

Sermon 8-23-20 - Love is not Rude
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We are in the middle of a nine part sermon series on love. This is week six which means that we are over halfway through. No doubt, some of you are saying, “Of course love is important, but nine weeks? Really?” Really! Love is that important.

In his 22nd chapter, Matthew points out just how important love is. As you may recall, Jesus had just silenced the Sadducees. So the Pharisees got together and one of them, an expert in the law, tested Jesus with a question:
"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." — Matthew 22:34-40

Did you hear Jesus? All the Law and Prophets hang on what? They hang on love! The greatest commandment is what? The greatest commandment is that we love! Jesus could not have been clearer. Nothing is more important than LOVE! Nothing is more important than loving God and loving people!

That is why for the past five weeks we have talked about what love is. You remember, love is patient, love is kind, love does not envy, love is not proud. We have also offered practical steps to help us live out and grow in that kind of love.

This morning, we are going to look at four more words that Paul used in 1 Corinthians 13 to describe and help us to live out God’s unconditional love. Paul wrote:

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, and it is not proud. Love is not rude. — 1 Cor. 13:4-5

Paul just added four more words to our description of what unconditional love is. Love is not rude. The Greek word Paul used was “aschemoneo”. It literally means without form or plan. Different versions of the Bible translate it differently. NIV says love does not dishonor others. NASB says love does not act unbecomingly. KJV says love doth not behave itself unseemly. Personally, I like the way NCV translates it: love is not rude.

Let me ask, have you ever been treated rudely? How did it make you feel? Did it make you feel valued? Loved?

Let me flip the question and ask you, have you ever been rude to someone? Did it occur to you that they probably did not enjoy it? That it did not make them feel valued or loved?

Which is why Paul comes right out and tells us that love is not rude! It is why we should treat others with respect. That said, it appears to me that there is not a lot of respect being shown these days. I read of a man in an Atlanta restaurant who was told that a wait for a table would be two hours, so he slugged the hostess. Two shoppers in a Connecticut, supermarket got into a fistfight over who should be first in a newly opened checkout lane. A woman at Wal-Mart attacked an associate who simply reminded her that she had to wear a face covering.

People can be rude. They can be mean. There is road rage, air rage, cell phone rage, checkout rage, bank rage, boat rage, desk rage and there is even funeral rage. Awhile back, I was riding in the hearse with a funeral director to a graveside service when a man grew impatient with having to wait for the funeral procession to pass. He started honking and flipping off the family of the deceased.

People have always been rude, but it seems to be growing worse. A recent survey on Civility in America found that 93% of Americans feel that rudeness is a serious problem and that it is getting worse. Seven out of ten people feel that people are ruder today than twenty years ago. 85% feel the world would be a better place if we just said 'please 'and 'thank you 'more often. But we don't need surveys to tell us that rudeness is on the rise. We experience it all the time.

What do I mean by rude? Well, some of the things I find rude are: inconsiderate drivers, people who have loud cell phone conversations in public, not holding doors or saying please or thank you, cutting in line, not respecting others time, and the list goes on. I don't know about you, but rudeness gets under my skin. I believe it bothers me so much because at its core it shows a lack of respect for people.

When I am rude to you what I am really saying is that "I don't really care for you. Your feelings don't matter to me. I am going to do and say what I want and I could care less what you think."

It bothers me because it shows a lack of respect for God's children. Which means that the way to overcome rudeness is not to stop being rude. The way to overcome rudeness is to learn to respect and appreciate our brothers and sisters. When we truly respect others it is hard to be rude to them. That may be why Peter wrote: **"Show proper respect for everyone. Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king."** 1 Peter 2:17

So, what then is respect? Respect is showing value and honor to others by our words and actions. How do you know whether you are showing respect to others? Ask yourself, "Do the people you interact with on a regular basis feel valued and cared for? Or do they feel diminished and unappreciated? I think that if we are honest, we all have to admit that sometimes we act rudely, that we don't fully respect others. However, Paul clearly states that love is not rude.

It might help to pause, and picture in your mind, someone that you have a tough time respecting. Do you have someone in mind? The next thing I am going to ask you to do may be a bit harder. Remember that God created them. Not only did God make them, he made them in his own image. Indeed, God says about every person you meet, "I made them. I made them and they reflect a bit of me." Which means that when we disrespect someone we are actually disrespecting God.

More than that, we should respect others because Christ cares enough for them to die for them. Paul addressed this in 2 Corinthians's 5:14,15 where he wrote, **"The love of Christ controls us, because we know that One died for all."** – 2 Corinthians 5:14,15

This means that that lady who annoys you, the man who was rude to you, the neighbor who blocks your driveway, indeed, everyone you lay eyes on is someone that Christ died for. They are someone of immense value to God. They are worth the life of his son. This means that everyone you see has value. The clerk at Wal-Mart has value. The neighbor who drives you crazy has value. The man whose lifestyle you disagree with has value. The person you are angry with has value. God created them in his image. God loves them enough to die for them. They are valuable.

