

# Garvin Adams

**Church Name**

**SERIES: In Your Shoes**

**MESSAGE 1: "Those People"**

**LINK TO MY SERMON:** <https://vimeo.com/757739411>

**Bottom Line:** Loving one another creates a hunger to understand one another.

**Object Lesson:**

**Key Idea:** Those people can be the worst. You know who "those people" are, right? We all have them, and they are difficult to like, much less love. It's helpful to know that Jesus had "those people," too, and his love for them drove him to understand them.

**NOTE:** All my commentary and suggestions are included in this document in BLUE. Also, this is NOT a manuscript. I prefer to outline most of the message while manuscripting the opening line, closing line, and transitions.

**CONNECTION** – It's easy to like and love Jesus. But Loving Jesus is way easier than loving like Jesus

**NOTE: CONNECTION:** The connection segment for the first message in series must introduce the overall idea and the message. This series is about empathy, so I set up the series by point to how lovable Jesus was, but loving Jesus is much easier than loving like Jesus.

A. **LIKABLE AND LOVABLE JESUS:** Jesus...he's a pretty lovable guy.

It's easy to like and love Jesus.

He's might just be the Mr. Congeniality of religion.

**NOTE:** Quick note. This "Mr. Congeniality of religion" comment is a bit sarcastic. That's my version of humor, but I must be careful to keep it light. I intentionally say things that feel slightly irreverent to help draw in the skeptics and cynics. Do this your way, but remember, in the connection we are trying to cast the widest net we can to engage our entire crowd.

Put your feelings around Christianity, church, and his followers aside, and it's hard to *not* like Jesus. Heck, even non-Christians like Jesus. Other faiths and religions like Jesus...

In Islam, Jesus is one of God's highest-ranked and most-beloved prophets.

The Bahá'í Faith considers Jesus to be one of many manifestations of God.

No wonder Jesus is likable. Just think about how he treats people:

# Garvin Adams

- a. **Loving**: Jesus seemed to like and love pretty much everyone. Lepers. Blind man. Women in general. Woman caught in adultery, yet he doesn't condemn her. Woman at the well. Roman Centurion officer.
  - b. **Fun**: His very first miracle was to turn water into wine. If you're going to do a trick...that's a great place to start.
  - c. **Helpful**: He fed thousands of people with a little boys sack lunch.
- B. **NEW COMMAND**: For three years, the Disciples watched and observed and learn from Jesus. They saw first-hand how likeable and lovable Jesus really was. The night before His crucifixion, they were gathered in the upper room. Of course, the Disciples had no idea what would transpire over the next day, but Jesus did. With that in mind, Jesus gave them a new command:

## John 13:34 (NIV)

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

This was really a brand new idea. Completely new. Up until this point, they had been living under the OG "golden rule (Or to me more specific, the OT golden rule...)."

## Leviticus 19:18 (NIV)

<sup>18</sup> "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord."

But Jesus one-ups it with the "platinum rule," His "new commandment."

## John 13:34 (NIV)

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

We don't really know, but I imagine all the guys probably leaned in and nodded ... makes sense. I mean, Jesus has loved others so well. Now he wants us to love others, too.

"Let's love the lame, the sick, the downtrodden, and the leper. Let's serve widows and orphans. When we catch a person in adultery, we can be more loving than condemning. Got it, Jesus."

Of course, they really had no idea how far reaching the love of Jesus would be AND how inclusive it would be. In that moment, loving others the way Jesus had loved them seemed challenging, but maybe possible.

- C. **NOT AN EASY COMMAND TO FOLLOW**: Not to be captain obvious, but knowing what we know now, on the other side of the crucifixion, loving Jesus is way easier than loving like Jesus. [SEP]

Loving Jesus is way easier than loving like Jesus.

# Garvin Adams

The disciples soon discovered that for themselves, too. After the crucifixion, “loving others” took on a whole new meaning. It was one thing to treat the sick a little better – it’s an entirely new challenge to give your life for others.

**TRANSITION:** You know why, right? Because of “those people.”

THOSE PEOPLE

**TENSION** – Just like you, Jesus had “those people” too.

A. **THOSE PEOPLE:** You know who fits in the “one another” category, right? THOSE PEOPLE. And “those people” are the worst.

THOSE PEOPLE

---

The group of people who are nearly impossible to love.

“Those people” are the groups or categories of people who are difficult to love.

a. Unfortunately, we all have this category in our life.

**NOTE:** When we need to dig a little into people’s life, it’s best to start light before digging too deep. As you see here, I start with “those people” who do silly, frustrating things. But I move into deeper territory after.

**EXAMPLES:** There are “those people” who still write checks at the grocery store. The “those people” of four-way stops. I find there’s lots of driving-related “those people.”

“Those people” are partially why our culture is so divisive.

