

Biblical Love – Leader Guide

The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

By JD Rogers 2011



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WHY LOVE

Galatians 5:5-7

“For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. **The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.**”

- At my grandfather’s funeral, as God was laying this love thing on my heart, the one thing that really stood out to me was this, “The only thing that mattered in PawPaw’s life now that he had died was love.” How did he love when he was alive? That is really the only thing that had a lasting impact on people. Not how good was he at hunting, fixing air tools, joking around, or playing the banjo, but how did he love me when he was alive.
- How will people answer that question about you when you die? How do you love?

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

“If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.”

- These verses contain very bold statements. Basically our Christian walk is nothing without love. Small group and church mean nothing without love. Our profession of faith means nothing without love. These verses are basically saying that you can’t call yourself a Christ follower and not be full of love!

Matthew 22:34-40

“Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. 35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” 37 Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’[c] 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’[d] 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

- Jesus says that the two greatest commandments are to love God and love your neighbor, and goes on to say that everything hangs on these two commands. At the heart of them both is love.

1 John 4:7-21

“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because **God is love.** 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. 13 This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. 16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. **God is love.** Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. 17 This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. 18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 19 We love because he first loved us. 20 Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.”

- Notice that twice it says God is love, not just that God loves, but that He is love. If the whole point of this life is to glorify God and become more like Christ (1 Cor 10:31 and Romans 8:29), then we must be growing in love! It is impossible to be growing more like Christ and not growing in love, because God is love. This is one of the few attributes we share with God. We are not called to be all knowing, powerful, everywhere at once, but we are called to love.

To Quote from A.W. Pink:

“It is not simply that God ‘loves,’ but that He is Love itself. Love is not merely one of His attributes, but His very nature.”

- Again, these are very bold statements, not to be taken lightly. God is saying that if we don't love each other we don't love Him, and we are not like Christ, and therefore should have no confidence on the Day of Judgment! That is pretty serious stuff.

HEART QUESTIONS

- Are you taking this whole idea of Loving as seriously as God is calling us to?
 - If your answer is yes, then what have you done in the past year to increase love in your life?
- Do you "love" love?
 - Do you actively seek it and show it?
 - Is your day full of it or do you give it lip service and sprinkle your day with?
 - Do you long to love people or do you just show a little more kindness than the world so people think you have "Christ's love" in your heart?
- Are you in love with Jesus?
 - To quote Crazy Love: “If you could have heaven, with no sickness, and with all the friends you ever had on earth, and all the food you ever liked, and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed, and all the natural beauties you ever saw, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted, and no sin in you or others, could you be satisfied with heaven, if Christ was not there?”
 - If yes, then you/we still have a self-love, and not a biblical love.
- Do you know what Biblical love looks like? What do you think God means when He says love me with all you are and love your neighbor as yourself? Is your definition based on your ideas, what you learned, or what you have taken from scripture?

These are questions that God laid on my heart this summer, and my answers were not so great. So I want to spend some time learning what Biblical love is really all about, and how that can radically impact my life. I don't want to fill my head with more knowledge and for us to sit around small group and pat each other on the back about what great points we make. I want God changing our love to radically change our lives through His word and Spirit. I want to love!

I pray you want to grow in love too. I want us to come along side each other in this study and hold each other accountable to truly love like Christ loves us.

DEFINE LOVE

Before we can talk about Love we must define it, and we must get our definition from God's word and not what the world or our flesh says love is, looks like, or feels like.

I find it interesting that the only 2 words I could think of that God takes the time to define for us are Faith (Hebrews 11:1) and Love (1 Corinthians 13:4). Then I find it pretty cool that He says the only thing that counts is our Faith expressing itself through Love, and we have the definition of both main words in that statement. That's our awesome God!

LET'S START WITH FAITH

Hebrews 11:1

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” NIV

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” ESV

- So faith is knowing that we have all the promises of God because of our hope in Christ, even though we don't see all of it.
- So God says take this blessed assurance you have in Christ, and because of that it should express itself (flow out of you) in the form of love.

SO WHAT IS BIBLICAL LOVE DEFINED AS

1 Corinthians 13:4

Bible Says Love is	Therefore is not	Fruit of the Spirit
1. Patient	1. Impatient	Peace
2. Kind	2. Cruel	Kindness
3. Good will or pleasure in others	3. Envy	Goodness
4. Modest	4. Boastful	
5. Humble	5. Proud	
6. Honors others	6. Dishonoring / Rude	Joy
7. Selfless	7. Self-seeking	
8. Slow to anger (calm)	8. Quick in anger (temper)	Self-Control
9. Keeps no record of wrongs	9. Keeps record of wrongs	
10. Rejoices in good	10. Rejoices in evil	
11. Rejoices in truth	11. Rejoices in lies	
12. Always protects	12. Always neglects	Gentleness
13. Always hopes	13. Always despairs	
14. Endures all things	14. Gives up on things	Longsuffering
15. Never Fails	15. Temporal	Faithfulness LOVE

So before we go deep into the meaning of each of these words that make up love, let's take a love test. Remember, these actions apply to everyone; family, friends, strangers, enemies, and God.

Circle the word that best describes you. Fill your name into the blank, and read it to yourself

_____ is patient / impatient.

_____ is kind / cruel.

_____ takes pleasure in another's blessings / envies others.

_____ is modest / boastful.

_____ is humble / proud.

_____ honors others / dishonors others with his/her speech and actions.

_____ is selfless / self-seeking.

_____ is slow to anger (calm) / quick to anger (temper).

_____ keeps no record of wrong / mentally tracks the wrongs people have done.

_____ rejoices in good / evil things. (Before you answer this too quickly think about the movies you laugh at, the TV shows you watch. Do you take pleasure in them? Are they good or evil according to God's standards?)

_____ rejoices in truth / lies.

_____ always protects / neglects.

_____ always hopes / despairs.

_____ always perseveres / gives up.

_____ always holds up / fails others.

- So which side of the slash are you on? The left side is love. The right side is not.
- God is calling us to all be on the left side of those slashes, and it is not impossible!
- We have a risen, living Savior that loves us in this way and He lives inside us. We have the power to change!
- The question is do you want to? Do you think you actually can? Are you willing to give it all over to Christ to change you in this area, where the world will say that you are weak and foolish to love in this way?

I want this study to grow us. I want to be like the biggest loser. We get excited when we see a 400 lb. man drop to 180 lbs. in the before and after and think “wow what a change”. I want us to have that same “wow” at the end of this study. I want us to look back and be able to clearly see where we have grown. I want others to look at us and say “wow look what the Spirit has done in their life”. I want supernatural Spirit change so that God will be glorified and we will love more like Christ.

