

# Rossville Church of Christ Doorpost Devo



March 31, 2024



## Encouragement from God's Word

### What I Love About Jesus: His Love for the Undeserving

Many teachers, gurus, rabbis, and philosophers across the centuries have espoused the virtues of love and kindness. It is not a radical, earth-shattering idea to teach that we should treat our fellow humans with decency. This is why it is so curious that so many in our modern landscape have reduced the world-changing, revolutionary message to one of simple niceness. Jesus was and is the perfect human, but I doubt many in his day would have described him as nice. His teaching was too authoritative, and his way of love was too explosive to be categorized so blandly and so free from controversy.

## Scripture Plan: Read

Mon, Tues, Wed.:

Ephesians 6:10-20 Each Night

Thurs., Fri., Sat.:

Revelation 5:1-14 Each Night

## Devo Plan

1. Mon.--Read and Pray Together
2. Tues.--Read, Pray, Ask Questions, and Discuss
3. Wed.--Read, Pray, and Think about how to Apply
4. Thurs.-Sat.--Repeat steps 1-3 with New Passage
5. Sunday--Pray and Reflect on What was Learned in Worship and Class

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## Discussion Questions

Ephesians 6:10-20

Discussion Question #1: What does it mean to be strong in the Lord? Where do we sometimes go to find strength?

Discussion #2: Discuss the different pieces of armor. Why does Paul use this imagery? What does it mean for us?

Discussion #3: Talk about the importance of the Word and prayer in this passage. How should these things impact our lives and our relationships in the Church?

Revelation 5:1-14

Discussion #1: Why does John weep in the throne room? What does this mean?

Discussion #2: Who does the lamb represent? Why is the slain lamb still standing?

Discussion #3: Who worships the slain lamb? What do they say and why is this important?

## Apply and Obey

To obey what God says, this upcoming week I will...

I will share what I learned with...

## Prayer Points

- Lord, Thank You--for winning the victory through your sacrifice.
- Lord, We Praise You--for your love and devotion toward us to give us good hope in Jesus Christ.
- Lord, Help Us--to be strong in you and strengthen one another as you would have us to.

After all, he was not brutally murdered on a Roman cross because of his pleasant demeanor and kind disposition. So what makes Jesus different from other leaders or spiritual sources of knowledge? What makes him worth following to the ends of the earth and beyond? Many reasons. But one of things that sets Jesus apart in my mind that makes me love him deeply is his uncomfortable call to love and forgive our enemies. Anyone with their eyes open to the horrors and evils of the world can recognize that the refrain of “be nice” is not nearly sufficient to meet the needs of a world so desperately looking for healing, hope, and wisdom. Jesus’ expectations-defying teaching was not just to be nice but to love our enemies and forgive, just as our Heavenly Father does. Consider the following teachings from the Lord Jesus:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:43-48)

“Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.” (Matthew 18:21-22)

Jesus’ call to love and forgive goes far beyond what is comfortable or what we might expect. This would have been especially shocking for a first-century Jewish context in which they were crying out for justice to be done to their Roman oppressors. They were looking for a Messiah who could defeat their enemies. Yet, he teaches his followers to actively seek to do good and to pray for their enemies. He teaches us to forgive even when it would seem foolish to do so. And he roots the foundation of this teaching in the character of a perfect Father in heaven who is abundantly generous in love and forgiveness even to his own enemies.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the *doorposts* of your house and on your gates." --Deuteronomy 6:4-9

This simple idea has the power to transform the world. But what makes Jesus so unique and special is that this is not an abstract philosophy or teaching in a classroom setting. His life is the embodied reality of the principle that he taught. And he took it to the furthest extreme, as far as a humiliating death on a cross. Rather than retaliate with violence, he spoke not a word as he was unjustly led to the slaughter. And when he had more of a right and reason than anyone to seethe with anger and foam at the mouth with vitriol, his heart was in another place entirely. What are the words out of his mouth when he is dying and is barely able to breathe? "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). The disposition of his heart was that his murderers find forgiveness. And even more, he was dying so that the way of forgiveness was possible. He died on that cross for his enemies. This is a truly radical idea, that every person is undeserving of forgiveness but still offered it. The worst people that we can imagine are loved by Christ and offered grace—terrorists, murderers, liars, and evildoers. At the same time, each one of us, even those of who consider ourselves decent and kind, are in deep need of the grace and sacrifice of Jesus. This is the great scandal of the cross—that we are all rebellious, God-hating sinners, but that there is a way of amazing, undeserved mercy available in Jesus.

This is the basis of his call for his followers to love and forgive. Again, this is not a random abstract philosophy or concept. It flows from a life-changing encounter with unthinkable mercy and grace in the person of Jesus. It changes who we are and how we see people once we really understand how much Jesus loves us and how undeserving we truly are of that love. There have been many examples of sacrifice and love in history. There have been many instances of kindness. But no one else is like Jesus. No one else has left the throne of heaven and taken on human flesh to die for rebellious sinners. No one else has died for the sins of those who hated him. No one is like our Lord Jesus. Let us seek to follow in his way of love.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the *doorposts* of your house and on your gates." --Deuteronomy 6:4-9