We have political “those people.” Racial “those people.” Generational “those people.” Gender “those people.” Lifestyle “those people.”

b. Unfortunately, we all have them.

THOSE PEOPLE

---

Who are your “those people?”

B. **EASIER FOR JESUS:** I’ll be honest, it’s hard to love the “those people” in my life. I know Jesus loves them but come on ... he’s JESUS! It’s easy to believe loving others was easy for Jesus. He was Jesus. God in a bod. He had the superpower of love. Captain love. He loved people like Matthew, Zaccheus, etc. The worst of the worst. He loved the unlovable. So, when Jesus gives us this “new command...”

# Garvin Adams

## John 13:34 (NIV)

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”

... it's almost easy to blow it off, because it's sort of unreasonable. I'm not Jesus, so how will I ever be able to love “those people” like He did?

**NOTE:** You've probably noticed how many times I've reviewed John 13:34. That's on purpose. This one statement by Jesus is the driving force behind our need for empathy.

So, we are tempted to give it the ole' college try, but not really commit to the command. How can we, anyway?

**NOTE:** Now we are moving into the *real* tension of this message.

- C. **JESUS' THOSE PEOPLE:** But here's what we often miss – Jesus had “those people,” too.

Jesus had “those people,” too.

I don't know if you realize it, because it's so easy to overlook, but Jesus had a “those people” category, too. The Pharisees.

The religious elite were “those people” for Jesus.

People like the Pharisees, the High Priests, and the Jewish elders.

These groups who prioritized the law over people. They prioritized obeying God over having a relationship with God.

- D. **PROOF OF THOSE PEOPLE:** I know, I know... Jesus loves ALL people. Sure, but he also found this category a bit more difficult than others.

### Pharisees in Action:

- They fiercely opposed Jesus.
- Constantly tried to trick Jesus.
- Continually plotted to catch and execute Jesus.

Just look at what he said about them:

## Matthew 23:27-28 (NIV)

<sup>27</sup> “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean.

<sup>28</sup> In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. [SEP]

Dang Jesus! Tell us what you really think!

**TRANSITION:** And then...it got worse. Those people become even worse than just “those people.” Much, much worse.

# Gavin Adams

## FOUNDATION – What the Bible teaches on the topic with summary.

- A. **UPPER ROOM TO THE CROSS:** That “new command” was given by Jesus to the Disciples in the upper room. The night before the crucifixion, Jesus shared a meal (the Last Supper) with the Disciples. You may remember he demanded they allow him to wash their feet. He replaced the Passover meal with what we now call “communion.” And he gave them the new commandment – which they had no idea was about to become impossibly real.
- B. **PASSION OF THE CHRIST:**

### Matthew 26:3-5, 47, 50b, 57, 59-68 (NIV)

<sup>3</sup> Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, <sup>4</sup> and they schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. <sup>5</sup> “But not during the festival,” they said, “or there may be a riot among the people.”

- This is the definition of “those people.” I know, you have “those people” too, but I doubt they are on this level!

**NOTE:** There are times we should read a passage and commentate. There are other times the stopping the flow of the scripture would do more harm than good. In this case, the emotion of the moment needs to remain uninterrupted.

<sup>47</sup> While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

<sup>50b</sup> Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.

<sup>57</sup> Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled.

<sup>59</sup> The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. <sup>60</sup> But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.

Finally two came forward <sup>61</sup> and declared, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’”

<sup>62</sup> Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” <sup>63</sup> But Jesus remained silent.

The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.”

# Gavin Adams

<sup>64</sup> “You have said so,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

<sup>65</sup> Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. <sup>66</sup> What do you think?”

“He is worthy of death,” they answered.

<sup>67</sup> Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him <sup>68</sup> and said, “Prophecy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?”

- C. **CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS:** Jesus was led to Golgotha, where he was crucified with two other criminals. Hanging above his head read a sign, “this is Jesus, the king of the jews.” The pain and torcher endured before the crucifixion was more than most of us can imagine. The pain of the crucifixion was beyond what any of us have ever seen or experienced.
- D. **JESUS PRAYERS:** But Jesus, the perfect, holy Son of God needed to take on the sin of the world as a final sacrifice. In the moments before his death, this is exactly what happened:

## Matthew 27:45-46 (NIV)

<sup>45</sup> From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. <sup>46</sup> About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

**HUGELY IMPORTANT MOMENT:** For the first time in his entire life, Jesus felt the pain of being separated from God through sin. Let me say it this way:

For the first time, Jesus felt  
the full pain of being fully you.

Jesus experienced what it is like to be you. Jesus felt the pain of separation.

He could have come down from the cross. He’s Jesus! He wasn’t just the “king of the Jews.” He was God on earth. But he remained because there was a great purpose in his death.

On that cross, He fully understood and shared in the feelings of humanity. He felt the pain of trying to go through life on his own. He felt disconnected. Separated. Apart. He felt the consequences of sin.