This Study is not a “pick it up on Wed. night before small group” study. If you are serious about change you must work on this all week, and I would recommend you at least look it over on Friday so you can know if there is something you should focus on that week.

Prayer Time this week

Don't be proud. Help when we fail. Love each other through it. Protection for Satan.

Don't become Discouraged. That the Spirit makes us grow. Don't become judgmental.

That we will be light. That we will be excited about Christ. For humility.

WEEK 2

LOVE IS PATIENT

WORD DEFINITION OF PATIENCE

- Able to wait without becoming annoyed or anxious.
- Bearing or enduring pain, difficulty, provocation, or annoyance with calmness.
- Tolerant; understanding
- Capable of calmly awaiting an outcome or result; not hasty or impulsive.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Proverbs 14:29 – “Whoever is patient has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly.”

Proverbs 15:18 – “A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.”

Proverbs 16:32 – “Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city.”

POSITIVE EXAMPLES

Job 2:10

Job 42:12

- Job was patient with God. He trusted in Him even though he did not understand or see what was going on. He knew God was in it, and He knew God loved him.
- God honors Job because of his patience and blesses him after all of that.

Matthew 8:26

Matthew 14:31

Matthew 16:8

Matthew 17:20

- Jesus is patient with disciples
- Over and over He loved them through their small faith and unbelief

Exodus 14:10-12 - Red Sea

Exodus 16:2-4 - No food

Exodus 32:1-13 - Golden Calf

- God with Israel
- God loved Israel and showed great patience for their constant complaining.

NEGATIVE EXAMPLES

Job 2:8-10

- Job's wife was not patient in love with Job or God.
- Her real heart attitude was squeezed out when the pressure was put on them.

Genesis 16:2-4

- Sarai and Abram were not patient with God.
- They wanted what they wanted and were willing to not love each other or God to get it.

HOW DO WE GROW IN PATIENCE?

Ephesians 4:22-24 - Put off and Put on

So what do we put off and on? Impatience and patience? That seems straight forward, but is that really the heart of the matter?

If you look at our examples again, I think there is a deeper heart issue that needs to change.

PUT OFF

Selfishness

- Job's wife wanted things to be back to normal. She wanted her life to be easy again. It was about her and not about what God was doing.
- Sarai wanted a child. She didn't want to be ashamed anymore.
- So what do you want in that moment when you are unwilling to be patient with someone?

Unbiblical expectations

- Job's wife expected that if we follow God's plans, then He blesses us. This should not be happening to Job.
- Sarai expected that God would fulfill His promise right away on her time.
- So what expectations do you have of others that drives an impatient attitude?

PUT ON

Serving others

- Jesus did not grow impatient with his disciples because He was too busy serving their greater need. He was sanctifying them.

Godly expectations of others.

- Job did not hold God to Job's standards, he let him be God.
- Jesus knew what the disciples needed to learn; what He wanted them to learn.
- God knew exactly what the Israelites were going to do and what would come of all the wandering in the desert.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN OUR LIFE TODAY?

Patient with

- Kids
- Spouse

- Church members
- Co-workers
- Neighbors
- Leaders
- Enemies

PLAN OF ACTION

Pray

- Pray for the Spirit to open your heart to areas where you need to grow in patience
- Psalm 139:23
- Pray that God would give you chances this week to grow in this area, and the strength to respond correctly when it happens.

Scripture

- Memorize - Proverbs 16:32 – “Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city.”

Take notes

- Write down areas in which you know you need patience or have failed in the past. or people with whom you need patience or have failed in the past.
- Think about what that situation would have been like if you had responded in a Godly way.
- Pray that God would help you the next time to respond in that way.

Fight

- Nehemiah 4:9 – “But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.”
- This is a threat! We are in a war! Don't sit idly by engage in the battle.
- Hebrews 12:1-4 – “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.”

ACCOUNTABILITY

Encourage one other in patience this week.

In prayer time next week, be ready to share your successes and failures.

LOVE IS KIND

WORD DEFINITION OF KIND

- Of a friendly, generous, or warm hearted nature.
- Showing sympathy or understanding; charitable
- Forbearing; Tolerant
- Generous

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Proverbs 11:17 – “A kind man benefits himself, but a cruel man brings trouble on himself.”

Proverbs 21:21 – “He who pursues righteousness and kindness finds life, prosperity and honor.”

Proverbs 31:26 – “She opens her mouth with wisdom and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.”

POSITIVE EXAMPLES

Book of Ruth

- Look at the kindness Ruth showed to Naomi by staying with her to help. She left everything for her mother in law. Ruth 2:11
- Look at the kindness Boaz showed Ruth as a stranger and poor person. Ruth 2:8

Luke 7:36-50

- The kindness shown to Jesus by the women.
- Through this kindness Jesus says she loves much.

Luke 10:30-36

- The Samaritan showed kindness
- Jesus said this is the one who followed the command

NEGATIVE EXAMPLES

Luke 7:36-50

- The owner of the house showed no kindness to Jesus.
- Jesus says this means he loves little.

Luke 10:30-36

- The priest did not show kindness.
- Jesus says that man did not follow the command to love.

HOW DO WE GROW IN KINDNESS?

Ephesians 4:22-24 - Put off and Put on

All of the examples show kindness that is coupled with sacrifice. We have to be willing to sacrifice in order to love. True love requires sacrifice, and true kindness requires sacrifice.

PUT OFF

Selfishness

- Again, in order to grow in an attribute of love we find ourselves putting off selfishness. I think we might see a pattern of this throughout this study.
- All of the examples had to give up stuff that would benefit them.
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Pride

- The sinful woman had to lay her pride aside to show the kindness she did to Jesus.
- To show kindness, the good Samaritan had to lay aside social status and pride about how he would be viewed.

PUT ON

Serving Others

- Again, we see all the positive examples were willing to serve others, no matter the cost.

Humility

- We must be willing to humble ourselves to show kindness.
- We must let go of status (middle class, parent, teacher, boss, elder)

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN OUR LIFE TODAY?

Kindness with

- Kids
- Spouse
- Church members
- Co-workers
- Neighbors
- Leaders
- Enemies

If you look at the memory verse it says “God’s kindness leads us to repentance”, true change. So if this is what works with us, that God rebukes us and disciplines us with kindness, then why do we think we need to do something different with our earthly relationships (kids, spouse, etc)? Why do we believe that a harsh word in anger is the only way to get the kids moving. or angry words to be right in an agreement will be the only way my spouse will see my point? God’s way is better; we should do it His way.

PLAN OF ACTION

Pray

- Pray for the Spirit to open your heart in areas where you need to grow in kindness.
- Psalm 139:23
- Pray that God would give you chances this week to grow in this area, and the strength to respond correctly when it happens.

Scripture

- Memorize – Romans 2:4,5 “Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.”

