

I want to talk about a quote from a friend on Facebook. I have known him since high school, and we share a deep love for Jesus and dogs. He posted, “No pastor can support same-sex marriage, homosexuality, transgender, abortion, and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.” I could have snarked back with some zippy retort. I didn’t, but I did respond with, “I do disagree, but I do so in love.” We could have debated all of these issues on Facebook, but that is not the place for in-depth conversation, especially involving heated topics.

My intent today is not to debate the issues he raised or even say, “Hooray for my side.” Instead, I want to lament the rise of binary thinking. This either-or type of thinking has helped build walls between us, as friends, churches, communities, and society.

When I think of these divisions, I think of The Letter to the Ephesians attributed to the Apostle Paul, which reads, “For he is our peace; in his flesh, he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.” (Ephesians 2:14)

Like Jesus, we are to be breaking down walls, not building them.

A pastor that I follow, Carey Nieuwhof, reminds us that one of the things non-Christians despise about Christians is that we are too judgemental.... “Two minutes on social media will reveal Christians and preachers condemning unchurched people for their sexual habits and preferences, lifestyle choices, and even political views. I doubt this is what Jesus had in mind when he gave his life in love for the world.”

One of the significant problems we face in our relationships and creating a community is shutting down communication before it starts. Statements that put down the other side for what they believe close down any opportunities for change or growth for ourselves or the others. As Nieuwhof says in his article, “I realized years ago that very few people get judged into life change. Far more get loved into it.”

This does not mean we can’t have solid beliefs; for example, I strongly disagree with my friend, but God called me into the business of love, not judgment. And I trust my beliefs are faithful and grounded in my core belief of love. Indeed the Scripture I will use this week in Church reminds me that the two Great Commandments are to love God and love our neighbor, and in doing so, we come near to God’s coming kingdom.

Us and Them thinking is dangerous. Oh, I know that some things must be deeply opposed. But these are things that are absolutely wrong. Moreover, I find those things that are universally wrong are the ones that willfully and knowingly spread hatred rather than express a difference of opinion.

Friends, today, try to do two things: think carefully about what you say and post, and ask God to help you take down a wall that divides you from a neighbor.