And it killed him.

**TRANSITION:** In this prayer, we see something incredibly powerful on display – something that’s been on display for Jesus’ entire ministry: **EMPATHY.**

EMPATHY

# Gavin Adams

## APPLICATION – How this can be applied today.

A. **EMPATHY:** You know what empathy is, right?

EMPATHY

---

The ability to understand and share the feelings of another. [L SEP]

Empathy is, at its simplest, awareness of the feelings and emotions of other people. The ability to feel what others are feeling. The ability to understand what others are experiencing.

B. **DIFFERENT THAN SYMPATHY:** Empathy goes far beyond sympathy. Sympathy is 'feeling for' someone. Empathy is 'feeling with' that person.

C. **JESUS FELT EMPATHY:** Jesus felt empathy. For us. For the Pharisees. For humanity. He understood... their perspective. He understood their heart. He understood that they didn't understand. And instead of allowing it to build a barrier, he built a bridge.

Love, expressed through empathy, is what drove Jesus to:

- a. Invite tax collectors to be Disciples.
- b. Spend so much time with the down and out, the disenfranchised, the sick, and the outcast.
- c. To weep at the tomb of his friend Lazarus.
- d. To stay on the cross and endure the pain and humiliation of death.

D. **OUR EMPATHY:** So when Jesus asked his Disciples, and then us, to "love one another"... as He first loved us," he was giving us a command of action that should drive us to understand and share in the feelings of others.

- a. Loving one another begins with understanding one another.

Loving one another creates a hunger to understand one another.

- b. We are generally well-attuned to our own feelings and emotions. But empathy allows us to "walk a mile in another's shoes." It permits us to understand the emotions that another person is feeling.
- c. Understanding one another allows us to better love one another.

Loving one another creates a hunger to understand one another, which allows us to better love one another.

**NOTE:** I used this transitional statement to drive home the point.

**TRANSITION:** If you want to follow Jesus' new command, it begins with empathy.

# Garvin Adams

## INSPIRATION – How is this memorable and inspirational?

A. So, back to one of those painful questions:

Who are your “those people?”

And maybe more importantly:

Who are your “those people?”

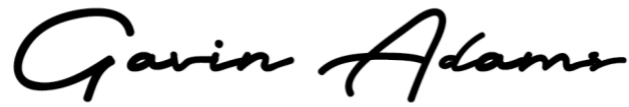
How can you better understand them?

How can you better share their feelings?

**NOTE:** Knowing where we are heading for Part 2 of this series, I end this message with questions that force us to recognize that we all have “those people” in our life, and it takes some intentional work to understand them and share what they are feeling.

## PRAYER





Church Name

SERIES: In Your Shoes

MESSAGE 2: "What Depends On You"

LINK TO MY SERMON: <https://vimeo.com/757739535>

Bottom Line: Do what you can do, as far as it depends on you.

Object Lesson:

Key Idea: "Those" people are the worst. In most cases, we believe we can keep "those" people over there, and when they are over there, we can avoid dealing with them and relating to them. But what if being over there doesn't actually keep them out of our relationships? And what if what's "over there" is hurting us?

CONNECTION – "Those people" see the world wrongly.

NOTE: CONNECTION: To begin message two, I present the core passage of the series, but quickly rewrite the passage to create a bit humor and self-effacing reality.

A. **HARD TO FOLLOW THE NEW COMMAND:** Last week we talked about empathy and the connection to the new commandment that Jesus gave his Disciples (and us). He took all 600+ OT laws and reduced them down to one. Basically, it is the New Testament imperative and ethic for all Jesus-followers:

John 13:34-35 (NIV)

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

B. **COMMANMENT, NOT SUGGESTION:** I really wish Jesus had said:

Gavin 13:34-35

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As they are lovable, so you must love one another."

C. **OUR OUT:** That would have given us an out! Love the people who deserve it... Love those who are right and agreeable. Who see it our way. And just avoid the people who don't. Unfortunately, that wasn't what Jesus said. Then Jesus allowed himself to be hung on a cross out of his love for the unlovable, modeling the command.

D. **THOSE PEOPLE:** Which means – and I hate to be the bearer of bad news – when it comes to 4K: "those" people, I think Jesus was including them in his "one another" grouping.

THOSE PEOPLE

But "those" people are the worst, aren't they?

# Garvin Adams

## THOSE PEOPLE

The **group** of people who are nearly impossible to love.

You know who they are, right? ... they are on the roads, in the other political party, in that other generation... We might have different "those" people, but we all have "those" people. They are difficult to love. Heck, they're hard to even like.

Ultimately, they see the world differently.

## THOSE PEOPLE

They see the world **differently**.

Or better yet...

## THOSE PEOPLE

They see the world **differently wrongly**.

Either way, their worldview is different. They make decisions differently than you would. They live in a way that you don't like.