That is why Peter (2:17) left no room for argument when he said, "Show proper respect for everyone."

I like the clarity Peter brings. What I don't like is that it means we must show respect to our spouse, our kids, our parents, our in-laws, that annoying coworker,

the person who cuts us off in traffic, that person we disagree with on Facebook, the Governor, the President. We are to show proper respect for them all. There are no loopholes. God has not given us permission to be rude to anyone.

Moreover, not only is respecting others the right thing to do, it is also wise.

Proverbs 15:1 reminds us that:

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but harsh words make tempers flare.” - Proverbs 15:1

I don't know about you, but when someone is rude to me, my first instinct is to be rude right back at them. How dare they? I don't have to take that. I'll just give them a taste of their own medicine. In fact, I might up the ante a bit. See if they try that with me again. However, escalating a conflict rarely ends the conflict.

Rudeness is like an infection. It grows. Sometimes I wonder how many of our interpersonal problems, our conflicts, our grudges, begin with a word or act of disrespect which is returned and grows until the entire body is infected. I sometimes wonder if there would be less conflict in our homes, our workplaces, our churches, in the world, if there was less rudeness.

What would the world be like if instead of sowing seeds of rudeness, we sowed seeds of respect. After all, natural law states that we get back what we give. In Galatians we read:

"Do not be deceived. God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." — Galatians 6:7

If you plant tumbleweeds, you are not going to get daisies, but if you sow daises... We harvest what we plant. What goes around, comes around. Do you want to be respected by other people, then give respect to other people. What we give out is what we're going to get back.

It is like Jesus said in Matthew:

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. – Matthew 7:12

Treat others like you would like to be treated. If we want people to smile and be nice to us, then we need to smile and be nice to them. On the other hand, if we're rude to them, how will they treat us? They will be rude to us.

More importantly, how we treat others reflects on the one we serve. If we, as Christians, disrespect and are rude to others what will they think of our faith? Again Paul writes:

“Be wise in the way you act with people who are not believers, making the most of every opportunity. When you talk, you should always be kind and pleasant so you will be able to answer everyone in the way you should.” – Colossians 4:5,6

Our mission is to make disciples by loving people and leading them to Christ. Rude Christians do not lead many people to Jesus. Instead, they drive them away. Yet, Paul Malone writes of working as a waiter at a Perkins located outside of Disneyland. He had not worked there long before he learned that there were two shifts that no one wanted to work. They were Sunday afternoons, right after church let out, and when Disney held their Night of Joy (a special night featuring Christian speakers and musical groups). His coworkers (none of whom were Christians) said that they hated to serve Christians because, for the most part they were rude, demanding, critical and left small tips. How sad, those who were supposed to be representing God were the rudest customers. They should have been the best.

We should treat everyone with respect, because God made everybody, because Christ died for everyone, because God commands us to respect others, because respecting others reduces conflict, because we reap what we sow, and because others judge our faith based on how we treat them. As the song said, “We may be the only Jesus they ever see.”

So how can we show more respect for others? First stop. Stop and think about the impact of your words before you say anything. One of the primary ways in which we are rude to others is through our words (spoken, tweeted, texted, emailed, posted, etc), So before you speak, stop. Before you tweet, stop. Before you text, stop. Before you hit send on that email, stop. Stop and listen. Respect what the other has to say. And then think about what you are going to say, and why you are going to say it, and what effect your words might have before you share them.

Then ask yourself, what is it that the other person needs? Instead of focusing on your needs, or rights, or hurts, ask what do they need in this situation? How can I best serve them? How can I show them that I care and make them feel respected? It may be as simple as listening to them, or turning the other cheek, or serving them. Note that we are the children of the One who came not to seek his own but to serve all.

And if they are still rude, follow Jesus advice. Turn the other cheek. Paul advised: **“Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable...Don’t let evil get the best of you, but conquer evil by doing good.” — Romans 12:17,20**

Remember that when we respond to rudeness with rudeness it only makes things worse. Recall your mother’s lesson that two wrongs don’t make a right. Instead of treating them like they are treating you, treat them like you would like to be treated. Remember that we reap what we sow.

Why? Because that is what love does. Love is never rude. Which means that we have four more words to add to the scripture we are memorizing. It now reads: **Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, and it is not proud. Love is not rude. — 1 Cor. 13:4-5**

That is a bit longer and harder to memorize, but we have been working on it for five weeks now. Recite it each night and again in the morning as you wake up. Let it sink into your soul and change the way you live and love.