

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Stop the Spread - Finding Peace

September 28, 2020

There are several definitions of the word “love.” It is one of the most intense emotions we experience as humans, and it spans a variety of different feelings, conditions, and attitudes that range from interpersonal affection to pleasure.

The past several months have left many of us with a vast amount of uncertainty. We may have worried about our health, the health of our loved ones, our work, our kids’ education, money, food, and safety—just to name a few. Too many changes and too much uncertainty in our everyday lives can hinder us from finding peace in our world and lead to anxiety. On a positive note, this uncertainty or change from the normal has many of us taking steps to better focus on God. And this change in focus is encouraging us to live with a non-anxious spirit—to be present with God, ourselves, and with others. That is until someone comes along and messes it all up!

Last weekend was the third week in our series, *Finding Peace*. Lead Pastor Ben Snyder focused on “Finding Peace Relationally.” He noted when it comes to our lack of peace, we might look away from ourselves and see other people as the problem.

Like a virus, our anxiety is contagious. When we are anxious, we cause others to be anxious. So, how do we keep anxiety from spreading (other than washing our hands of it)?

The answer is ... **LOVE!**

Love is the remedy for anxiety. God invites us to experience love and a non-anxious presence.

1 John 4:18

Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear.

What kind of love does this? Agape! Agape is one of several words used to describe “love” in the Greek language. It is not a feeling as much as it is the motivation behind your actions. CompellingTruth.org describes agape love as “a sacrificial love that voluntarily suffers inconvenience, discomfort, and even death for the benefit of another without expecting anything in return.” It is perfectly described in the following verses:

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

⁴ Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud ⁵ or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. ⁶ It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. ⁷ Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

This week, Ben's Bottom Line encourages us to ***pay attention to HOW as much as WHAT***. Or, in other words, pay attention to *how* you interact with others as much as *what* you interact about.

Don't let the "what" of your interactions cause you anxiety. Instead, pay attention to how you can love those in your life as you interact with them.

Questions:

Who are the people in your life that cause you to be anxious? What is it about interacting with them that causes your anxiety?

Think about an interaction you've had with someone that went poorly. Did your behavior reflect the love you have for that person?

How could you interact with them differently to lower your anxiety?

Next Steps:

When you feel your anxiety going up as a result of someone else, try to identify why. Think about how God is inviting you to step into your interactions with others instead of focusing on what your interactions are about.

Continue to read this week's LivingItOut as we look at ways we can show love within our interactions.

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, you are love. Thank you for your love and how you interact with me each day. Help me learn from your example and to show love to those around me, no matter the circumstance I find myself in. In Jesus' name, Amen.

This post was written by Pam Haynam, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

Overflow of Love - Finding Peace

September 29, 2020

In week 2 of our current series, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder encouraged us to think about the stories we tell ourselves. I thought deeply about it and reflected on a list of words he provided. Two words from the list jumped out to me: perfect and successful. I was forced to acknowledge that the stories I was telling myself were shaped by my desire for perfection and success.

As an Enneagram 5, I want to find the perfect solution to every problem I encounter—from the food I feed my family, to the homeschool curriculum I choose, to the half marathon plan I follow. These choices make me feel like I have control, but they can also be crippling and lead to anxiety. I feel like if I make the wrong choice, everything will come out wrong. This has caused health problems, friction in relationships with those I love, irritability, and insomnia. Some might say this perfectionism is caused by my love for the people I'm making decisions for, and that's partly true. But ultimately, I am allowing my peace to be dependent on my ability to navigate life on my own power. My desire to control reveals my lack of peace and faith that God will provide for me even if the choice I make is less than perfect. It comes down to pride.

This week, Ben talked about how a lack of peace reveals a lack of love. How does love relate to pride? Pride says, "I can do it all by myself." It says, "I can help you with your oxygen mask first because I can handle the lack of oxygen." It says, "I don't need anyone to help me; I am enough in myself." Love says, "I can't do it on my own and I need help." It says, "In order to ensure I can help you, I need to put on my own oxygen mask first."

John 15:4

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

1 John 4:7-8

⁷ Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. ⁸ But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

If I do not abide in the love God has for me every day, I will struggle to show his love to my family and those around me. If I'm so focused on all of the things I am able to do, it leaves no room for the love of Christ to flow through me into the

lives of those around me. When I spend a few minutes in the morning reading my Bible and praying, I allow God's love to fill me. Then, when someone needs me—and it's a constant in my house—I can respond in love. I give Christ permission to overflow from my heart into the lives of those around me. When worship is filling the walls of my home, my children hear that God is love and worthy of our praise and devotion. When we share what God has been teaching us in prayer, those around us see that our faith is real and it yields a peace that is absent in our culture.

