

Love Does, Session 4: BE NOT AFRAID

Jesus said “Go live a really, really full life. One that is chocked full of adventures.”

Further explore the challenge of Love Does by engaging in any or all of the following activities between sessions. This part of Love Does is not about following rules or doing your homework. The following activities are designed to give you the opportunity to jump into the risk of God’s kingdom with both feet.

DO: WELCOME A STRANGER

Read Hebrews 13:1-3(NRSV):

13 Let mutual love continue. **2** Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. **3** Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.

Behind some of our most primal fears is often a basic fear of the unknown. The unfamiliar or unseen is usually scariest to us. This is why one of the classic Christian disciplines that can heal our fear is the practice of hospitality. Through hospitality--welcoming strangers (or the unknown) into our home, reaching out to the sick and needy--we turn our fear into friendship and do another small part in bringing heaven to earth.

This week you are invited to welcome a stranger. How can we do this while also staying socially distanced? Let’s get creative!

Here are a few ideas:

1. You can invite a friend (maybe even a new friend from your small group) to join you for a meal over Zoom. Decide on a time that works best for you and Zoom or Facetime and chat while you eat or sip some coffee.
2. Connect with someone in need. Is there someone that is stuck home alone that you could call or FaceTime? Maybe you could write a letter to someone in prison. Ask God to guide you to someone that may already be in your life orbit to whom you might extend hospitality (virtual or in-person).

3. Meet a friend (or an acquaintance) outside on the patio, in your driveway or at a park.

Reflection Questions:

- What did you learn about yourself and about God through this exercise?
- Would living this way more often make you less afraid? Why or why not?

REFLECT: GO DOWN TO THE WATER

Continuing in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, read Matthew 6:25-34(NRSV):

25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink,^[a] or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? **26** Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? **27** And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? **28** And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, **29** yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. **30** But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? **31** Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ **32** For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **33** But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. **34** “So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

Jesus moves toward the conclusion of this grand teaching in Matthew’s gospel with a common not to worry. Taken out of context, it can feel like an unachievable demand. Don’t worry? Are you crazy, Jesus? I have no control over that, and now I’m worried I can’t live up to your expectation not to worry!

Relax. This is not what Jesus is getting at.

There is a flow to the Sermon on the Mount. It's going somewhere. And where Jesus is taking the crowds when He tells them not to worry is at the conclusion of a long section about entrusting ourselves to God. God is trustworthy, Jesus explains, and the more we accept that truth and practice it, the freer we become from worry and anxiety.

Bob began this *Love Does* session by talking about how he likes to be “down by the water,” because for him it is there that life slows down and its relentless cadence is disrupted. So, your invitation is to take this meditation and find some water to sit beside. It can be the ocean, a lake, a river, a swimming pool, a decorative fountain, or the bathtub. Wherever you go, let the water symbolize the place where life slows down for a bit.

Once you arrive at your destination, take a few deep breaths and practice just being with God. You can reflect on where your life is with God and where He wants to take you next. Or you might consider your fears, where they might come from, and what it will take to surrender them to God. Whatever you do, don't fill this time by the water with activity. Too much activity (even if it's good stuff like reading the Bible) can actually rob us of the benefits of resting. Take the time to just *be*.

Once you're returned from the water's edge, reflect on the experience.

Reflection Questions:

- Where did you choose to go and how long did you stay?
- Describe the experience with one word.
- Did anything distract you while you were alone? Does that tell you anything about yourself?
- How could a practice like this be part of your everyday life with God?