

Love Reaches!

Part 4: "All the Way Out to the Less Good Side!"

"Jesus is calling each one of us, by name, to come out... to live this abundant life... and that can be scary!"

Approaching our second topic in our "Love Reaches" Series! And after our love reaches up to God, the source of our lives... After hearing His voice for the work and ministry ahead of us... Our love has to reach out... sideways!

Two "sides..." *Where there are two sides, there is an implied good and bad side!*

There is the good, "familiar" side... With the people who are in the same place as we are! Family, friends... likeminded, like-interests, loveable, love us (at least "like").

There is the less good, "unfamiliar!" Unfriends, frenemies, people who are tough on us, hard to take, dissimilar!

The "good" side... Is for building us up, patching us up, helping us get back on track! Not always good for "wrecking" us... More "emery board mani's" than "iron man sharpening iron!" More cheerleading than challenging! More pillow fluffing and comforter tucking than pulling back the covers! We'll come back to this another day...

The 'Less good' but more effective side... is for checking us out, testing our strength, keeping us honest! To see if we can operate in the dark! If we can't operate in the dark how do we expect to be effective in the world? "It is impossible that in the world you won't have offences..." **Lk17.1** But are you of good cheer? **J16.33** Do you count it as "joy?" **Jam1.2** Or do you go off track, offended/hard?

How can we operate with an eternal God if a merely human offense, which we cannot avoid, can change our course?

Want to take you far out on the edge... to those who "curse and persecute you!" So that we know what it takes to stay on track with God in the extreme... just like Jesus!

Matthew 5.44-48 *Love* your enemies, *bless* them that curse you, *do good to them* that hate you, and *pray* for them which spitefully use you and persecute you; That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love them which love you, what reward do you have? Even the unsaved do the same! And if you salute your brothers only, what more is that than others? Don't even the unsaved do that? Be perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

How can we honestly love, bless, do good to, and pray for those who are mean to us unless we see some value?

Matthew 5.44-48 (paraphrased) Love your enemies. *Let them bring out the best in you.* When they give you a hard time, *prove your God-created connection.* Do what He does. God gives His best to everyone, the good, bad, nice and nasty. Don't expect a bonus if all you do is love the lovable! Everyone does that. *Grow up in God* so that you can be like your heavenly Father!

Difficult, even mean, people can often do more for us than our family and friends!

Core Scripture for the Principle! **2Samuel 16.5ff** A man named Shimei cursed David and threw stones at him and his friends... "Get out of here you bloody man!" Then one of his soldiers said, let me go over and cut off the head

of this dog! But David said, leave him alone, *the Lord is chastening my soul. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and will requite me good for his cursing this day.*

Good... from the edge!

Many times a “mocker” is expressing the sentiments of a larger group! (How often do we share the sentiment of what another person is voicing?) Listen to what people are saying and ask, “what’s in this for me?” “Lord, what do I need to see/change?” “Are my perceptions of myself skewed?”

“Don’t I want to know?”

Good... from the edge!

These “offenses” come because you are His and “we” are human! David’s sin was no greater than any other! But this fallen “friend of God” living out the consequences/easy target! People love attributing one failure to your whole life! Makes them feel better about themselves! “You’re no better than me!” (GOT IT!)

“Lord let me remember we are all human and broken!”

Good... from the edge!

These “offenses” always “hit” when our defenses are weakened! Most malice is dormant until the fear of retaliation is diminished! Kicking happens while we’re down!

But that limits the assault to a duration!

More Good... from the edge!

God can use each element for good!

We don’t have to defend!

LORD, KEEP ME FROM OFFENDING SOMEONE ELSE!

“Blessed are those who are not offended in Me...” Lk 7.23 And we are blessed when we grow in the midst of our adversity!

People from the edge... *Can put you in a low yield position or propel us to a high yield portfolio!* “There are people who hear and receive the word with joy but because they have no stabilization in their lives they only endure for a while. When trouble and opposition arise because of the word they are offended (and wither)!”

Mt13.20ff

Exercise with offenders can deepen your roots!

People from the edge... *Can help you see if you are at risk! Mt 15.12* “Every plant My Father didn’t plant will be uprooted. Leave them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind and both will fall in a ditch!” (Religiously delicate!) Anyone want to be uprooted, left alone, blinded and fallen in a ditch?

Exercise with offenders can keep you from falling!

People from the edge... *Can help you see if you are a risk! Mt24.10* Offended people fall away from God! “*He didn’t protect them from harm...*” Offended people often become betrayers of others... “*I don’t have to protect them...*” Offended people often fall into hate... “*I hate what you did to me and now I hate you too...*”

Experience with offenders can keep you in love!

The Gospel is scary because it is dangerous...!