Take notes

- Write down areas you know you need kindness or have failed in the past, or people with whom you need kindness or have failed in the past.
- Think about what that situation would have been like if you had responded in a Godly way.
- Pray that God would help you the next time to respond in that way.

Serve

- Go out of your way to show someone kindness this week.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Encourage one other in kindness this week.

In prayer time next week, be ready to share your successes and failures.

LOVE DOES NOT ENVY

WORD DEFINITION ENVY

- A feeling of discontent and resentment aroused by and in conjunction with desire for the possessions or qualities of another.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Proverbs 14:30 – “A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.”

Ecclesiastes 4:4 – “And I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from one person’s envy of another. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.”

POSITIVE EXAMPLES

John 3:26-30

- John is presented with the chance to become envious; instead he chooses to love Christ more.
- We are called to do the same to others.

NEGATIVE EXAMPLES

Matthew 20:1-16

- The workers are upset at the owner (God) and look down on the workers that didn’t do as much as they did. This is not loving God or others.

Mark 10:35-45

- The other disciples became upset with James and John for their request. They were all envious of the spots next to Jesus.
- Again, no love for one another.

Genesis 16

- There is envy all over this chapter. Hagar envious of Sarai, and Sarai envious of Hagar.
- All with no love or thought of the other person.

HOW TO PUT TO DEATH ENVY?

Romans 8:12-14 – “Put to death the misdeeds of the body.”

PUT TO DEATH

In order to kill envy in our flesh, we must be content in Christ.

- Job 36:11 – “If they obey and serve him, they will spend the rest of their days in prosperity and their years in contentment.”

- 1 Timothy 6:6 – “But godliness with contentment is great gain.”
- Do you really believe that you have everything in Christ?
- Can you be fully satisfied with just Christ or do you need Christ + _____?
- To put to death envy we must believe that Christ is our all and that God is sovereign over all things. He has given us all that we need.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN OUR LIFE TODAY?

So what does it look like to live as though Christ is your greatest possession and you need nothing else?

PLAN OF ACTION

Pray

- Prayer from Valley of Vision – Contentment

<p>Heavenly Father,</p> <p>If I should suffer need, and go unclothed, and be in poverty, make my heart prize your love, know it, be constrained by it, though I be denied all blessings.</p> <p>It is your mercy to afflict and try me with wants, for by these trials I see my sins, and desire to be rid of them.</p> <p>Please help me willingly accept misery, sorrows, temptations, if those things will help me feel sin as the greatest evil, and be delivered from it with gratitude to you, acknowledging this as the highest testimony of your love.</p> <p>When your son, Jesus, came into my soul he became more dear to me than sin used to be; his kindly rule replaced sin's tyranny.</p>	<p>Teach me to believe that if I ever want to conquer any sin I must not only labor to overcome it, but must invite Christ to take its place, and he must become more valued to me than the vile lust had been; that his sweetness, power, life may be there.</p> <p>So I need to seek a grace from God that will oppose sin, but I should not seek it as a thing on it's own, apart from himself.</p> <p>When I am afraid of evils to come, please comfort me by showing me that in myself I am a dying, condemned wretch, but in Christ I am reconciled and live; that in myself I find insufficiency and restlessness, but in Christ there is satisfaction and peace; that in myself I am feeble and unable to do good, but in Christ I can do all things.</p> <p>Though now I have his graces in part, I shall shortly have them perfectly in that state where you will show yourself fully reconciled, and alone sufficient, efficient, loving me completely, with sin abolished.</p> <p>O Lord, may that day come quickly!</p>
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Scripture

- Memorize – Romans 8:1 – “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”

Spend time with Jesus

- Spend your time with Jesus this week. Walk with Him, sit with Him, eat with Him, and fall in love with Him.
- Spend every minute of your free time with Christ this week.
 - No TV, news, movies, Internet surfing, etc. Use the time when you normally entertain yourself as time with Jesus.
 - When you usually talk with your spouse about your day, talk to them about your time with Jesus.

- Talk to Him as you walk along through your day.
- Read about him in the Gospels and in Revelation.
- Devote this week as one wholly to Jesus.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Encourage one other this week by sharing what you learn about Christ.

In prayer time next week, be ready to share how you feel more in love with Jesus this week.

LOVE DOES NOT BOAST

WORD DEFINITION BOAST

- To glorify oneself in speech; talk in a self-admiring way.
- To speak of with excessive pride
- The act or an instance of bragging
- Arrogant

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Proverbs 27:1 – “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.”

Jeremiah 9:22-24 – “Thus says the LORD: Let not the wise boast of their wisdom, or the strong boast of their strength, or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight, declares the LORD.”

POSITIVE EXAMPLES

2 Corinthians 11 and 12

- Paul rebukes them for the evil boasting
- Calls boasting foolish
- Paul shows that boasting is not loving.

NEGATIVE EXAMPLES

James 4:13-17

- They were boasting in their plans, and not God's. We do not love God when we make our own plans and act as if we can do all on our own. James calls their boasting evil.

2 Corinthians 11 and 12

- Those that did not love the Corinthians were being boastful.

HOW TO PUT TO DEATH BOASTING?

Romans 8:12-14 – “Put to death the misdeeds of the body.”

PUT TO DEATH

To put to death Boasting we must be humble and the best way to be humbled is by God!

We need a good look at who we really are and who God really is, and the best place to find that is the Scripture:

- Isaiah 40:22 – people are like grasshoppers
- Job 38 – 40 – We should respond like Job and just cover our mouth and repent in dust and ashes. We have nothing to boast about save Christ.

- 1 Chronicles 29:11-12 – God is over all and is the only thing to boast about.
- Romans 3:9-20 – We are all sinners.
- Isaiah 64:6 – Our best acts are filthy rags.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN OUR LIFE TODAY?

So what does it look like to live a life without boasting, except in Christ?

PLAN OF ACTION

Pray

- Pray that God would reveal areas where you are boastful, and give you the strength to be modest.
- Praise God with the prayer Nebuchadnezzar prayed after being humbled by God for 7 years:
 - “His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: ‘What have you done?’”

Scripture

- Memorize – 1 Corinthians 5:6 - “Your boasting is not good. Don’t you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?”

Boast in Christ

- Purposefully look for opportunities to boast about what Christ has done, is doing, or is going to do.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Encourage one other with boasts of Christ.

In prayer time next week, be ready to share your successes and failures.

LOVE IS NOT PROUD

WORD DEFINITION PRIDE

- A sense of one's own proper dignity or value; self-respect.
- Pleasure or satisfaction taken in an achievement, possession, or association.
- Arrogant or disdainful conduct or treatment; haughtiness.
- An excessively high opinion of oneself; conceit.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Proverbs 8:13 – “To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.”