1 John 4:12

No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.

Questions:

How do you “put your own oxygen mask on first”? When you speak or act, is it under your own power, or is it an overflow of Christ's love in you? Do you think people see peace or anxiety when they look at your life?

Next Steps:

Commit to a small, daily act that helps you spend intentional time soaking in the love of Christ. There are many different reading plans on [YouVersion](#) to help you develop a habit of reading your Bible. Commit to praying at least once a day. The more you allow God to fill up your life, the more you are able to love those around you.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for showing us a perfect example of love in Jesus. Thank you for Jesus' example of prioritizing time with you so our hearts will be full. Help me be consistent in daily prayer and Bible reading. I pray for your love and peace to overflow from my heart into the lives of those around me so that your name may be honored. Amen.

This post was written by Julie Mabus, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

Love to Listen? - Finding Peace

September 30, 2020

I love the *Finding Peace* series because God is using it to show me the growth I have accomplished in the 26 years since I submitted myself to the leadership of Christ. Several weeks ago, Lead Pastor Ben was very vulnerable when he talked about his strengths and how there is a shadow side to each one. He told us to ask the question, “What is it like to be on the receiving end of me?” So this is my story of learning to listen, in love.

As a police officer on patrol, I encountered a wide variety of situations and the people who created them. My Field Training Officer taught me to wade in, calm things down, get the facts, tell people what they had to do next, and leave. This process did not involve extended listening, which would have resulted in making things more complicated and would have required solutions that a first responder doesn't have access to. It involved making snap judgments about problems that had often been hours (if not weeks or years) in the making. As a control expert, I was pretty good at this on the job. At home, on the other hand, this gift didn't work out quite so well.

Being on the receiving end of me was not good! I was good at fixing—I wasn't so good at listening. When I left the police department for my position at CedarCreek, I was definitely a work in progress. One of my mentors once told me that maybe the reason I wanted to fix people was because I didn't love them enough to walk with them through their struggle. I had to acknowledge that she was probably right. I wanted people to do what I said, and then be better for it. I did not want to walk with them through their pain and hurt. I realized there was improvement to be made on my end—I wasn't fully trusting God to work in my life. I had to heal my own bitterness and pain before I could walk with others through theirs. As Ben said, *I needed to put on my own oxygen mask first.*

Our staff prayers and conversations taught me a whole new way of listening to people in order to truly hear what they had to say. My new colleagues were so much better at listening to learn than I was, but they were gracious to me. I learned that, most of the time, the way love shows up is by listening. Loving others creates a safe, calm place for people to express their hopes and their fears.

1 John 4:16-17

¹⁶ We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. ¹⁷ And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

Now that I am able to rest in the love of God, I can listen to learn instead of listening to fix. Fixing is about what I have to offer. Listening to learn is how I show I care about you! And as I listen, I can trust that God is working in you to fulfill the purpose for which he created you! This purpose can be prayerfully discerned with the help of others, but it isn't something to be fixed by someone else telling you what to do. You and God should have the last word on that!

Questions:

How do you show up? Do you listen to fix, or do you show love by listening to learn?

Next Steps:

Put your name in place of love/it in these verses of 1 Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

⁴ Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud ⁵ or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. ⁶ It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. ⁷ Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

Pick one and try to live that out this week.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I want to treat people the way Jesus did, with love, patience, kindness, and compassion. I am not good at this, but I want to be! Heal the broken pieces of my heart that make it hard to see people as you do. Help me trust in your love, and by that, show your love to others. In Jesus' name, amen.

This post was written by Lauri White, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

Who Gets the Last Word? - Finding Peace

October 1, 2020

During his third installment of *Finding Peace*, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder discussed that a lack of peace is a lack of love. He told us that love is the solution to the anxiety we experience, and we need to pay attention to how we love the people in our lives as we interact with them.

One way we can show love to others in our interactions is by giving them the gift of the last word. It is a gift because it lets others know their opinions and emotions matter. It focuses the attention on them instead of the issue and what you think about it. I know that I can insert myself too much when I am having a conversation, and it hurts people when they aren't given an opportunity to be heard. I don't want to convey the message that I know more than everyone else.

