

Megachurch Pastor Says to Win the Lost, We Must ‘Love Them Anyway’

When Pastor Wilfredo “Choco” De Jesús says he ministers to the beaten, broken and rejected, he knows whereof he speaks. De Jesús grew up in Humboldt Park, one of the roughest areas of Chicago—and the now-eight-campus-church he served for 19 years still has its home there today.

“Because I was raised in the ‘hood ... and because I knew people were broken and they were beaten by life in our community, I knew that this gospel ... needed to go out of the four walls of the local church and into the streets,” De Jesús, now general treasurer of the Assemblies of God, tells Dr. Steve Greene on a recent episode of the *Greenelines* podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network. He pulls his key to ministry straight from Scripture: We must walk in love toward God and toward others (see Matt. 22:36-40, Mark 12:28-34).

“Too many times, we have valued our position on issues more than God’s command to walk in love,” De Jesús says. “So we need to understand that we’re citizens of heaven, and we’re here on earth to become a conduit of His love—not a cul-de-sac.”

“I told *The New York Times* that the church of Jesus Christ and culture have always been at odds, and that we need to understand that the church was never called to accommodate culture,” he says. “The church was called to prophetically speak into culture.

“And what’s happened in the last year or two, is that pastors have joined into the culture,” De Jesús adds. And when you do that, you lose your voice, your prophetic voice to be able to legislate his love here on planet Earth.

“We need to recognize who we are,” he says. “We need to know that we are kingdom citizens here on earth, and that we are to serve the King in whatever capacity He wants us to serve.”

✖ But De Jesús is in no way soft on the gospel, as he shares in his latest book, *Love Them Anyway*. In his ministry to the downtrodden, ‘When I say that we should love them anyway, it doesn’t mean that we should capitulate our convictions,” he says. When I say, ‘love them,’ I’m saying we should affirm. affirm their humanity, not their lifestyle. And so we need to be able to walk with that identity. We’re going to love them—and everybody has a ‘them.’”

For much more from Pastor Choco De Jesús on how we can walk out our calling to “love them anyway,” listen to the entire episode of *Greenelines* at this link, and subscribe to *Greenelines* on your favorite podcast platform for more inspiring stories like this one. Find *Love Them Anyway* wherever fine books are sold. {eoa}

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