

March 17, 2022

Love God. Love People.

[Acts 10:34-43](#)

Peter said, "I am really learning that God doesn't show partiality to one group of people over another." Acts 10:34

When I arrived at Forrest Burdette Memorial UMC in Hurricane, one of the first things that was given to me was a t-shirt that read, "Love God. Love People." I was delighted to receive this and felt an instant connection to the congregation. In the past few years, I have become more convicted that this is what God requires of me.

Jesus said, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind." And "You must love your neighbor as you love yourself." (Mt 22:37 CEB). Jesus told us that our "neighbor" was more than just those who live next door.

Loving people isn't always easy. As I try to follow this life command, I identify with Peter as he struggles with learning that God doesn't show partiality to one group of people over another.

Have you ever been the "different" person in a group? When we lived in England for several years, I learned that things I assumed were the same for everyone weren't necessarily universal. The words we used for items weren't the same and sometimes this meant moments of misunderstanding and embarrassment!

The hymns we sang weren't always familiar or were sung to different tunes. Some behaviors which we felt were rude or boorish were easily accepted there. More than once I had to plead ignorance when I trampled on some social norm.

Some food we ate was new to us, and I learned that you didn't serve savory and sweet foods together (could be why British children don't eat peanut butter and jelly!) or that people found it amusing that Americans serve salad as a "starter." How do we figure out when what we've always thought of as right or wrong are merely cultural differences?

As God revealed to Peter, our cultural differences do not matter to the One who has created and redeemed us. God is bigger than the barriers we put between us, and God's love can span the divisions that we create. Focusing on our love of God and love of people allows us to get past differences that otherwise keep us separated. Peter heard this message from God and was able to take the message of salvation to the Gentiles. This was a huge leap, but it allowed for the light of the Gospel to spread to the nations. May we also take a leap in love as we witness to others.

Prayer: Dear Lord, we are divided in so many ways by physical, social, and emotional barriers we have erected. You have made us pure in your eyes and called us to be united. May we learn to love You fully and abundantly, and may we love other people so that as we share Your love, they will hear our words and know You. In the name of the one who taught us to love, Amen.

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