Proverbs 11:2 – “When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.”

Proverbs 13:10 – “Where there is strife, there is pride, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.”

Proverbs 16:18 – “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”

Psalms 101:5 – “Whoever slanders their neighbor in secret, I will put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, I will not tolerate.”

Proverbs 16:5 – “The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.”

POSITIVE EXAMPLES

1 Corinthians 9:1-18

- Paul humbly served those to whom he preached the gospel.
- He did not demand his rights in payment.
- He loved them enough to humble himself and not be proud.

John 13:1-17

- This is the ultimate display of humility.
- Text makes it clear that Jesus knew He had all power, that He is lord of lords, and then goes on to say that he washed their feet.
- This is our example of humility; this is our example of love!

NEGATIVE EXAMPLES

Esther 3

- Haman's pride drove him to want to kill all the Jews.
- It eventually cost him his life.

Daniel 4:28-32

- Nebuchadnezzar's pride prevented him from loving God and seeing God for who he really was.

HOW TO PUT TO DEATH PRIDE?

Romans 8:12-14 – Put to death the misdeeds of the body.

Ephesians 4:22-24 - Put off and Put on

PUT TO DEATH

Pride is one that is hard to put to death. It has more than 9 lives. This one is at the core of so much of our sin and our unwillingness to love in the way God calls us to. We have to call in the big guns to kill this one. This one takes a lifetime to die. We need the help of the Spirit first to show us our pride, and then to help us battle it. We need to be on constant alert for pride sneaking up in our speech, actions, and more importantly, in our thoughts. This battle starts with our thoughts. For Christ says out of the heart flows the man. Pride is deep in our heart and we have to root it out.

PUT ON

For each battle we win against pride we must quickly put on humility. Even in our victories over pride we can become proud of ourselves! We must actively put on humility in our thoughts, speech, and actions on a regular basis.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN OUR LIFE TODAY?

So what does it look like to live a humble life and be at war with pride?

- Quick repentance
- Alert mind to pride's ugly face.

PLAN OF ACTION

Pray – Valley of Visions - Pride

O thou terrible meek, Let not pride swell my heart. My nature is the mire beneath my feet, The dust to which I shall return. In body I surpass not the meanest reptile; Whatever difference of form and intellect is mine Is a free grant of thy goodness; Every faculty of mind and body is thy undeserved gift. Low as I am as a creature, I am lower as a sinner; I have trampled thy law times without number; Sin's deformity is stamped upon me, Darkens my brow, Touches me with corruption: How can I flaunt myself proudly? Lowest abasement is my due place, For I am less than nothing before thee. Help me to see myself in thy sight, Then pride must wither, decay, die, perish.	Humble my heart before thee, And replenish it with thy choicest gifts. As water rests not on barren hill summits, But flows down to fertilize lowest vales, So make me the lowest of the lowly, That my spiritual riches may exceedingly abound. When I leave duties undone, May condemning thought strip me of pride, Deepen in me devotion to thy service, And quicken me to more watchful care. When I am tempted to think highly of myself, Grant me to see the wily power of my spiritual enemy; Help me to stand with wary eye on the watch-tower of faith, And to cling with determined grasp to my humble Lord; If I fall let me hide myself in my Redeemer's righteousness, And when I escape, may I ascribe all deliverance to thy grace. Keep me humble, meek, lowly.
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Scripture

Memorize - Proverbs 16:5 – “The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.”

Take notes

- As God shows you areas of pride in your life, write them down.
- Think about what those situations would have been like if you had humility in your heart.
- Pray that God would help you to respond in humility next time.

Fight

- Nehemiah 4:9 – “But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.”
- This is a threat! We are in a war! Don't sit idle by, engage in the battle.
- Hebrews 12:1-4 – “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.”

ACCOUNTABILITY

Think of at least one act of humble service this week and do it.

In prayer time next week, be ready to share your successes and failures.

LOVE IS NOT RUDE

WORD DEFINITION RUDE AND DISHONOR

- Rude
 - Being in a crude, rough, unfinished condition
 - Ill mannered; discourteous
 - Abruptly and unpleasantly forceful
 - coarse
- Dishonor
 - A cause of loss of honor
 - To bring shame or disgrace upon
 - To treat in a disrespectful or demeaning manner

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Deuteronomy 27:16 – “Cursed is anyone who dishonors their father or mother. Then all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’”

Romans 2:23 – “You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?”

Ephesians 5:4 – “Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.”

Proverbs 21:21 – “Whoever pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honor.”

Proverbs 10:18 – “Whoever conceals hatred with lying lips and spreads slander is a fool.”

POSITIVE EXAMPLES

John 12:1-8 – Mary anointed Jesus

- She honored him in love with the expensive perfume she had.
- Do we go out of our way to honor others or even Christ that way?

NEGATIVE EXAMPLES

2 Samuel 16:5-14 – “Shimei cursed David as he left the kingdom.”

- He should have had honor for God’s anointed one, but he dishonors him with cursing.
- 1 Kings 2:8-9 – David said he would not kill him for this dishonor, but he had his son, Solomon do it.

John 19:1-37 – Jesus is crucified

- This is the ultimate dishonoring, the ultimate lack of love.
- We do this every time we sin against Christ.
- We are right there slapping his face.

HOW DO WE GROW IN HONORING OTHERS BEFORE OURSELVES?

Ephesians 4:22-24 - Put off and Put on

PUT OFF

I think at the heart of dishonor and rudeness is selfishness. I think we dishonor others so that we feel better about ourselves or make ourselves look better.

I think this is another one where we must put off selfishness.

PUT ON

If we are going to put off selfishness then we should put on serving and lifting others higher than ourselves.

We should actively work to honor others over ourselves.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN OUR LIFE TODAY?

So how do you honor others above yourself in today's world?

- What does it look like with your wife, kids, co-workers, church members, enemies?
- What does this look like in the face of gossip and slander?

PLAN OF ACTION

Pray

- Pray for God to help you control your thoughts of others, that He would help you really see others as before you and more important than you.
- Pray that He would give you the opportunity to honor someone this week with your words or actions.
- Pray that God would show you the second you speak a dishonoring word to someone or about someone, and that he would grant you quick repentance.

Scripture

- Memorize – 1 Thessalonians 5:11 – “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

Be intentional

- Don't just sit back and wait for a chance to show love with honor, think of those you would have the hardest time honoring and seek an opportunity to lift them up.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Speak an honoring word to someone this week; lift him or her up with encouragement.

Hold each other accountable if you hear a member of small group speak dishonorably to someone or about someone. Bring it to their attention do not let sin get a foothold.

In prayer time next week, be ready to share your successes and failures.

