers were trying to make sense of what was required to live a godly life. Jesus said it simply beautifully - Love God with your whole being and love your neighbor. That’s it. In another place he said all the laws and writings of the prophets are summed up with those few words. It reminds us to be in harmony with God and with everyone around us. In simple language this rule of love is still the best way to understand the best way for us to honor God and others from all different perspectives. How might this rule of love help you to love others in spite of their “sin”?

Breath Prayer: Inhale: *Let the rule of my life...* Exhale: *be love - period.*

Tuesday May 10, 2016

Matthew 7: 1-5 (CEV) Don’t condemn others...You can see the speck in your friend’s eye, but you don’t notice the log in your own eye... First, take the log out of your own eye. Then you can see how to take the speck out of your friend’s eye.

Reflection: Jesus always encouraged people to look into their own hearts first. He made it very clear that it is not our place to judge or condemn others. That is what we are doing when we try to identify and label other people’s behaviors. Too often, if we are really honest with ourselves, pointing out someone else’s shortcomings is a subtle way of making us feel better about our own behaviors. It can lead to a dangerous sense of self-righteousness, something Jesus constantly warned people about. How might the Holy Spirit help you replace things like ill will, pretense, envy and slander with more caring attitudes and acceptance of others? Who determines what “sin” is or is not?

Breath Prayer: Inhale: *Let the rule of my life...* Exhale: *be love – period.*

Wednesday May 11, 2016

Matthew 5:43-45 (CEB) You have heard that it was said, You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who harass you so that you will be acting as children of your Father who is in heaven. He makes the sun rise on both the evil and the good and sends rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous.

Reflection: Jesus was really clear in his teaching that we are to love *everyone*. In this scripture he shows us that God makes the sun rise on both the evil and the good. The rain falls on everyone equally not based on his or her behavior. If God can treat people the same, then we must be willing to love in the same kind of broad and expansive way. Who are the most difficult people for you to love - i.e. different class, different nationality, different religion, different politics, etc.? How do you feel about Jesus saying that the rain falls on all people the same? How does that saying have practical implication for your life today?

Breath Prayer: Inhale: *Let the rule of my life...* Exhale: *be love - period.*

Thursday May 12, 2016

Philippians 4:8 (CEB) ...brothers and sisters, if anything is excellent and if anything is admirable, focus your thoughts on these things: all that is true, all that is holy, all that is just, all that is pure, all that is lovely, and all that is worthy of praise.

Reflection: This sentence, hate the sinner, is counter to the Biblical teaching of where we are to focus our attention. Read through the verse above again slowly. In light of your own daily experience would you say you focus most of your attention on what is excellent, admirable, true, holy, just, pure, lovely and worthy of praise? We are bombarded hourly with negative and violent words and images in all forms of media. It is really difficult to take the responsibility for what gets our attention. We can chose to allow our eyes, our minds and our hearts to be flooded with the negative, but we can also chose not to allow ourselves to be drawn into the flood of negativity with which we are constantly bombarded. This is why spiritual practices like: centering prayer, mindfulness, silence and solitude are so important to practice regularly. What practices do you engage to help redirect your brain from negative judgment to a more positive focus of your thoughts? You might want to check out <http://www.themindfulchristian.net/>

Breath Prayer: Inhale: *Let the rule of my life...* Exhale: *Be love - period.*

Friday May 13, 2016

John 8:10 - 11 Jesus stood up and asked her, "Where are your accusers? Isn't there anyone left to accuse you?" "No sir", the woman answered. Then Jesus told her, "I am not going to accuse you either. You may go now, but don't sin anymore".

Reflection: A woman who was caught in the act of adultery was brought to Jesus with the goal of having Jesus condemn her and approve of her being stoned to death. Notice only the woman was brought to Jesus. There was no condemnation of the man who was with her. Jesus disappointed the pious ones who brought the woman to him by asking them to reflect on their own lives and if there was one among them who had never sinned. If so the person was free to throw the first stone. Of course there was no one there who had never sinned. In this story Jesus gives us the model for responding. Before we label someone else as a "sinner", we should look into our own hearts. Judge not. Love all of our neighbors as we love ourselves. Knowing that there

is both love and hatred in your heart at the same time which one do you listen to most? Again, what practices do you have to listen to the voice of love more than the voice of hate?

Breath Prayer: Inhale: *Let the rule of my life...* Exhale: *be love – period.*

Saturday May 14, 2016

Romans 3:23 (CEB) All have sinned and fall short of God's glory.

Reflection: Let's return to the first verse of the week. All of us have sinned, we fall short of God's wonderful intention for our lives. When we are tempted to fall into using this old saying, "Love the sinner, hate the sin", the most important thing for us to remember is we all fall short. Even so we can still connect more deeply with God's Spirit allowing it to guide and shape our lives and our attitudes so that we can become more loving and more accepting. As followers of Jesus we must be careful not to let anyone's behavior, habits or lifestyle choices cause us to separate ourselves from them. We are all beloved children of God, made in God's image, filled with the very breath of God. May we breathe in the mercy and compassion of God and breathe out the love and acceptance of Christ on everyone we meet. If someone does fall short does that really make him or her a "sinner"? Are we to continue holding their falling short against them while saying we still love them? Is that even possible?

Breath Prayer: Inhale: *Let the rule of my life...* Exhale: *be love - period.*