- E. **THOSE PEOPLE VS OUR PEOPLE:** Let me give you some good news, though. **Good news: We are able to avoid being in direct relationships with "those" people.** Not always, but we try our best, don't we? We are naturally connected to "our" people, and we keep "those" people over there. That's personally very helpful, because those people stress us out. They frustrate us. They anger us. They cause us to sin...and it's their fault!
- F. **LIFE AND RELATIONSHIPS:** **It's a good thing we can keep "those" people over there (where they belong). It keeps us from having to interact with them as much.** Maybe we can avoid them all together. That's helpful because relationships gone south hurt our quality of life. You've probably heard it said before: The quality of our lives is only as good as the quality of our relationships.

The quality of our **lives** is only as good as the quality of our **relationships**.

**If we were forced to be in constant relationships with "those" people, our quality of life would for sure suffer.**

**TRANSITION: Luckily...we don't often have direct relationships with our "those" people. I mean, sometimes we do (cough Mother-in-law), but not always. ... or do we???**

# Gavin Adams

## TENSION – Is it possible to only have relationships with the people who we already like?

- A. **THOSE PEOPLE LOOPHOLE:** We are tempted to believe that the quality of our life is connected to the quality of our relationships, so just try to have “relationships” with *our* people, not “*those*” people. Again, we are forced into some direct contact with people we don’t love and like, but that isn’t a “relationship.” Relationships require two people.

Relationships require **two** people.

It takes two to tango, right? And “those” people aren’t the people in our relational sphere. I mean, we know them (or know about them). We see them. But we don’t have a “relationship” with them.

It’s like a New Covenant loophole. If we don’t have a relationship with “those” people, we probably won’t ever have to “love” those people.

### **New Covenant Loophole**

You only have to “**love** one another”  
if you are **around** one another.

So, if we steer clear of those yuckoes, we’re good, right?

- B. **BROADENING OUR RELATIONSHIPS:** **Think about this:** You have relationships with lots and lots of people in your life. But **our relationships are broader than we might think.**

We believe our relationships are limited to the people in our life with whom we relate to. But that doesn’t tell the entire story. Because we have a relationship with anything we relate to.

We have a relationship **with**  
anything we relate **to**.

**EXAMPLE:** I have a relationship with spicy deluxe chicken sandwiches... with pepper jack cheese and buffalo and ranch sauce. I have a relationship with jalapeno peppers (have you noticed Jalapenos have taken the place of avocados which took the place of bacon in the food fad?). I have a relationship with queso (I have lots of food relationships).

Some of us have relationships with cars or boats or cars and boats. Some of us have a relationship with LeBron James or the Atlanta Falcons (that’s a very one-sided and abusive relationship). Maybe you would say you have a relationship with your house or sofa. I don’t know.

**CROWD INTERACTION:** Turn to someone beside you and tell them one thing you have a relationship with that doesn’t really relate back to you.

**THE POINT:** **Having a relationship doesn’t always require participation on both sides.** If you’ve named it, you have a relationship with it.

- C. **BACK TO THOSE PEOPLE:** You know what that means, right? If we can bring it back to the “those” people in our life...

We all have a **relationship** with  
“those” people in our life.

# Gavin Adams

You have a relationship with the “those” people in your life, even if they don’t have a relationship with you. If “those” people are the democrats, you have a relationship with them. Republicans? You have a relationship with them. If “those” people are a generation, you have a relationship with them.

- D. **QUALITY AND PEACE IN OUR LIFE:** So, like we said before, if the quality of our lives is only as good as the quality of our relationships.

The quality of our **lives** is only as good as the quality of our **relationships**.

**Our relationship with “those” people counts... and it is abusive and destructive TO YOU.** Your relationship with that other political party affects your quality of your life. Your relationship with that race, or generation, or lifestyle... it’s all affecting you, because the quality of your life is connected to the relationships in your life

**TRANSITION:** Now, when it comes to your car and your queso, I really can’t help today. A counselor can help, but I can’t. **BUT**, when it comes to the people version of “those” people, there is some help.

**FOUNDATION** – As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone – including “those people?”

**NOTE:** It’s often helpful to give some context for a biblical author or historical context for a passage if necessary to understand the principle for our life today.

- A. **WRITING TO THE ROMANS:** **In the book of Romans...**, Paul gives us some helpful advice to help us avoid the harmful effects of our “those” people relationships. Paul was so brilliant. He recognized this was true for people, even back in the first century. He knew that every one of our relationships mattered.

And listen, **he was up to his eyeballs with “those” people.** When he wrote the letter to the Roman Christians, he was in Corinth on his third missionary journey, raising money for the poverty-stricken Christians in Jerusalem. If you’ve ever tried to raise money in church, you know you’re going to meet lots of “those” people! Kidding...sort of.

