

Sermon Outline Four**The Unstoppable Community of Love**[read *TMIWTB* chapters 15-18]

Introduction: John Ortberg writes, “An academic journal called *The Journal of Happiness Studies* uses the tools of research to identify what makes human life flourish. When researchers look at what distinguishes quite happy people from less happy people, one factor consistently separates those two groups. It is not how much money you have; it is not your health, security, attractiveness, IQ, or career success. What distinguishes consistently happier people from less happy people is the presence of rich, deep, joy-producing, life-changing meaningful relationships. Spending meaningful time with people who care about us is indispensable for human flourishing. Social researcher Robert Putnam writes, ‘The single most common finding from a half-century’s research on life satisfaction, not only from the U.S.A. but around the world, is that happiness is best predicted by the breadth and depth’s of one’s social connections’” (*TMIWTB*, 179-180). We will only become “the me I want to me” as we are deeply connected to the loving community of Jesus-followers called the church. We flourish through a commitment to community. At the core of everything Jesus was about was one word: love (Matthew 22:37-40). Jesus chose the rag-tag, dull, unruly 12 disciples in order to have someone to love. He trained those same 12 to become the most loving group in the world (John 13:34-35). Jesus’ life of love was like *three giant signs*.

Sign Number One: Everybody’s Welcome. Luke 15:2

- A. Jesus’ welcome of “sinners” to his table scandalized people as he loved them, embraced them, and included anyone who came to him.
- B. After Jesus died and rose again an amazing life of love erupted in his community.
 - 1. In the Roman world, slaves were worthless, tortured, used for sex, degraded, and killed for growing old, but the church showed love welcoming slaves and giving them positions of honor.
 - 2. In the Roman world, the poor were despised and rejected, but the church showed love and welcomed and cared for the poor.
 - 3. In the Roman world, children were often abandoned, violated, and killed, but the church showed love, rescuing and blessing children.
 - 4. In the Roman world, the diseased and dying were discarded as the church showed love and cared for the sick and dying even during times of plagues. Love literally kept the church healthy!

Sign Number Two: Nobody's Perfect. Matthew 7:1 No Judging

- A. Some people are more anxious than others even in the face of Paul's "Be anxious for nothing" (Philippians 4:6)
 - 1. Some people have a genetic propensity toward anxiety and are risk-avoiders while many others are risk-takers.
 - 2. Our brains produce different levels of GABA—*gamma amino butyric acid*. Risk-takers has a high level; non-risk-takers have a low level. Not being anxious may have nothing to do with you faith, but your GABA level. Don't judge others.
- B. Our temperament and genetic wiring make some spiritual practices more natural for us and also make us more vulnerable to some temptations.

Sign Number Three: Anything's Possible. Acts 1:8

- A. Jesus embraces people, puts his Spirit in them and transforms their lives.
- B. The Spirit gives spiritual gifts beyond human abilities.
 - 1. Shaky Simon becomes solid rock.
 - 2. Wealthy Joe becomes "son of encouragement" (Barnabas).
 - 3. Zealous, violent Saul becomes Paul the sacrificial apostle.
- C. We become "the me I want to be" as we commit to and get connected in the community of love. We are loved into personal transformation. Anything's possible.

Application: "A friend offered to introduce English essayist Charles Lamb to a man that Lamb had disliked for a long time by hearsay. 'Don't make me meet him,' Lamb said. 'I want to go on hating him, and I can't do that to a man I know.'" *TMIWTB*, 208

At the core of Jesus' power to transform us into "the me I want to be" is love. That love comes to us through his community of love—the church.

Get connected and become a welcoming, but not perfect, yet anything's possible kind of person.