Growing up, when my brother and I used to bicker about silly things, I always thought I had to have the last word. I am the oldest, so why wouldn't I know more than him, right? This sense of pride created anxiety and stress in our relationship. The point is, my lack of consideration only made us both mad and upset. What was seemingly a series of small conflicts turned into a big issue over time.

Proverbs 13:3

Those who control their tongue will have a long life, opening your mouth can ruin everything.

If only I'd known this verse while growing up – as a reminder that I could (and should) control my tongue. If I would have given him the last word, it would have shown him that I cared about his perspective. It would have shown that I was willing to consider his feelings. By not controlling my tongue, I caused a strain on our relationship. Fortunately, now that my brother and I are older, we understand each other better and have repaired our relationship. But I could have saved us some struggle by giving him the gift of the last word.

It takes some humility to remain quiet and listen. But ultimately, giving the gift of the last word tells the people in your life that you love and care for them. And that will bring peace to your relationships, even in the midst of your anxiety.

Questions:

When was a time that you did not consider the gift of the last word? How did it show carelessness towards others?

What does Proverbs 3:13 mean to you?

What can you do to control your tongue in order to give someone else the last word?

Next Steps:

During your next interaction, be quick to listen and slow to speak. Instead of focusing on what you think, focus your energy on listening.

Ask intentional questions to increase your understanding of the situation.

Prayer:

Dear God, Proverbs 3:13 mentions controlling the tongue. The Bible talks a lot about this, but knowing that my tongue can bring ruin if I don't give the last word reminds me of what matters. I pray that you would show me any pride that pushes me to have the last word. I want to have peace with my relationships. Please show me the power the last word has to communicate love, and that by loving them in this way, I can bring peace in the midst of any anxiety. In Jesus' name, amen.

I'm Headed Your Way - Finding Peace

October 2, 2020

This past weekend, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder gave us some valuable advice on how to handle someone who creates anxiety and tension within us. He suggested that, as an alternative to backing away from this person, you should take a step toward them. After all, backing away will just create more tension, anxiety, and difficulties in the relationship.

So, what would this look like if someone says or does something hurtful to you? Instead of talking behind the person's back, meet them in private, and in a loving way, ask if the perceived hurtful event was intended as such. Another simple way of moving toward someone you're struggling with is to pray for them... every day. If you cannot do it on your own, ask someone to help keep you accountable. As you continue to pray, trust that God's love—agape love—will show up.

Matthew 18:15

If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back.

Ben continued the conversation on moving toward those with whom we are struggling by reminding us to be aware of those who are moving back towards us and those who are not. It is possible to be so concerned about helping or fixing someone, like your kids, your spouse, or your co-workers, that you do the opposite of what you plan. The closer you move toward them, the farther they move away. Recognize who is moving toward you, and invest in those relationships. If you see someone moving away, stop chasing them. *You* may be pushing them away! Pay attention to **how** you are relating to them and **what** you want out of the relationship. Take a step toward peace relationally.

This brings us to our bottom line: ***Pay attention to HOW as much as WHAT.***

Ephesians 4:2-3

² Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowances for each other's faults because of your love. ³ Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

This passage is an excellent example of *how* perfect love shows up. Notice that this verse starts with the word *always*. This means that no matter *what* is going on, *always* be humble, gentle, patient, and kind. As Ben said, put your own

oxygen mask on first. In other words, get yourself in check before you try to solve someone else's issue. You will be ineffective at helping someone if you are full of anxiety. Take a step toward God first.

Questions:

When you struggle with someone, how do you handle it? Do you distance yourself from them, or do you move closer to them?

Are you mindful of those who are moving toward you and those who are not? Of those who are not, are you pushing them away?

How is love inviting you to show up today?

Next Steps:

Take an inventory of your relationships that you know have anxiety and tension. Are you showing others love as God has loved you? If you are not, take time to verify that you are paying attention to *how* you interact with them as much as *what* you interact about. Make sure you are showing up and interacting in a loving way, so as not to create anxiety in them.

Prayer:

Dear Father in Heaven, grant me wisdom to see where I need to remain in you. Show me the ways that I can take a step toward someone in patience, gentleness, and kindness. Keep me mindful of who I am and how I can be helpful to others. Help me to be aware of how I show up in people's lives. In your Son's name I pray, amen.