- B. So Paul, in his letter to the Christians living in Rome, Paul addresses LOTS of things. It’s his longest letter (that we have). In Chapter 12, he addresses a Christian’s relations to the world around, including our friends, neighbors, *and* opponents.

**Romans 12:15-18 (NIV)**  
<sup>15</sup> Rejoice with **those** who rejoice; mourn with **those** who mourn.

- Like them or not.

# Garvin Adams

<sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with **one another**. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

- There's our catch phrase: "One another."

<sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of **everyone**.

- Because people who do evil to you are in the "those" people category.
- Then he gives us a concluding idea:

**NOTE:** What you'll see if the passage built backward. I'm building a case and the point in inverse to point out the ridiculous of the suggestion IF we miss how it begins.

<sup>18</sup> ... live at **peace** with everyone.

- Which is exactly what you'd expect from a missionary/pastor, right?
- This is the kind of stuff that makes you not want to be a Christian, because it's just not feasible.
- Feels so Christian-ridiculous, doesn't it? If "those" people would stop behaving like they do, I *would* live at peace with them. Thanks, Paul...not really that helpful.
- Luckily, that's the end of the thought. Let me fill in a few important gaps:

<sup>18</sup> If it is **possible** ... live at **peace** with everyone.

- To which we should all say, "Whew!"
- Paul wasn't stupid. He understood that living at a peace with everyone wasn't a real possibility. He was up to his eyeballs in "those" people. He had switched parties. He had people who hated him. People who didn't understand him. People trying to kill him. He was constantly persecuted, arrested, and more.
- Here's what we are about to see, though: "If it is possible" doesn't mean "if those people change..." "When they act better." "When they do it my way (the right way)." We really can't control "those" people (and believe me...we've all tried!). Paul understood that which is why he adds a bit of personal instruction and direct application for us all:

<sup>18</sup> If it is **possible**, **as far as it depends on you**, live at **peace** with everyone.

- And here we have the full thought.
- As far as it depends on you, meaning: Do what you can do. Whatever is within your control, do that to find peace in the relationship. Never let yourself be the reason for an un-peaceful relationship with another person.

Never let **yourself** be the reason for an un-peaceful relationship with **others**.

**TRANSITION:** So practically, what "depends on us?" How do we do this well? This is just good advice for all our relationships, but how can we apply this to our "those" people?

# Gavin Adams

## APPLICATION – What depends on us?

- A. **CONTROLLING WHAT WE CAN CONTROL:** If we try to apply this idea to our “those” people, we quickly realize that we will never be able to control “those” people. That’s why they are “those” people. They are different than us. They think differently. See the world differently. Behave differently. But we can control our side of the relationship. We *can* control our reactions and our responses. That’s exactly why Paul said, “as far as it depends on you.”
- B. **DEPENDS ON US:** Specifically, what depends on us? Our own ego, pride, desires, and prejudices depend on us, and we should never allow them to get in the way of living peaceably with others. I hand-picked these four because they all tend to trip me up along the path of seeking peace.

### What Depends On Us?

Our own ego, pride, desires, and prejudices should never get in the way of living peaceably with others.

We can’t be the reason for the lack of peace.

Each of these spaces in our life can all too easily keep us from controlling what we can control:

### What Depends On Us?

Our own ego, pride, desires, and prejudices should never get in the way of living peaceably with others.

- d. **EGO:** We can’t allow our own self-esteem or self-importance to block the path to peace. We all tend to look down on those with whom we disagree. It’s just in our nature. We like to believe we are right. We’re not always right.

### What Depends On Us?

Our own ego, pride, desires, and prejudices should never get in the way of living peaceably with others.

- e. **PRIDE:** We can’t allow our unwillingness to not back down and to be “right” to keep us from approaching others in humility. Assume there is something to learn, not something to teach.

### What Depends On Us?

Our own ego, pride, desires, and prejudices should never get in the way of living peaceably with others.

# Garvin Adams

- f. **DESIRES:** We can't allow our desire to control others to control our love and approach for others. After all, we can only control what depends on us. Our desire should be to make peace, not be right.

## What Depends On Us?

Our own ego, pride, desires, and prejudices should never get in the way of living peaceably with others.

- g. **PREJUDICES:** We can't allow an unfavorable opinion or feeling formed beforehand or without knowledge to keep us from seeking peace. A little more on this: In many cases (maybe most), we tend to fuel our prejudices more than challenge them. We all have a lot of prejudices, and most are more hidden than not. **EXAMPLE:** If you are drawn towards a particular side politically, and all you're doing is listening and watching more and more from that political side, you are fueling your prejudice. **MORE...**
- E. **EMPATHY:** There is a solution to our ego, pride, desires, and prejudices: **Empathy.** Empathy is the understanding and sharing in the feelings of others. The more we understand "those" people, the better we can share in their feelings, and the closer we get to peace – at least as far as it depends on us.