LOVE IS NOT SELF-SEEKING

WORD DEFINITION SELFISH

- Concerned chiefly or only with oneself

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Psalm 119:36 – “Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain.”

Proverbs 18:1 – “An unfriendly person pursues selfish ends and against all sound judgment starts quarrels.”

James 3:16 – “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.”

POSITIVE EXAMPLES

Galatians 4:4-7 – Jesus coming for us

- Jesus leaving the Father’s side to come as a man to save us!
- This is the example we have of not self-seeking

John 15:12-14

- Christ’s ultimate example of selfish love is Him laying down His life for us.
- He says this is our example of how we love.
- It’s easy to think of that for our kids and spouse, how about your enemies? Are you willing to die for that neighbor who drives you crazy?

NEGATIVE EXAMPLES

Matthew 26:6-16 – Judas

- Notice what prompted Judas; he wanted to sell that expensive perfume to “give to the poor”, John 12:6 he wanted the money.
- His selfishness leads to the ultimate sin of betraying Jesus.
- Don’t think yours won’t lead to that as well!

HOW TO PUT TO DEATH SELFISHNESS?

Romans 8:12-14 – “Put to death the misdeeds of the body.”

Ephesians 4:22-24 - Put off and Put on

PUT TO DEATH

We must die to ourselves. We must truly believe that our desires are nothing and the only thing that counts is Christ’s desires in us.

PUT ON

We must put on a giving heart. We must be willing to do what Christ commands. Matthew 19:21-23

Are you willing to give everything away for Christ? Do you really love that much?

That is not a pie in the sky, Christ motivational speech. I believe he really meant it; do you?

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN OUR LIFE TODAY?

What does it look like to sell all your possessions, give them to the poor, and follow Jesus in today's world?

PLAN OF ACTION

Pray

- Pray that God would increase in you a giving spirit, and an eternal view of life.
- Pray that God would cause your selfish desires to turn toward loving others more.

Scripture

- Memorize – Matthew 16:26 – “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Give

- If you are not at least tithing, start doing that this week. Don't even argue with yourself about how you can't. Just do it. TITHE! Malachi 3:10
- In addition to tithing, I want to challenge you to give away something this week. Not just a couple of bucks to the homeless guy, unless that was all the money you had for food that day. Really give something away that you will feel a little “ouch” on. Be it time, money, or items, give like Christ has given to you.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Encourage one another in giving this week.

In prayer time next week, be ready to share whether you did the tasks this week. You don't have to share details if you want that to stay between you and God, but be ready to give an account of whether you did it or not.

LOVE IS SLOW TO ANGER

WORD DEFINITION ANGER

- A strong feeling of displeasure or hostility
- Enrage or provoke
- A feeling of great annoyance or antagonism as the result of some real or supposed grievance
- Wrath
- Rage

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Proverbs 15:1 – “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

Proverbs 22:24 – “Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered.”

Proverbs 30:33 – “For as churning cream produces butter, and as twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife.”

Ecclesiastes 7:9 – “Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.”

Ephesians 4:31 – “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.”

POSITIVE EXAMPLES

Luke 23 –

- Jesus is crucified and says “Father forgive them”. He is not angry with the people that are spitting on him, slapping him, and even crucifying him.
- Why? How can Jesus not be angry at this? Because He knows why He is here.
- Do we know why we are here? Is it not to glorify God and become more like Christ? Then why do we get angry in those very situations that grow us?

Acts 5:40-42

- Apostles were flogged. They could have been angry about the injustice. That was not fair, nor was it legal.
- Yet they rejoiced and counted themselves worthy?
- Do you count yourself worthy, or do you become angry?

Ezekiel 8

- God is slow to anger with Israel, however He does get angry. There is good righteous anger for God’s glory.

NEGATIVE EXAMPLES

1 Samuel 18:1-11 – Saul would not control his anger toward David, and attempted to kill him several times.

John 8:48-59 –

- The Pharisees did not like what Jesus was saying. They were quick to anger, and did not take time to understand the truth.
- Are you quick to anger when you don't understand something and it rubs you the wrong way?

HOW TO PUT OFF ANGER?

Ephesians 4:22-24 - Put off and Put on

Anger is usually the result of a deeper heart issue. Many times we have idols in our heart and when they are touched, anger is the result.

PUT OFF

False idols. Only God should sit on the throne of your heart.

We should only have biblical expectations, hopes, and dreams.

What is sitting on your heart that is not biblical, that results in anger?

- Perfect kids, obedient kids,
- Loving spouse
- Control of work, home, others
- Self time
- Daily plans

Our only hope and plan should be to love God and grow to be like Christ. We should be slow to anger with all things, and have righteous anger for those things that affect our relationship with God. So most of the time we should be angry at our own sin, not other's sin. Other's sin causes us to grow.

PUT ON

Love for God

Submission to the will of God and His commands

To grow in "slowness" of anger you must be more focused on God than you are on yourself. You will always be angry if you are thinking about you and how this affects your plans, your thoughts, your control of things. You must submit to God's control, God's plans, God's thoughts.

This starts in the heart; you must put on more of Christ every day than you put on your own thoughts about you.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN OUR LIFE TODAY?

What does it look like to be slow to anger around people in your life?

PLAN OF ACTION

Pray

- Pray that God will give you eyes to see and focus on eternal matters, and to see the here and now for what it really is.
- Pray that God would expose idols in your heart and that the spirit would help you dethrone them.

Scripture

- Memorize - Ecclesiastes 7:9 – “Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.”

Heart Exam

- Write down times in the past when you have had a quick temper.
- Think about those situations and ask yourself 5 heart questions from Paul Tripp:
 - What was going on?
 - What were you thinking and feeling while it was happening?
 - What did you do in response?
 - Why did you do it, and what were you seeking to accomplish?
 - What was the result?
- Pray that God would help you have insight into those answers and help you next time respond in love.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Encourage one another this week to be slow in anger.

In prayer time next week, be ready to share what you have learned from the heart exam and what we can pray for around the insight God has granted you.

LOVE KEEPS NO RECORDS OF WRONGS

WORD DEFINITION RESENTMENT

- Indignation or ill will felt as a result of a real or imagined grievance.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Psalms 130:3 – “If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?”

2 Timothy 2:24 – “And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.”

Hebrews 12:15 – “See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.”

Matthew 18:21-22 “Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”

Proverbs 21:19 – “Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and nagging wife.”

POSITIVE EXAMPLES

Matthew 26:74-75 & Mark 16:6-8 – Jesus did not keep a record of wrong with Peter

- Jesus did not hold it against Peter that he completely betrayed Him.
- We would quickly hold it against our friend or family if they did the same thing to us.
- Again, Jesus is our standard and our example and He forgives

1 Corinthians 5 – Paul’s love for other Christians

- Paul could have easily been resentful toward the Corinthians. Paul was pouring his life out to these people, and they so quickly turned to sin.
- He could have written them off, and kept count of their sins, judging them saying “That’s just too far, now I’m done.”
- He didn’t though, he loved them and rebuked them and encouraged them.

