



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Romans 8: 31-39

KEY POINT: We live in a world where suffering is inevitable, but God's salvation offers us incredible hope.

FOR LEADERS

- **Worship Night!** We're going to be hosting an outdoor Worship Night at our Totowa campus! Mark your calendars for May 16th!
- **Feedback:** Walking in discipleship together this past year during Pandemic has been CHALLENGING (to say the least)! Even so, the challenging seasons we've faced have opened new doors of opportunity for us together as a church. As we prayerfully consider what it means for discipleship to consider to flourish at Emergence, we would very much like to hear from our faithful leaders! When you have a moment, please head to www.emergencenj.org/feedback to let us know what your experience has been and to help provide insight as we plan for what's to come!

GETTING STARTED

- [1] **Communities Video:** Watch this week's community extras video!
- [2] **Icebreaker:** Coffee or tea? How do you take it?
- [3] **Opener:** What were your biggest takeaways from the sermon this week?

DECONSTRUCTION

In the sermon this week, we talked about Christians "deconstructing" their faith, or the process of questioning fundamental aspects of faith to reevaluate what we believe and what our lives are about. Ryan went on to point out that there are essentially two ways to do this: the healthy way, fueled by mission, and the destructive way, fueled by skepticism.

- [1] What are some of the dangers of a skepticism-driven deconstruction of our faith? Why do you think this appeals to so many people today?
- [2] What does it look like to deconstruct our faith in a healthy way, fueled by Gospel mission?
- [3] In general, what are some ways we can encourage people to deal with their doubts in a healthy way?

For Leaders:

- **The destructive way**— Often fueled by ex-Christian writers / speakers / social media personalities, where people attempt to dismantle what they believe by feeding doubts and disillusionments with popular one-sided critiques of classical Christianity.
- **The healthy way**— Known as "disenculturation," this is where a missionary will seek to disentangle the message of the Gospel, the Church, the Bible, and what it means to be a Christian from the ways in which these things have been colored by our own culture / sub-culture. The result of this is a more durable Christianity, contextualized to meet the challenges of modern life in a way that's faithful to what God's revealed in Scripture.

WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?

Ask for someone to read Romans 8:31-32.

- [4] What are some reasons for why people might question if God is really for them? When was a time where you experienced this yourself?



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- [5]** How do these verses in Romans 8 engage this concern? What happens if we fail to truly grasp this?
- [6]** Verse 32 shows us that God will graciously give us “all things”, but more importantly that He gave his Son up for us. What do you think Paul is trying to help us understand here?

For Leaders: To get a better idea of what Paul means by God giving us “all things”, check out Rom. 8:16-17, 1 Cor. 3:21-22, 15:27-28.

WHO SHALL BRING CHARGES?

Ask for someone to read Romans 8:33.

- [7]** What kinds of “charges” do you think Paul is talking about?
- [8]** In your own words, describe what Paul means by “justification.”
- [9]** Notice that the thrust of this verse isn’t simply *that* we are justified, but also *who* justifies us (“*it is God who justifies*”). What difference does this make for the person who fears judgment?

WHO SHALL CONDEMN?

Ask for someone to read Romans 8:34.

- [10]** In the sermon, Ryan mentioned that our sin is primarily an offense against God. Why is this important for a Christian to understand?
- [11]** What are the three things that this verse points out about Jesus which should put to rest any fears of condemnation? How do each of them contribute to the hope we have in Christ?

WHO SHALL SEPARATE US?

Ask for someone to read Romans 8:35-39.

- [12]** How do these verses temper the expectation that God is only loving if he saves us from all struggles in this life?
- [13]** What is the substance of Paul’s encouragement here for those who feel that suffering somehow severs us from God’s love?
- [14]** When was a time in your own life where you really needed to know this? Who is someone in your life right now who might need to hear what God is saying to us in this passage?

PRAYER

- [1]** Pray that God would show you areas of doubt in your faith, and encourage you with the truth that, for the Christian, there is nothing that can separate us from God’s love.
- [2]** Pray that God would help you to have the confidence described in this passage.