## What Depends On Us?

Empathy evolves our ego, proves our pride, discloses our desires, and professes our prejudices.

Because empathy is more curious than critical.

Empathy is curious, not critical.

*TRANSITION: In a way, the most empathetic thing we can do is to become more curious and less critical. And that only depends on you.*

## INSPIRATION – Curious questions.

- A. **CURIOUS ABOUT THOSE PEOPLE:** Ultimately, empathy is about understanding, and curiosity illuminates what we don't understand.

### CURIOUS QUESTIONS:

- a. What is it like to be you?
  - b. What do you think it's like to be me?
  - c. What is it like to be on the other side of me?
- B. **CONCLUSION:** So, back to us: This isn't about changing them...it's about changing us. And one thing I can promise you – empathy will change you.

# Garvin Adams

It is true: The quality of our lives is only as good as the quality of our relationships. So when it comes to your “those” people, Paul would say: Do what you can do, as far as it depends on you.

Do what **you** can do,  
as far as it **depends** on **you**.

**PRAYER**



# Garvin Adams

Church Name

**SERIES: In Your Shoes**

**MESSAGE 3: "Grace"**

**LINK TO MY SERMON:** <https://vimeo.com/757746051>

**Bottom Line:** Conversations create connections.

**Object Lesson:**

**Key Idea:** The reason we often struggle to love "those" people is that we don't agree with them. That's problematic when "those" people are over there, but it gets infinitely more difficult when "those" people become "that" person – in our family, our neighborhood, or even our workplace. Paul had lots of "those" people, and he gives us some great advice on handling our disagreements.

**CONNECTION** – Personal story about "those people."

**NOTE: CONNECTION:** I used a personal story to connect people to the message concept. In this final series message, we are considering the people who are nearly impossible to love. We've all had experiences with these people. The connection of this message is a perfect place to tell a story.

A. **PERSONAL STORY:** Have you ever found yourself on the wrong end of a "well meaning" person? Friend? Family member? Or a Mother-in-law? You know, those people who don't hesitate to give you their unsolicited advice.

Like the newlywed couple giving marriage advice, or the college student telling you how to better discipline your children.

I'm not sure if there is a way to rank these in order of horrible but being on the wrong end of "well meaning" Christians is quite possible the worst.

**MY STORY:** I can think of quite a few examples from my life. It's funny ... I've probably received more unsolicited Christian advice as a pastor than I ever did before becoming a professional Christian. But by far, my favorite (by that I mean I'm still a bit frustrated by it) happened when I was in high school. At 15 I started dating this crazy gorgeous super model who was even more beautiful on the inside (who I eventually married). I went to church on Wednesday nights to be at our youth group and Chantel would come with me. One night, I was standing outside with a group of friends and Chantel was beside me. As we were talking as a group, the Associate Pastor (who baptized me a couple of years prior), came up and asked to speak with me – which was weird, because he had not spoken to me since I was baptized.

# Garvin Adams

He pulls me aside, away from my friends, and here's what he said, "Son, I saw how close you were standing beside that girl, and I know what you were thinking about."

Now, I have the spiritual gift of sarcasm. And with my gift on full display, without the gift of wisdom or a filter mind you (or a fully developed frontal lobe), I look right back him, and I said, "Well do you know what I'm thinking now!!"

I was furious. I was one of the good kids. I didn't smoke or drink or chew, but I did seem to hang out more with those who do. I just remember walking back over, grabbing Chantel's arm, and telling her we were leaving now. I wanted to just make out with her right on that sidewalk in front of that guy – to prove a point AND to make out. I went home and my parents asked, "How was church tonight?" And I just lost it! I told them, "I'm never going back to that church – ever!"

And you know what, I never went back – literally. Never. I have not set foot on the property of that church since that ill-fated day at the age of 15.

Now, I'm sure that pastor meant well. He understood the power of purity and wanted to be sure I was going to prioritize God in my dating. AND...he was probably right. I was a 15-year-old boy. 90% of my brain capacity was dedicated to one area of life, leaving 10% for literally everything else the world had to offer. I mean, odds are that anytime he would have said, "I know what you are thinking," he would have been right!! He was very clear. He saw an open door. He saw an opportunity.

I may have NEVER returned to church at all, except that Chantel's family attended a church, and her parents only allowed us to "date" for 6 hours a week, but church time didn't count, so if her church was open, we were there! Seniors trip to Helen... sure, we'll go! That stupid dating rule is the only thing that kept me at church.

**NOTE:** It is important to notice that I twist the point of the story here. Sure, that pastor was a "those people" to me, but I was equally a "those people" to him.

- B. **I WAS THOSE PEOPLE:** When I think back to that moment at the age of 15, on the sidewalk of that church, standing with my friends and my girlfriend – you know what I was to that pastor? I wasn't Gavin. I wasn't just a guy standing around in a circle with some friends. I was a "those" people to that pastor.