Genesis 50:19 – Joseph and his brothers

- We would almost say that Joseph had a right to be resentful of his brothers after what they did to him.
- He didn’t though, he took care of them.
- He did not look at the here and now, he had an eternal focus. This allowed for the forgiveness.

NEGATIVE EXAMPLES

Genesis 34 – Dinah’s rape

- The sons of Jacob did not forgive the men of Shechem.
- The family sought to make it right, however the sons would not forgive but killed everyone in the town.

HOW TO PUT OFF RESENTMENT?

Ephesians 4:22-24 - Put off and Put on

Resentment and keeping a record of wrongs are, in the heart, a lack of contentment about where God has you and a lack of forgiveness.

PUT OFF

You must put off selfish desires and self-righteousness.

We become resentful when we believe we have a special right to be treated in a certain way, or to have certain things.

We are also unwilling to forgive if we're being somehow better than others, more worthy of respect and less sinful. We forget how much God has forgiven us because we think we're doing pretty good, so then why can't this other person do pretty good too and not sin against me.

PUT ON

You must put on forgiveness and a Godly view of your forgiven state before Him.

You cannot hold a record of wrong if you truly understand what Christ has done for you. We would only be like the unmerciful servant Matthew 18:21-35.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN OUR LIFE TODAY?

So how do you practically live out keeping no records of wrongs in your life? Of course I remember things done to me.

PLAN OF ACTION

Pray

- Pray that God would keep before you eyes your true state, which is you are the worst of sinners and you are forgiven in Christ alone.
- Pray that God would keep you humbly dependent on His grace, and that the spirit would allow that same grace to flow through you to all those around you.

Scripture

- Memorize – 1 Timothy 1:15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst.

Forgive

- This week I want you to pray and ask God to show you someone that you have been resentful of or unwilling to forgive. I want you to seek that person out and grant them forgiveness.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Pray for each other this week to be overwhelmed by God's grace, mercy and forgiveness.

In prayer time next week, be ready to share how offering forgiveness has freed you from a burden.

LOVE DOES NOT REJOICE IN EVIL

WORD DEFINITION REJOICE, EVIL, AND WRONGDOING

- Rejoice
 - To feel joyful
 - Be delighted
 - gladden
- Evil
 - Morally bad or wrong
 - Causing ruin, injury, or pain; harmful
 - Characterized by anger or spite; malicious
 - Source of suffering or destruction
- Wrongdoing
 - One who does wrong, especially morally or ethically

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Proverbs 3:31 – “Do not envy the violent or choose any of their ways.”

Proverbs 2:12-15 with Proverbs 1:7 – “Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.”

Proverbs 8:13 – “To fear the LORD is to hate evil, I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.”

Proverbs 11:19 – “Truly the righteous attain life, but whoever pursues evil finds death.”

POSITIVE EXAMPLES

1 Corinthians 5:1-3 – Incest

- Paul deals with it correctly. He is upset and rebukes them.
- We must rebuke each other when we see sin in our lives.

2 Kings 22 and 23:1-30 – Josiah

- Josiah heard God’s word and had zeal for what was right.
- He went against all of the culture at that time and destroyed what was evil.
- He had no tolerance for it.

NEGATIVE EXAMPLES

1 Corinthians 5:1-3 – Incest

- The Corinthians are rejoicing in their brother’s sin.
- We must not go along with each other in sin.

1 Kings 11:1-13 and Nehemiah 13:26-27 – Solomon’s wives

- Solomon loved foreign women, so he tolerated some of their other customs that God called evil.
- This led him to building idols for them and led to sin before God.

HOW DO WE GROW IN RIGHTEOUSNESS?

Romans 8:12-14 – Put to death the misdeeds of the body.

Ephesians 4:22-24 - Put off and Put on.

If we love God then we will love the things He loves and hate the things He hates.

PUT TO DEATH

We need to put to death the lust of the flesh (Ephesians 2:1-5). We need to be on guard for what we view as good, entertaining, acceptable, and funny. Then we need to flee from it because God calls us to not even a hint (Ephesians 5:3).

To quote Josh Harris from *Sex Is Not The Problem, Lust Is*:

“Take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish for spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself. It doesn’t matter what something is rated, or how popular it is, or how seemingly innocent it appears. If it hardens your heart toward God, if it obscures your awareness of the ugliness of sin and the holiness of God, if it takes the edge off your spiritual hunger, then it’s sin. Ask yourself ‘Can I honestly thank God for it?’”

Are you willing to give up the things that you have become comfortable in even though God calls it sin? Can you give up that TV show, that movie, that magazine, that relationship, that music, or your daily news fix? Are you willing to have not even a hint of evil in your life for the sake of knowing God better and loving Him more?

PUT ON

We need to put on righteousness, which means we must feed ourselves good things. You cannot have a steady diet of daily cake and not expect to get fat. It doesn’t work that way. If you eat a ton of cake your body produces fat. In the same way you can’t have a daily diet of sinful things and expect your mind to produce righteous thoughts.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN OUR LIFE TODAY?

So what does it look like to live a life with not even a hint of evil before our eyes?

PLAN OF ACTION

Pray

- Pray that God would allow you to see sin the way He sees it.
- Pray that you will not grieve the Holy Spirit in your life.
- Pray that the Spirit would reveal areas in your life where you’re rejoicing in evil, and help you have a desire for the things of God.

Scripture

- Memorize – Ephesians 5:3-4 – “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.”

Change your media intake

- With all the media you take in, TV, movies, books, papers, Internet, music, etc. ask yourself “Can I honestly thank God for this?” If the answer is “No”, then put it away. Replace it with something that God says is good.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Spur each other on this week to feed our minds with things that draw our hearts closer to God.

In prayer time next week, be ready to share areas that passed and failed the “Thankful test.”

LOVE REJOICES IN TRUTH

WORD DEFINITION TRUTH

- Conformity to fact or actuality
- A statement proven to be or accepted as true
- Sincerity; integrity
- Reality; actuality

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Proverbs 12:19 – “Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.”

Proverbs 23:23 – “Buy the truth and do not sell it – wisdom, instruction and insight as well.”

Proverbs 8:7 – “My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness.”

Psalms 119:142 – “Your righteousness is everlasting and your law is true.”

Psalms 119:160 – “All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.”

Psalms 25:5 – “Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.”

POSITIVE EXAMPLES

Acts 5:25-32 – Apostles preach truth at all cost

- They loved the Lord and because of that loved the truth of the gospel.
- They were compelled to preach only the truth.

