

**LOVE
HANDLES**
Get a Grip on Your Relationships
Jan 27 - Feb 17



Parkway Fellowship

Love Handles: Get a Grip on Your Relationships • Dad Bod: Embracing the Imperfect •
Romans 8:1-2; Ephesians 5:21; 1 Thessalonians 5:11 • 02/03/2019

Main Point

Rather than rejecting people, we can do what God does and embrace them in their imperfections.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Complete this sentence: “If people would only”

Do you tend to expect the best out of people or the worst?

How do you typically handle disappointments in people: walk away, angrily confront them, sulk about it, try to help them do better, or forgive them quickly? Explain.

Nobody's perfect. We know it, but we still struggle when the imperfections of people impact us personally. People to be difficult to deal with, and we can quickly write them off. We'll see in today's passages, though, the biblical way to handle it.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Ask a volunteer to read Romans 8:1-2.

How would you define condemnation, and what does it have to do with a person's relationship with God? Why is there no condemnation for people in Christ Jesus?

How does it make you feel to know that God sees your imperfections only through the lens of Jesus' death on the cross?

A person under condemnation is one who has been pronounced guilty and sentenced to punishment. Because of the fallen state of humanity, we all enter this world as those guilty of sin and deserving of death. We do not have the ability in and of ourselves to have a relationship with God and receive the eternal life and grace He offers. However, in Christ, we have no condemnation. We do not need to fear rejection from God. The focus here is not solely on the end of life. To be in Christ means to be embraced by God and alive in Him right now.

How should the fact that there is "no condemnation" for those who are in Jesus Christ impact our relationships?

Verse 2 compares "the law of the Spirit of life" with the "law of sin and death." What characterizes each of these in the way we relate to imperfect people?

The law—which refers to the Ten Commandments—could not bring life, because it was limited by the flesh. Meeting the requirements of the law depended on people being perfect and sinless. With the exception of Jesus Christ, no one has ever been able to keep the law perfectly. Because of our sin, the law only highlights the depth and breadth of our problem with temptation. In this way, it condemns us. What we were unable to do in the flesh, however, Christ did by taking on our flesh and conquering sin. Where we are sinful, He is perfect.

Would you say you struggle more to embrace your own imperfections or the imperfections of others? How do these verses help you with that?

| Ask a volunteer to read Ephesians 5:21.

How would you define submission? Why does the word tend to stir up controversy?

For what reason did Paul explain we should submit to one another? What does a person's reverence for Christ have to do with his or her earthly relationships?

Are there exceptions to this command? Explain.

Mentioning the word submission usually generates negative reactions. One way to understand it is as yielding to the interests and needs of another person over your own. In this week's message, it was put this way: "Die to self by putting thee before me." Paul charged that submission expressed devotion to God. It also demonstrated that the church took seriously the example of submission set by Jesus, who selflessly gave Himself on the cross for our best interest.

| Ask a volunteer to read 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

What is one of the goals of encouragement, based on 1 Thessalonians 5:11? What does the opposite of that look like?

One of the privileges we have as Christ's followers is to invest ourselves in the lives of others, adding to them, rather than tearing them down. Instead of engaging in criticism and fault-finding, we are to act toward others in a way that will encourage them to be more godly.

This week's "Love Handle" is to compliment people. When is complimenting people a practical application of 1 Thessalonians 5:11 and when is it meaningless words?

Encouragement doesn't come naturally for us, although it does come easier for some than for others. Because we all have a tendency to be selfish people, consumed with our own needs and problems rather than the needs of others, we have to remind ourselves of the value of encouragement, and we have to work at it.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Does embracing the imperfect mean we should ignore sinfulness and just let people live their lives? Explain.

How would you counsel someone who feels they are not "good enough"?

Does complimenting people in their strengths come naturally to you or is it difficult? Why is it important that we look for the strengths in others and regularly encourage them with meaningful words?

Pray

Thank Jesus for descending to the depths of our need by taking upon Himself the penalty and punishment for our sins. Ask God to give you such a deep understanding and humble appreciation for His embracing grace in our own lives that we will be compelled to extend it to others.

Commentary

| Romans 8:1-2

8:1-2. Paul's "therefore ... now" occurs this way only here in Paul's epistles. Coupled together, the two particles call attention to a turning point in Paul's epistle (see 5:1 and 12:1 for other major turning points signified by "therefore"). The main text of Paul's argument can be seen most clearly by skipping from 7:6

directly to 8:1: “But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code” (7:6). Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (8:1).

In Christ Jesus and “in Christ” occur 119 times in Paul’s epistles. The other epistles add only four additional occurrences (none in Acts and the Gospels). It is fitting that the apostle who received the revelation of the mystery of the union of Jew and Gentile into one body should coin a phrase to describe those incorporated into one body by that union. The body is, of course, the body of Christ, the church (see Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27; Eph. 4:12; Col. 1:24). But it is not the membership of all Christendom’s organized churches. Rather, the body of Christ is that mystical body made up of those who have died together with Christ through faith, and have been made “one with him in spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17). Being in Christ Jesus means we are free from the law of sin and death, which blocked our way to every other blessing that is ours in Christ. The law of the Spirit of life which Paul says has set us free from the law of sin and death is more of a principle, or controlling power, than a law (see Rom. 7:23).

| Ephesians 5:21

5:21. Paul ends a list of actions that show the Holy Spirit’s presence in a believer’s life by commanding submission to one another. In today’s society, the idea may seem odd. Yet in Christian fellowship we must be willing to learn from others, even from those who differ from us in age, gender, or station in life. We are also called on to serve one another and be willing to accept counsel and correction from others. An aggressive, arrogant attitude is the opposite of being careful in the way we live.

| 1 Thessalonians 5:11

The assurance of salvation, of transformation into the image of Christ, should encourage us. As we are encouraged, we must continually talk about it and remind one another of our future so that we do not grow weary or lose heart in the spiritual battles which rage. Every Christian has a responsibility to encourage others in the faith. In an age which is prone to criticism and fault-finding, the same fault-finding attitude can creep into the church. It can become natural to talk about others or critique their performance instead of examining our own hearts or encouraging others toward godliness.

While encouragement inspires us to keep on track spiritually, building each other up deals with investing in others. We should add to other people in such a way that they will be spiritually stronger. In this way, we encourage maturity and fortification of character. We need to look upon all persons as those for whom Christ died. They are eternal soul-spirits just as valuable as we are. We have a responsibility to encourage them to remain faithful and growing until the end.