## THOSE PEOPLE

Those "teenagers!" Those kids holding hands and thinking lustful thoughts!

Those "hooligans!" Those kids who are always up to no good.

Those "other generation!" Those people who think differently and see the world differently (wrongly)

- C. **THOSE PEOPLE:** In this series, we've been talking about how to deal with "those" people. Which is important because we all have them in our life.

# Gavin Adams

## THOSE PEOPLE

The **group** of people who are nearly impossible to love.

You know who they are, right? ... they are on the roads, in the other political party, in that other generation... We might have different “those” people, but we all have “those” people. They are difficult to love. Heck, they’re hard to even like.

**TRANSITION:** *Those people are difficult. This is why it’s just better to keep “those” people over there (where they belong), and our people around us.*

**TENSION** – If those people would stay over there where they belong, things would be much better for me over here.

- A. **KEEPING THOSE PEOPLE OVER THERE:** If it we can keep “those” people over there and “our” people over here, life is just easier.

Life is easier when “those” people stay over **there**.

Even better. **Often we can keep our world segregated. MY STORY:** I did – I left that church never to return. I stopped trusting pastors. Ironic that I became one!

You know what? Typically, we can keep a healthy separation between us and “those” people. Of course, last week we realized even that separation doesn’t remove us from having a relationship with those people. But at least it’s a *distant* relationship. When our “those” people are a category, it’s much easier to ignore them and confront them through our *imaginary conversations*.

- B. **TODAY... THOSE PEOPLE BECOME THAT PERSON:** **Here’s what I want us to consider today:** What do we do when “those” people don’t stay over there. What do we do – or what should we do as Christians – when “those” people come over here?

When we think of “those” people, we do think of a group. But every group is made up of individuals, and those individuals often don’t remain in the group over there.

Those **people** often become that **person**...

*[BUILD AND HIGHLIGHT EACH KEY WORD INDIVIDUALLY  
(marriage, family, neighborhood, workplace)]*

Those **people** often become that **person**...  
in our **marriage**, our **family**,  
our **neighborhood**, and our **workplace**.

**When “those” people become “that” person, it gets more personal, and much more difficult.**

# Garvin Adams

- C. **NEW COMMAND AND AGREEMENT:** If you aren't a Jesus-follower, you've got some great options when those people move into your life.

**Non-Christian: Fight or flight!** Just "tell it like it is." Set 'em straight. Scissor-kick them in the throat.

**NOTE:** Whenever possible, it's helpful to engage and acknowledge the non-believer in the room or listening online.

**Christian: Take new commandment seriously:**

## John 13:34-35 (NIV)

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

Jesus is suggesting his followers find a way forward with all people – including "those" people and "that" person.

**TRANSITION:** Again, the Apostle Paul can help us here. Paul had lots of people with whom he disagreed. And he definitely had plenty of people who violently disagreed with him.

**FOUNDATION & APPLICATION** – We should choose conversations over confrontations.

**NOTE:** In this message, I combined the FOUNDATION and APPLICATION. Paul's passage is full of application, so I allowed his words to lead the conversation through these two segments.

- A. **PAUL AND COLOSSAE:** That's why we should love Paul on this topic because he was up to his eyeballs in "those" people. Not in a distant, group-over-there sort of way, either. He was often surrounded by people with whom he did not agree, but he wanted to love them well, which meant he had to accept them where they are for who they are.

The churches he planted and was supporting were constantly fighting against false teachers and such – with people which whom they disagreed!

- B. **COLOSSIANS:** In Paul's letter to the Colossian Christians, he gives them some specific instructions on how to interact with "those" people in their community on an individual basis. I suspect if we heed his advice, we'll see a beautiful result.

## Colossians 4:3-6 (NIV)

<sup>3</sup> And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.

- **PAUL'S MESSAGE:** MORE...

# Gavin Adams

## 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NIV)

<sup>3</sup> For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...

That is Paul's message. That's the gospel. You need God, but your sin has separated you from God. God loves you too much to leave you separated, so he allowed his Son to die for your sin as a final sacrifice. And he raised him three days later to punctuate the payment in full and new life on the other side. Believing in that truth is accepting God's free gift of forgiveness.

## Colossians 4:3-6 (NIV)

<sup>3</sup> And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.

- **OUR MESSAGE:** Paul is reminding his audience that his/our message isn't "their" message. Those people aren't on board with our message, either. Of course, Paul is referencing the people who were anti-Jesus and fighting against the early Christian movement. But today, things aren't all that different. There are plenty of opponents to the gospel... unfortunately; Christians have been our own worst enemy! Why? Because when we are faced with "those" people, we tend to "tell it like it is" rather than "love one another."
- **WHY ARE WE AFRAID TO LOVE PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE?** Why are Christians so afraid to love people where they are and for who they are?