John 6:25-66 – Hard teaching from Jesus

- Jesus loved the truth and spoke the hard things.
- Many people left him because He spoke truth they did not want to hear or understand.
- Do we love truth and others enough to speak truth into their lives?

2 Samuel 12:1-12 – Nathan Rebukes David

- Nathan loved God and David enough to speak truth into David’s life.
- This would not be easy. David could have had him killed because this was the king he was rebuking.

NEGATIVE EXAMPLES

Acts 5:1-11 – Ananias and Sapphira

- They loved money more than the truth.
- They were willing to lie to protect what they really loved.
- Do we do the same? Do we lie to ourselves to justify our sin?

John 19:1-16 – chief priests

- They were willing to lie to have Jesus killed because He was a threat to their religion and way of life.
- Are we willing to lie to ourselves about what God's word says in order to protect our way of life or religion?
- Do we not love truth because it's an exposing light into our souls?

HOW TO PUT OFF LIES?

Ephesians 4:22-24 - Put off and Put on

PUT OFF

To put off lies, I think it ties back to what idols are in your heart. We lie to protect something, and that something is usually an idol. It could be our image (fear of man), a possession, a relationship, an expectation, a sin we like...

We need to put off that idol that we lie in order to protect.

PUT ON

We must put on a love for God's word, which is truth. We must believe that His words and promises are real, and that there is nothing worth lying about. We must believe that things will be better if we tell the truth. This means we usually have to give up that idol we are holding on to.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN OUR LIFE TODAY?

So how do you live a life of loving the truth and being willing to speak truth whatever the cost?

PLAN OF ACTION

Pray

- Pray that God would show you idols in your heart that you are willing to or actively are lying about.
- Pray that the Spirit would give you a love for the truth of God's word, and strength to speak His truth to those around you.

Scripture

- Memorize - Psalm 25:5 - "Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long."

Quick Repentance

- Ask the Spirit to convict you quickly on lies and to help you quickly ask for forgiveness both from the person you lied to and God.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Encourage one other with the truth of God's words and promises this week.

In prayer time next week, be ready to share your successes and failures.

LOVE ALWAYS PROTECTS

WORD DEFINITION PROTECT

- To keep from being damaged, attacked, stolen, or injured; guard
- To defend from trouble, harm, attack, etc

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Psalms 116:6 – “The LORD protects the unwary; when I was brought low, he saved me.”

Proverbs 2:8 – “For he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.”

Proverbs 2:11 – “Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.”

Proverbs 4:6 – “Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you.”

2 Thessalonians 3:3 – “But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.”

Proverbs 3:11 – “My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline, and do not resent his rebuke.”

Proverbs 5:23 – “For lack of discipline they will die, led astray by their own great folly.”

Proverbs 3:12 – “Because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.”

POSITIVE EXAMPLES

Genesis 37:12-36 – Joseph

- Look at the story of Joseph. God watched over Joseph, but it didn’t always look like what we would expect.
- God had a plan to grow Joseph and save others. This required Joseph to go through hard things, but God protected him.

Book of Job (at least chapter 1)

- God watched over and protected Job also, but again it doesn’t look like what we would expect.
- It doesn’t look like what we pray for when we ask God for protection, but Job knew God so much better in the end. God protected him and grew him.

NEGATIVE EXAMPLES

Matthew 26:50-52 – Jesus’ disciple cut off the ear of high priest

- This looks more like what we would think of by protections, but Jesus rebukes him.

1 Samuel 13:5-14 – Saul’s burnt offering

- Again, this looks like what we would think of as protection.
- He took matters into his own hands because his troops were scared.
- God was not pleased.

HOW DO WE GROW IN GODLY PROTECTION?

Ephesians 4:22-24 - Put off and Put on

PUT OFF

A worldly view of protection and safety

We need to put off our thought that God is only protecting us if we are perfectly safe and everything is as we think it should be. This is not how God protects us.

PUT ON

A biblical view of protection and God's purpose in our life.

We need to put on the truth that God is not as concerned about our comfort as He is about our growth in Christ. He loves us enough to put us through trails and discipline to grow us. That is true love and protection. He saves us from evil!

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN OUR LIFE TODAY?

So what do God's love and protection look like in our lives, and are you excited about that protection?

PLAN OF ACTION

Pray

- Pray that the Spirit would give you strength to let go of our perceived need for comfort and safety.
- Spend some time and think about it - "Are you to the point yet of trusting God completely with your life?" Do you trust God enough to honestly pray "God bring into my life whatever you will, and whatever will make me more like Christ"?
- Pray that you will have strength to love others enough to protect them like God protects us.

Scripture

- Memorize – Exodus 14:14 – "The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

Let go

- In the past weeks we have been called to fight. This week we are called to be still and trust in God.
- This week let go of the perceived control of your life and give it over to God. Not only your life, but the lives of your love ones that you think you somehow protect. Put it in God's hands and trust that He loves you and knows what is best in your life.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Encourage one other this week to trust in God with the things we hold so closely to.

In prayer time next week, be ready to share if you struggled in this area this week.

LOVE ALWAYS HOPES

WORD DEFINITION HOPE

- To wish for something with expectation of its fulfillment
- To have confidence in
- A desire accompanied by confident expectation of its fulfillment
- The desire and search for a future good

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Psalm 33:20 – “We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.”

Psalm 147:11 – “The LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.”

Romans 5:1-5

1 John 4:18 – “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”

POSITIVE EXAMPLES

Mark 5:24-34 – Bleeding woman

- All of her hope was in Christ; He was her only chance.

1 Corinthians 15:18-20 – hope in Christ

- We don't have blind hope, pie in the sky “hope everything works out” hope.
- We have hope in a risen Savior, that lives in us. There is power in our hope.

NEGATIVE EXAMPLES

Mark 5:24-34 – Bleeding woman

- When she hoped in man (doctors) she got nowhere; she was in despair.

HOW DO WE GROW IN OUR HOPEFULNESS?

Ephesians 4:22-24 - Put off and Put on

PUT OFF

We must put off our hope in man, in systems, or in money to save us. You will not love others if you are hoping in them. They will disappoint you and let you down. You will become angry and bitter towards them.

We must put off our hope in ourselves.

PUT ON

We must put on hope solely in Christ. Christ will not fail us, and therefore we will not be let down. We can love via this, because we know the promises we have in Christ. Because of our hope in Him, we can love others as they are, sinners just like us.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN OUR LIFE TODAY?

So what does your life look like when you hope in Christ and not in man?

PLAN OF ACTION

Pray

- Pray that God would reveal areas in your life where you are hoping in anything other than Christ alone.
- Pray that the Spirit would give you the strength to let go of those hopes and replace them with hope in Christ.

