

## DON'T BELIEVE IT! (Part 1)

Scripture used: [Matthew 5:8-9 \(NLT\)](#)

### OVERVIEW

Pastor Hurmon began a new sermon series this week called "Don't Believe It!" He will focus on the messages that the world - even the church - spreads, and how they can get in the way of a thriving God-filled life. The first obstacle to surmount is the feeling of powerlessness that we feel when confronted with an endless list of problems. Pastor Hurmon took us back to scripture, and the example of Jesus, Paul, and St Francis of Assisi. We don't have to believe the world's message of despair. We can take action by humanizing the people around us, loving them in the same all-consuming way that God loves us!

### KEY POINTS

- 1) **Jesus wants us to be the difference in the world.** Global and national issues can seem overwhelming: climate change; gun violence; human migration; racial tension. Many of us will be tempted to ignore it all, to stop caring for the world, and to believe in our own powerlessness. But the message of Jesus is one of hope. Following Him means loving others and practicing generosity towards them.
  - a. **Have a pure heart.** Jesus says this in [Matthew 5:8 \(NLT\)](#), but what does it mean? A pure heart is one free of toxicity. It cannot absorb the judgmental message that surround us, especially from the media and politics. Turn instead to the Bible for wisdom.
  - b. **Work for peace.** Jesus says this in [Matthew 5:9 \(NLT\)](#). "Peace" in this case means much more than the absence of conflict, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr said. This means striving to build a world that operates as God intended it, drawing from Him as the source of all good things.
- 2) **Be the difference by internalizing the love of Jesus.** In [Romans 5:10 \(NIV\)](#), Saint Paul explains how we live in opposition to God through a sin-filled life. We need Jesus to be reconciled to God, and to claim eternal life. Pastor Hurmon told the story of Saint Francis, a 12th century Christian who had a vision of Jesus on the cross staring down at him. This look of incredible love revolutionized Francis's life, and he founded a new Catholic order devoted to living exactly like Jesus. Over the centuries, Saint Francis had such a huge impact that even the city of San Francisco is named after him!
- 3) **Be the difference by practicing radical hospitality.** Saint Paul uses the last few chapters of Romans to explain what it means to live like Jesus. We can love others without compromising our principles, as described in [Romans 12:9 \(NIV\)](#). We can reject destructive behavior without judging others, because we know that it is only by Jesus' sacrifice that we are saved. Instead of judgment, radical hospitality means we seek others. We love them, which is often hard to do, but it breaks down barriers between people.
  - a. **Don't Demonize - Humanize!** Paul described in [Romans 12:20 \(NIV\)](#) how loving enemies will confuse them. They expect anger and hatred in return, not love and acceptance. This is one of the most powerful ways that Jesus followers can stand out from others, especially in today's outrage-filled culture.
  - b. **Listen to the story of the other person.** It's much easier to blame and stereotype than to listen and love. This is part of our mission: to return hate with love. When you hear someone saying something that angers you, don't react. Instead ask for the personal story that explains what they're saying. You will hear stories of pain, anger, fear, and loss. You will probably still disagree even after hearing these stories, but at least this way you are validating the other person and their right to a different opinion.

### DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Saint Paul instructed Christians to practice radical hospitality, which means loving strangers. How can you practice radical hospitality in your daily life? Where might this attitude make the most difference in your community?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Pastor Hurmon cautioned us against despair. We can always make a difference as followers of Jesus, no matter how bad the situation seems to be. How do you think God wants you to be the difference in the world? What gifts has God given you that can contribute to improve things?
- 3) **DO** - Every day this week take 5 minutes to pray: "Lord, help me to love strange people!" Recite the [Peace Prayer of Saint Francis](#).