

BRAND = New

PART 1: Letting Go

INTRODUCTION

Jesus' arrival signaled an end to one way of relating to God and the beginning of something entirely new. Jesus instructed us to love one another as well as those who won't love us back. Over time and across cultures, different churches have tried to live that out in different ways. But when you reduce church to its irreducible minimum, it is a group of people doing their best to follow a teacher—Jesus—that we believe was sent from God to clear the way to God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When you hear the word “church,” what comes to mind? Why?
2. What are some things you think people today find resistible about Christians and the church? Is their assessment fair? Why or why not?
3. *“Many of the things people resist about the church are things the church should resist.”* Have you ever felt rejected or unloved by a church? If so, how did it affect the way you viewed God or Jesus?
4. Do you tend to think of the church as an institution or a movement? How do you think that influences the way you think about and relate to God?
5. In Matthew 5:44, Jesus challenges his followers to *“love your enemies.”* You may not think you have enemies, but who are people who make you uncomfortable or pull you out of your comfort zone? What would it look like to love those people?
6. In what ways do you find yourself tempted to relate to God based on the temple model—focused on sacred places, sacred texts, or sacred men? What is one thing you can do to better love God, your neighbor, and your enemy?

MOVING FORWARD

The arrival of Jesus signaled an end to the temple model and the beginning of something entirely new—no more sacred places and no more sacred people. The Old Testament was fulfilled and its laws reduced to a single verb—*love*—to be applied to God, neighbor, an enemy. The church got off to an incredible start, but over time the temple thinking resurfaced. It's still with us today. It makes the church resistible. But together we will resist it.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

John 13:34–35