Scripture

- Memorize – Philippians 1:20 “I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now, as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.”

See the big picture

- Take this week and really try to have an eternal view of things.
- Our hope is for the future things to come in Christ – Romans 8:22-25
- Spend some time this week really meditating on what it means to hope in Christ, and the glories that are to come.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Encourage one another with the promises of God that are yet to be fulfilled this week.

In prayer time next week, be ready to share what God revealed to you this week.

LOVE ENDURES ALL THINGS

WORD DEFINITION ENDURE

- To carry on through, despite hardships; undergo
- To bear with tolerance
- To suffer patiently without yielding

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Psalm 100:5 – “For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”

Psalm 136 – “His love endures forever.”

2 Timothy 2:10 – “Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.”

POSITIVE EXAMPLES

Matthew 27:11-66 – Jesus’ crucifixion

- Christ’s love for you is so great that He endured the cross, the wrath of God, for you.
- He took on your sin. He became sin for us, that we might have His righteousness. That is love enduring all things.
- How can we not endure the sins against us, if Christ did that for you?

Ezekiel 23 – We are the prostitutes

- Look at what God’s love endured from Israel.
- Look at that as though it were you. That is what your sin is like to God, His love endures that kind of bold adultery towards Him.

NEGATIVE EXAMPLES

Job 2:9 – Job’s wife

- Job’s wife’s love for him did not endure all things. When things got hard she was ready to quit and give up.

Genesis 37:18-20 Joseph’s brothers

- His brothers did not love him enough to endure the special treatment, the dreams, and the arrogance of Joseph.

HOW DO WE GROW IN OUR ENDURANCE FOR OTHERS?

Ephesians 4:22-24 - Put off and Put on

PUT OFF

We must put off our selfishness and self-righteous view of ourselves. We have to put away the idea that we are somehow special and should never be sinned against and people should treat us how we want to be treated.

PUT ON

We must put on the truth of what Christ has done for us. That if He did that for me, if God endures and is so long suffering for me, then I must extend that to others.

You can never endure in love, if you don't fully grasp Christ's love for you. It has to flow from the grace and love of Christ.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN OUR LIFE TODAY?

So what is God calling you to endure in love right now, and what does it look like in your life?

PLAN OF ACTION

Pray

- Pray that God would bless you with a fresh view of the love, grace, and mercy of Christ.
- Pray that God would bless you with the ability to see your sins first and as the worst, so that you may endure the sins of others against you with love.

Scripture

- Memorize - 2 Timothy 2:10 - "Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."

Pray for others

- Think about the people you are struggling to endure.
- Spend time this week praying for those people in love.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Encourage one another in endurance this week.

In prayer time next week, be ready to share your successes and failures.

LOVE NEVER FAILS

WORD DEFINITION FAIL

- To prove deficient or lacking
- To be unsuccessful
- To decline, as in strength or effectiveness
- To disappoint or prove undependable

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Psalm 73:26 – “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

Psalm 6:4 – “Turn, LORD, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love.”

Psalm 13:5 – “But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.”

Psalm 32:10 – “Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORDS’s unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him.”

Psalm 36:7 – “How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.”

Psalm 107 – “We are all saved by His unfailing love.”

POSITIVE EXAMPLES

Revelation 21 & 22 – Jesus is coming!

- Christ is coming! His love will not fail us, His promises will hold true
- He knows the end from the beginning and no plan of His can be withheld from Him

The entire Bible – God’s love never failed anyone that trusted in him.

- I challenge you to find one example of God’s love failing.

NEGATIVE EXAMPLES

There are no examples of love failing, because where there is failure there is no biblical love!

HOW DO WE SUSTAIN OUR LOVE FOR CHRIST AND OTHERS?

As this is the end of our study, how do we continue in love? How do we make it such that our love never fails?

We must continue to daily walk this Christ, just as He said in Luke 9:23 – “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

If we are to sustain our love for Christ and other, we must continue to draw closer and closer to Christ.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN OUR LIFE TODAY?

So what does it look like to be obsessed with Christ?

Francis Chan in *Crazy Love* defines the “profile of the obsessed” as follows:

- People who are obsessed with Jesus give freely and openly, without censure. Obsessed people love those who hate them and who can never love them back.
- People who are obsessed with Jesus aren't consumed with their personal safety and comfort above all else. Obsessed people care more about God's kingdom coming to this earth than their own lives being shielded from pain or distress.
- People who are obsessed with Jesus live lives that connect them with the poor in some way or another. Obsessed people believe that Jesus talked about money and the poor so often because it was really important to Him.
- Obsessed people are more concerned with obeying God than doing what is expected or fulfilling to the status quo. A person who is obsessed with Jesus will do things that don't always make sense in terms of success or wealth on this earth. As Martin Luther put it, “There are two days on my calendar: this day and that day.”
- A person who is obsessed with Jesus knows that the sin of pride is always a battle. Obsessed people know that you can never be “humble enough”, and so they seek to make themselves less known and Christ more known.
- People who are obsessed with Jesus do not consider service a burden. Obsessed people take joy in loving God by loving His people.
- People who are obsessed with God are known as givers, not takers. Obsessed people genuinely think that others matter as much as they do, and they are particularly aware of those who are poor around the world.
- A person who is obsessed thinks about heaven frequently. Obsessed people orient their lives around eternity; they are not fixed only on what is here in front of them.
- A person who is obsessed is characterized by committed, settled, passionate love for God, above and before every other thing and every other being.
- People who are obsessed are raw with God; they do not attempt to mask the ugliness of their sins or their failures. Obsessed people don't put it on for God; He is their safe place, where they can be at peace.
- People who are obsessed with God have an intimate relationship with him. They are nourished by God's Word throughout the day because they know that forty minutes on Sunday is not enough to sustain them for a whole week, especially when they will encounter so many distractions and alternative messages.
- A person who is obsessed with Jesus is more concerned with his or her character than comfort. Obsessed people know that true joy doesn't depend on circumstances or environment; it is a gift that must be chosen and cultivated, a fight that ultimately comes from God.
- A person who is obsessed with Jesus knows that the best thing he can do is be faithful to his Savior in every aspect of his life, continually saying “Thank You!” to God. An obsessed person knows there can never be intimacy if he is always trying to pay God back or work hard enough to be worthy. He revels in his role as child and friend of God.

PLAN OF ACTION

Pray

- Pray that God would grow your love for Him and others each day, that daily you would fall a little more in love with Christ.

Scripture

- Memorize - Psalm 36:7 – “How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.”

Plan and work to be madly in love with Jesus Christ

- Become an obsessed person for Jesus

ACCOUNTABILITY

Continue to encourage one another in love.