Why are we so afraid  
to love people  
where they are and  
for who they are?

- **AGREEMENT AND ACCEPTANCE:** We've been led to believe..., at least our culture has tried to lead us to believe, that agreement and acceptance are the same thing.

### Agreement | Acceptance

I get it... We are living in polarized times. Everything is divisive... We are encouraged (forced) to choose sides. Social media has convinced us that our opinions (even our uniformed opinions) are not just opinions, but facts. We've been led to believe that disagreements only are resolved when the other side comes over to your side.

But agreement and acceptance aren't the same.

### Agreement | Acceptance

Agreement means another must adopt the same perspective as you.

Agreement: Agreement means another must adopt the same perspective as you.

# Gavin Adams

## Agreement | Acceptance

Agreement means another must adopt the same perspective as you.

Acceptance means we value the person over their perspective.

Acceptance: Acceptance means we value the person over their perspective.

## Agreement | Acceptance

Agreement means another must adopt the same perspective as you.

Acceptance means we value the person over their perspective.

Agreement and acceptance are related, but they are not the same.

- If we continue to connect agreement and acceptance, we'll be stuck. We'll be unable to move forward with "those" people or "that" person. And we'll be unable to live out Jesus' new commandment in each and every circumstance. Differentiating between them is critical if we ever hope to follow Jesus well.

Paul learned to accept people where they are, for who they are.

That doesn't mean that he didn't challenge people, but it does mean that Paul decided that his approach determined his influence.

- So he gives the Colossian Christians some helpful advice on loving "those" people in our life well:

<sup>5</sup> Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.

- Opportunities matter. They aren't unlimited. They can't be wasted.
- **OPPORTUNITY:** Making the most of every opportunity is probably what that Associate Pastor would say he was doing, though. It that thing in us all that wants to "tell it like it is." "Truth in love." "If I don't correct them, who will?" "If I don't point out their faults, they'll never know!"
- Here's Paul's instruction: When "those" people become that person, here is the step to take:

<sup>6</sup> Let your conversation...

- There's more, but let's pause for a second.
- Conversation is a massively important word. We don't see two sides conversing much. We see yelling and confronting all the time. Everywhere. But we don't see much conversation.

Confrontations create chasms.

- But... Conversations create connections.

# Gavin Adams

Confrontations create chasms.

Conversations create connections.

- Paul understood that to “love one another” as Jesus has first loved us, we must learn to lead with conversations, not confrontations.
- Conversations allow space for empathy, while confrontations rid the space of understanding.
- Conversations are curious, where confrontations are critical.
- These conversations somewhat have a formula, too:

<sup>6</sup> Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt...

- Conversations that bridge the gap of the chasm begin with grace, not truth – even if we know for absolute certain that our truth is *the* truth.
- Grace is a bridge across the chasm.

Grace seeks to understand,  
not be understood.

- We have really been consistent at getting this wrong. All of us. But especially Christians and “those” non-Christians.
- We confront with truth, but we converse with grace.

We confront with truth, but  
we converse with grace.

<sup>6</sup> Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

- For Paul and the Christians in Colossae, Paul was addressing those people outside the faith. For us, maybe it is faith-outsiders, too. Or maybe it’s the category of “those” people. Or maybe it’s that person in our family, our workplace, or our neighborhood.
  - The great news is that conversations create connections with “everyone,” regardless of which category of “those” people we are conversing with.
- C. **EXAMPLES FROM JESUS:** If you think back to what we see in the life of Jesus, this is exactly what he did. I imagine this is where Paul got the idea! Jesus often was face to face with people with whom he didn’t agree (FYI: He was always on the “right” side of the disagreement). But think about how he approached agreement and acceptance:
- a. **Woman at the well**... “You’re right, you don’t have a husband...you have had 5...”
  - b. **Woman caught in adultery**... “Go and stop sinning.”
  - c. **Zacchaeus**... “Yes, you have been stealing...”
  - d. We could go on and on and on and on...

# Gavin Adams

Conversations create connections.

## TRANSITION:

*If you aren't a Christian... , you should consider leveraging the power of conversations full of grace in your life. It will help you. It will help your relationships. It might even help your career. If you are a Jesus-follower, closing the chasm through gracious conversations is part of the new commandment.*

## INSPIRATION – What's really at stake?

- A. **MORE AT STAKE:** We don't have to agree with someone to accept them. We DO need to have conversations with them to understand them and make the most of every opportunity. We don't have to agree to show grace or seek to understand. We don't have to agree to be curious. To be genuine. To show sincere empathy.
- This is helpful in our daily life. In our family. Our workplace. Our neighborhood. But before we wrap up this series... this might be the most important lesson for us as Christians to learn when we are interacting with people outside of the faith. We believe everybody lives forever somewhere. Paul's heart behind this instruction was to help us get out of the way and give Jesus space to meet people where they are, for who they are.

## PRAYER