

---

# THE POWER OF LOVE

## Unreasonable Love

---

To reach a people who have not heard about Jesus. To go a way we haven't been before. We must hoist our sails and let the wind of His Spirit take us under His power to wherever He is leading.

We believe now is the time to look beyond the four walls of the church, to honour the past by building the future, and see what God is calling us to as we assess and try to meet the -

- + needs of our local community
- + as we endeavor to pastor the city of Brisbane
- + and release revivalists to the nations of the world.

God's love continually seeks to expand the boundary markers to include all people into His Kingdom. An authentic Christian community reflects this (Mark 12:30-31; John 13:34-35). These commands, give us insight as to how we are to go to the world around us. We go with hearts that are in love with God and that are motivated by that love, to love others.

Do we have a love for others that is inclusive NOT exclusive? God's love begins by counting people in, people may count themselves out, but we begin by counting people in! What does this look like amongst God's people? It happens naturally as we encounter the loving grace of God with Jesus, are transformed by that love which then freely overflows to others.

## TERRORIST SAUL TO APOSTLE PAUL

The apostle Paul knew what God's love practically looked like in community (1 Corinthians 15:9-10).

Before Saul became known as the Apostle Paul, he had severely persecuted the very people that now embraced him as a brother in Christ, God's love changed everything.

- + Acts 8:3 - "Saul began to destroy the church..."
- + Acts 7:60 - 8:1 - "And Saul approved of their killing him."
- + Acts 9:1-9 - "All this time Saul was breathing down the necks of the Master's disciples, out for the kill."

## A LOVING EMBRACE - ACTS 9:10-19

The Lord calls Ananias to send him to Saul as an agent of healing.

The mission requires trust in God because it appeared ridiculously dangerous.

The Lord is calling Saul for the particular task of being sent to the wider world.

Ananias completes his mission to embrace Saul into the family of God with a wonderful greeting!

God's love changes everything, turn the tables to count people in!

1. Saul was blinded by the light but then became a light to the Gentiles with the message of Jesus.
2. Saul went to lay violent hands on the Christians but then Jesus had the Christians lay loving hands on him.
3. Saul went to take hold of the Christians but then Christ took hold of Saul.
4. Saul went to break the body of Christ (the church) but then finds he's been taken up into the body of Christ, baptized and breaking bread with the body of Christ as an unexpected guest at their table. (Acts 9:19)

Paul, persecutor turned passionate Jesus follower... But it took Godly people such as Ananias to embrace Saul into the community, restore and resend Saul back into the world to do the same for others! (Acts 9:20-22)

## OVERFLOWING WITH GOD'S LOVE

If you don't have a good healthy love for someone you know you need to love, why don't you try getting God's perspective on them, try praying for them!

The moment from which you know your identity as a loved son or daughter of God, you can finally begin to freely release love to others. When your life is centred on God, and you know His love for you, then you can love others without placing stipulations or expectations on how they should or shouldn't react.

Ananias knew his identity and out of an overflow of God's love in his life and he can embrace Saul! That's Jesus for us!

We need to learn to love people more than they can hurt us. The gospel says there is a greater reality in Jesus that changes everything, a reality that will enable you to freely love and embrace even your enemies (Luke 6:35-36) - just as Ananias did.

If Ananias was able to embrace his persecutor Saul as a redeemed brother, we can do the same! Saul sat and ate with Ananias as equals as the unexpected guest at the table. The way Ananias was able to do this is the same way we will today.

Jesus says, "Come, all who are hungry, all who are thirsty", and perhaps we are the ones to deliver this message to those so broken that they have become angry, hard, mean, annoying, ...people difficult to love that really are hungry and thirsty for something more that only Jesus can give. You may discover your own "Saul" as Brother Paul as your own unexpected guest at the table!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Has God ever sent you to someone you'd rather love from a distance?
2. Has God been prompting your heart to renew or perhaps begin to centre your busy life on Him? Have you considered the benefits of just how healthy that would be for you and those you care for?
3. Most of us wake up to the alarm, grab a coffee, and rush to work as a lifestyle. In such a frantic culture can you think (perhaps with some friends) of some ways in which you would be able to create space to hear God's voice towards those around you?
4. If you don't have a good healthy love for someone you know you need to love, why don't you try getting God's perspective on them, try praying for them! Stop and pray for them now and then commit to doing this on a regular basis. Hold each other accountable.
5. Where is your "Straight Street", who is your Saul? Ananias actually practiced releasing love into real places with addresses to love those few would embrace. Spend some time writing a list of people like this who are on your front line.
6. Think of someone you find difficult to love (maybe someone at your workplace, classroom, or a neighbour). Show them an incredible act of love without expectations. If they ask "why", tell them what god has been saying to you.