

This week Pastor Andy brings us Part One of the four-part series "God's Toughest Jobs" with the message entitled "You Are Loved."

Do you have a job you consider to be tough? Chances are you do. Many people have jobs that test their patience, dedication, integrity, etc. Like many others, you are going to have your tough days. Did you ever consider that God has a tough job also? Among the toughest things about God's job may be how He finds a way to love us. As you examine the ways people avoid God and how much He still loves us, you will be able to appreciate how tough His job is and how easy yours is in comparison.

Why do people avoid God? People have three main fears that keep them trapped in a life without Him. The first fear is that they will have to give up their fun. You may know someone like that who likes the idea of having a relationship with God but is scared of the thought of having to give up the things they think make life fun. While it's true that God will convict you of those areas of your life that are outside of His will for you, His desire is to give you "life to the fullest."

The second fear is that they will become some kind of religious fanatic. Some Christians have a tendency to become overzealous in certain things and can appear to others to be judgmental, narrow minded, or self righteous. In so doing they turn off the very people they are hoping to reach for Christ. Remember to love people first and foremost, so that they can see the good Christ has done inside of you.

The third fear is that they'll lose their freedom. Show people that being a Christian is true freedom and peace, not a spiritual straightjacket.

Now that you have a better idea of the fears that keep people from God, let's look at how much God loves us in return. First, God's love is wide enough for everybody. God not only loves His children, those who are already believers, but everyone else as well. As strange as it may seem, God loves the extremists in other countries who plot violence against us. As Christians demonstrate Christ's love in the world, more and more people of other faiths are coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Second, His love is long enough to last forever. Andy tells the story of a father who was determined to save his son from being buried under the rubble of a collapsed school house following an earthquake. Digging for 38 hours straight, he rescued 14 children, including his son. An amazing story of love and hope, yet it pales in comparison to the kind of love our heavenly father has for us.

Third, His love is high enough to get you to heaven. Two members of our church gave their own testimonies of how God patiently and lovingly called each of them into a deeper relationship with Him and His people. Every person who has answered the call of God has their own story of just how amazing His love is. When you consider where your final home is, living eternally in His presence, you gain understanding of His love for you.

Fourth and finally, His love is deep enough to die on a cross. For Jesus to die on the cross for us, He had to surrender His godly authority and take upon Himself the shame of our sins. When you can imagine the depth of love it took for Him to do this, you will be more in awe of God than ever.

Hopefully you can better understand that your earthly job is not nearly as tough as God's job of loving you. Considering how wide and how long, how high and how deep is His love, how can you love Him (and others) more in return?