

**Title:** Together for Good: The Limits of Love // **Scripture:** Romans 14:1–15:13

**ARRIVAL / SOCIAL TIME** *15-20 minutes*

Spend the first 15 minutes or so of your time together catching up and socializing with one another. Also find time to catch up together on how the assignments from last week turned out.

**SERMON REVIEW** *5-10 minutes*

This week we continued our series, Together for Good, through the book of Romans by looking at Romans 14–15. In this passage, Paul lays out a pathway for community among people with different opinions by calling us to the way of love. Love engages faith with flexibility. But what does flexibility really look like? In this sermon, Jon differentiates between dogma, doctrine and opinion as three categories of our faith. Dogma is the truth that all faith is built upon. It is important and essential for every Christian community in every place. Doctrines are deep beliefs that form a community. However, they are important but not essential—meaning that while they hold an important place in the individual community, they may not be held by every Christian in every place. Opinions are important for the individual but not essential for the community. How every community deals with dogma, doctrine and opinion dictates the health and vitality of that community. So, Paul calls the Christian community to live with a Christ-like attitude, awareness and allegiance. This means not despising those who think differently than you but welcoming them into your community by having a Christ-like attitude toward them. It means getting to know people and becoming aware of why they believe the way they do. And it means living a life of allegiance to Christ in a way that serves others instead of serving ourselves.

**THE MAIN THOUGHT** *keep this in mind as you facilitate discussion*

The gospel both transforms our individuality and forms our community.

**SEE IT – Questions** *10-15 minutes*

**Picture** (What is the story saying?): Do you think it is possible for people with different opinions to be part of the same community? Why or why not? How did Jon differentiate between dogma, doctrine and opinion? What does it mean to be Christ-like as we work through differing opinions in our community? What should our attitude be? How can we become aware of the beliefs and opinions of others? How might we live in allegiance to Christ as we create community with those who may believe differently than us?

**Mirror** (Where am I in the story?): What keeps you from creating community with people who believe differently than you? Is there anyone that you despise for their beliefs or opinions? How might God be asking you to deal with that? Is there any place that you are causing people to stumble? How might God be asking you to discern your approach to this? Is there any place that you are pleasing yourself instead of welcoming others? How might God be asking you to sacrifice in this?

**Window** (How does the story change how I see those around me?): What would it look like to create a community of unity but not uniformity? How might this be a testimony of love to the world? What would it look like to be known as a community of love?

**BE IT – Practice**

**Change UP – Worship**

Pick out a few of your favorite worship songs and sing them together as a group. The power of worship is that people with very different voices sing together in one voice. After you spend a few minutes worshipping together, discuss how worship creates an atmosphere and community where people with different voices sing with one voice.

**Change IN – Welcome**

Use the bucket illustration that Jon introduced in his sermon to work through the differences between dogma, doctrine and opinion in your group. List out the things that are both essential and important and place those things in your dogma “bucket.” List out the things that are essential and important to your group but might not be important to other groups and place them in the doctrine “bucket.” List out the places that are important and essential to the individuals in your group but may not be held by everyone in your group and place them in the opinions “bucket.” Then talk together as a community about how you can be a place of welcome that is united as a community but not uniform in your opinions.

**Change OUT – Warmth**

Reflect with your group on this ancient Christian idea: “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.” How might your group best reflect this idea to the world? Think about the ways your group could open itself up to others through this mantra and the way your group could personify this as you come across people with differing opinions than you.

**CLOSING PRAYER** *5 minutes*

May you see God clearly, hear His calling clearly, and may He help you fulfill that calling in faithfulness, trusting no matter how bleak things may appear, we trust the God who raises the dead.