

***Let's Show America Great Again***

**"WALK IN THE WAY OF LOVE"**

**Ephesians 5:1-20**



The doctor that started our daughter's delivery did childbirth by the book. As long as the birthing process went the way it was supposed to go, she was okay. When things got complicated, though, she had to go back to the textbook repeatedly. By contrast the doctor who finished the delivery did it by heart. As soon as he had stepped into the room and assessed the situation, he knew exactly what needed to be done and how to do it. He had the textbook written on his heart.

Like we saw last week, our old identity is controlled by the things we see and feel. Our new identity in Christ is governed by the things Jesus taught and his Spirit reveals to us.

Because our old identity is controlled by what's visible and tangible, it needs rules and regulations to govern its behaviour. The only way we can exist together, when we are governed by the old identity, is if we live by the book. That's why one of the primary tasks of our government is to create laws and enforce them. That's also why Christian communities and churches sometimes develop long lists of rules, codes of conduct, dress codes, etc.

Is that what Jesus taught? Is that what our Lord envisioned when he spoke of a church that would prevail against the gates of hell? No! Jesus knew that the law turns some people into rebels and the rest of us into hypocrites. Rather than

building community by the book, Jesus called his followers to do community by the heart – John 13:34-35.

Ephesians 5:1 to 6:9 presses the point that true Christian community, far from being built around a list of rules and regulations, is built on Christ-like love one for the other. Ephesians 5:3-20 describes destructive behaviours this love prevents. Ephesians 5:21-6:9 describes constructive behaviours this love promotes. Today we look at the destructive behaviours Christ-like love prevents.

- **“Walk in the way of love” – Eph. 5:1-2**
- **Love does not destroy the other – Eph. 5:3-8**
- **Love does not deceive the other – Eph. 5:8-14**
- **Love does not deprive the other – Eph. 5:15-20**

As humans that still wrestle with the old identity, we may still need some rules to guide our behaviour and keep us from destroying each other; but rules and regulations, be they biblical or extra-biblical, will never make us the community that Jesus envisioned. The one thing that will make us that kind of community is Christ-like love. Not only does Christ-like love stop us from injuring each other, it also enables us to forgive each other when we do wound one another.