

“Apples & Orange - Love and Happiness Part 2”

Winter Circle Groups | Week #2

MESSAGE SUMMARY

This week’s “Love and Happiness” sermon centers around the differences we all possess. Like apples and oranges, we each possess characteristics, personalities, and qualities that make us unique. While our differences may differentiate us, they are God-given and should ultimately unify, not divide the body of Christ. In fact, the glory of God is evident through our relationships each day. In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had unlimited access to the spirit of God, walking and talking with Him in the cool of the day (Gen. 2). However, when they sinned, they lost this unlimited connection. What happened to them physically is our spiritual truth. We have been struggling to get back to the garden ever since! Let’s talk about Apples & Oranges and discover how we can use our differences to demonstrate God’s love in our daily environments!

KEY SCRIPTURES

Genesis 2:15-25

Additional Scriptures: Mark 12:28-33; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Amos 3:3

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- This week's key scripture outlines two important truths: Love has boundaries and the enemy thrives on creating distance. Because he comes to steal, kill and destroy us... the enemy specializes in tampering with our thought-life. Giving in to his tactics skews our perspective, making it difficult to take God at His word and thereby follow His instructions. In this passage, the enemy twists a God-given boundary, causing Adam and Eve to see it as a restriction from their wants rather than a protection from unseen consequences. **Do you see God-given boundaries as obstacles to avoid or as protection from possible danger? How might an incorrect view of boundaries impact your relationships?**

Let’s take it a step further. Have you disregarded a relational boundary in the past, only to find that it was meant for your protection? What were the consequences and what did you learn?

- Just as boundaries are given by God from a place of love, so too are our differences. Differences are meant for our benefit and should not cause insecurities or competition. Eve was a provision for Adam. She was created to work in concert with him as a helpmate, not to be his competition. As people of faith, we must be the first to seek to understand differences, rather than eliminate them. **How has “religion” skewed the narrative, causing us to view differences as**

competition rather than provisions? What can we do as kingdom citizens to change the narrative back to its intended purpose?

- God can change a heart, but man cannot. Rather than fighting and engaging in divisive activity, as Kingdom Citizens we must get to the same climate and find common ground. **Think about a close relation whose differences challenge you** (husband, wife, best friend, for example). **How might viewing their differences as a provision for a need change how you interact with them?**
- Honor is the currency of the kingdom, what we honor we attract and what we dishonor, we repel. Let's put the focus on our fruit and take personal responsibility by honoring those in our circles. **Have you resented the differences of those around you or tried to make them more like you? If so, how has this behavior impacted your relationships? How can you honor their fruit and begin demonstrating God's love?**

CONCLUSION & CHALLENGE

Love is not a feeling, it's a decision rooted in a knowledge of Christ's love and propelled by a desire to love His people. Instead of pointing out our differences, what if we decided to celebrate them? Imagine the unity and honor that would break out! If we are going to be effective and make lasting change for the Kingdom of God, we must have healthy relationships. Let's work together to build a garden that glorifies the Lord, that honors each other's fruit, and cultivates a climate for love and happiness to grow!

Challenge: Let's continue our journey with an honest evaluation of our relationships. Questions to consider are:

- Have I allowed things in my garden that should not be there? (competition, envy, offense, etc.)
- Does everyone have a purpose, and do they belong in my garden?
- How can I intentionally celebrate someone in my circle this week?
- Do I honor the fruit of those in my life? Is there anyone that I need to ask forgiveness from regarding my behavior?