

Love is Not Rude

「 Introduction 」

20 years ago, Richard Mouw's book "Uncommon Decency" caused a significant stir. Starting with the question of whether sincere faith and civility can truly coexist, the book pointed out the rudeness of Christians who speak the truth but lack love, insist on being right while losing people, and argue well while damaging relationships. It also suggested that Christians today should 1) restore authenticity, 2) focus on relationship-centered, ministry, 3) recover an attitude of listening, and 4) live a lifestyle that communicates the Gospel.

「 Consideration among believers 」

There was a sense of rudeness within the church in Corinth. This behavior was clearly revealed during their communal meals.

1. What happened in the church at Corinth?

1 Corinthians 11:20-22

²⁰ When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. ²¹ For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. ²² What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not."

2. Paul corrects this issue and exhorts them to "wait for each other" (1 Corin. 11:33-34). What would be the meaning of this?

3. Love is more of an attitude than an emotion. Let's reflect on and share the areas within our own church where more **consideration** and **respect** are needed.

「 The Speech of Believers 」

The church in Rome lacked kindness in their speech. Rather than acknowledging and accepting one another's differences, they criticized and condemned each other.

Romans 14:1 "1 As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions."

Romans 14:4 "Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand."

Romans 14:10 "Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God."

1. Let's read Romans 14:1-12. What issues caused conflict within the church in Rome?

- Matters regarding food

Romans 14:2-3 "² One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. ³ Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him."

- Matters regarding specific days (holy days/feasts)

Romans 14:5-6 "⁵ One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God."

2. Much like the Jews and Gentiles, when we fail to properly understand and respect different cultural and faith backgrounds, we end up treating one another rudely (through criticism and contempt). Let us reflect on how this might apply to us today.

7 Spiritual Pathways

Everyone is different. This is the principle of creation and the foundation of its beauty and abundance. Our lives are enriched through diversity. However, within the church, we often tend to judge spiritual growth by a single standard.

1. The Intellectual Pathway
2. The Relational Pathway
3. The Serving Pathway
4. The Worship Pathway
5. The Activist Pathway
6. The Contemplative (prayer) Pathway
7. The Creation (nature) Pathway

Sharing

Let us choose 2 spiritual pathways that are most familiar to us. Then let's share how we might potentially misunderstand or judge those who follow a different pathway from our own.

「The Courteous Love of Jesus」

1. Jesus' Incarnation

- He entered into our culture.
- He spoke in our language.
- He dwelt in the midst of people's lives.

God the Son did not command us to "come up." He came down to us instead.

2. Jesus' Waiting – "Behold, I stand at the door and knock..." (Rev. 3:20)

- He does not break down the door.
- He does not force His way in.
- Yet, He never leaves.

The love of Jesus is quiet but never gives up; it may seem silent but always present; it is long-suffering but never grows cold.

3. Jesus' Kindness – "A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out..." (Isa. 42:3)

- Even a life that is like a bruised reed, He does not break but protects.
- He treasures the weak who are fading away and restores them.
- He does not let the failures of life to be the end but enables to stand again.

「Application」

The closer the relationship, the more comfortable it becomes. This makes it easier to be rude to the very people we should love the most. Being comfortable with one another means being able to meet without pretense. However, there is a clear difference between being transparent and being rude. Family members may lounge around in their pajamas or see each other with unwashed faces. But even with family, we must not be disrespectful. For love does not act rudely.

Sharing

1. Let's reflect on the people we tend to be most rude to. Then, let's share who we ought to treat with the greatest kindness.

2. A Small Group is a community. Let's think about ways we can be more considerate of one another within our group and share one idea each.

「Let us pray together」

The greatest value the Bible speaks of is love, because God is love. Therefore, love should not remain only in our hearts, but should be revealed through our words, attitudes, and relationships. "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Let us all pray that good deeds are restored within us, that we build one another up with consideration and respect, and that we become a community that lives according to the kind, patient, and courteous love that Christ has demonstrated.