



Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Acts 8:4

Loving and Embracing All ... Even Them

by Matt Sauder, Philippines

My Filipino friends questioned how the USA could allow legalization of same-sex marriage. I told my small group we don't have to agree with or like a person's decisions, but we are called to love the person. I tried to tell them how Jesus befriended sinners and the lost, how He touched their lives. One of my pastor friends asked his Sunday school class what they would do if a gay person walked into the church. You could see the fire burning in people's eyes. They wouldn't allow it. One angry person yelled out, "Put a nail in their head!"

It was very difficult for them to even think about loving people who, in their eyes, have sinned "too much." So, I made it my mission to try to share with them the love God has given us ... and even to sinners. I prayed the Lord would soften their hearts and help them love the same way He loves.

A week later I was at the market. I heard a commotion coming from a transgender person who was being very loud and flaunting herself. Shoppers were trying to run away and not be bothered by her. I realized she was heading straight for me. I smiled at her.

She came up to me, placed her arms around my arms, and said, "Hi, honey."

I was a little shocked, and I wanted to get away. Instead I said, "Good evening. How are you?"

That led to a conversation. It was all small talk, but then she noticed my shirt had an embroidered Free Methodist Church logo.

She screamed, "Are you a priest?"

I explained I was a pastor.

After talking more she said, "You are the first Christian who's ever taken the time to talk to me and mean it." She said she would visit the church.

After telling my friends about what happened they were blown away. They told me they had never stopped to talk to people they considered to be such sinners. I shared that Jesus loves and embraces all ... even people like the one I had met. The pastor started to talk to the church about this type of love. Slowly the church is learning to embrace all and to love all just as Jesus loves all. It's hard to love everyone, but the ones who are hardest to love are the ones who need Jesus the most.



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