



# ECHOES

Adult Student Book  
Comprehensive Bible Study  
September–November 2020



Love for One Another  
Studies in Genesis, 1 Samuel, Luke,  
John, Acts, and the Epistles

# T A B L E O F Contents

## Love for One Another

September, October, November 2020

(Studies in the Old and New Testaments)

### Unit 1: Struggles with Love

<b>Sept. 6</b>	Lesson 1	Biased Love	p. 5
<b>Sept. 13</b>	Lesson 2	Obedient Love	p. 12
<b>Sept. 20</b>	Lesson 3	Victorious Love	p. 19
<b>Sept. 27</b>	Lesson 4	Revealed Love	p. 26

### Unit 2: Inclusive Love

<b>Oct. 4</b>	Lesson 5	Love that Intercedes	p. 33
<b>Oct. 11</b>	Lesson 6	Love for Enemies	p. 40
<b>Oct. 18</b>	Lesson 7	Love for Neighbors	p. 47
<b>Oct. 25</b>	Lesson 8	Love Never Fails	p. 54

### Unit 3: Godly Love Among Believers

<b>Nov. 1</b>	Lesson 9	Serving Love	p. 61
<b>Nov. 8</b>	Lesson 10	Abiding Love	p. 68
<b>Nov. 15</b>	Lesson 11	Confident Love	p. 75
<b>Nov. 22</b>	Lesson 12	Responsive Love	p. 82
<b>Nov. 29</b>	Lesson 13	Impartial Love	p. 89

### Special Features

What's Ahead	p. 4
Personal Pages	p. 96
Lesson Cycle	p. 97
Coming Up Next Quarter	p. 98
Poster: Struggling to Love One Another	p. 99

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## Biased Love

“He’s jealous of you, Krystal,” Trina said.

“For what?” Krystal practically sobbed. The 30 year old had retreated to a less populated part of the park. She had grown weary of her sister Danielle’s acid tongue and the anger—especially the anger! Krystal reached out repeatedly to her sister in love. Still, when Danielle had an audience, “the comedian” would come out to entertain with jokes that were mostly at Krystal’s expense.

“You certainly fill out those jeans. I mean talk about tight!” Danielle had wisecracked earlier. Then came the laughter.

The Sampson family had gathered for a picnic. Krystal, Danielle, and their brother Grady were the children of their parents, Gerald and Delores. Krystal had the lightest coloring of the children. Her complexion and wavy hair came from her “father’s side of the family and her brains came from her mother’s side.” Although Krystal was the youngest, she was the first in her immediate family to graduate from college.

“I don’t have anything more than anyone else. I’m not rich or anything,” Krystal said to Trina.

“You have your parents’ love,” said Trina.

“So does Danielle,” countered Krystal.

“Yes, but they understand what your sister has done to you,” her friend said gently.

Krystal sighed in her heart. She knew it was true. Krystal took Danielle’s abuse because she wanted to make it up to her. She also continued to pray for the Lord to save her hurting, angry sister.

- 1. How do serious problems in families impact society in general?**
- 2. Why is a strong marriage important to a family?**
- 3. Why do members of a family need to respect each other?**

## Jacob's Favoritism of Joseph

*Genesis 37:2-4, KJV*

2 These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.

4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

*Genesis 37:2-4, NIV*

<sup>2</sup>This is the account of Jacob's family line.

Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

<sup>3</sup>Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. <sup>4</sup>When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

The end of Genesis spotlights the life of Joseph and the circumstances that led to the relocation of Jacob's entire family to Egypt. The narrative begins with Joseph as a young man of 17. He and some of his brothers were taking care of his father's flocks. The brothers had done something they shouldn't have while away from home tending the sheep. Joseph saw the wrongdoing and let Jacob know about it. Although the text doesn't tell us so, the brothers undoubtedly had hard feelings toward their younger sibling because of his reporting on them.

Jacob increased the friction by showing his preference for the firstborn of his favorite wife, Rachel. Jacob loved Joseph more because he was born in his father's old age. In fact, Joseph was Jacob's youngest son next to Benjamin, Joseph's only full brother. Jacob showed his favoritism by giving

Joseph a special tunic. The Hebrew word that describes it is obscure. "A coat of many colours" (vs. 3, KJV) may mean that the robe had long sleeves or was richly embroidered. In any case, it distinguished Joseph as the favored son of Jacob and the future ruler over the family.

As Joseph wore the ornate robe, it became a source of constant irritation to his siblings. They were visually reminded that their father loved Joseph best, and their hatred of Joseph prevented them from being able to even speak to him kindly.

**4.** *What responsibility did Jacob give to Joseph?*

**5.** *How did Joseph's brothers feel about him?*

## Joseph's Two Dreams

*Genesis 37:5-11, KJV*

5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

7 For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun

*Genesis 37:5-11, NIV*

<sup>5</sup>Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more.

<sup>6</sup>He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: <sup>7</sup>We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."

<sup>8</sup>His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

<sup>9</sup>Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

*KJV*

and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

10 And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

*NIV*

<sup>10</sup>When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" <sup>11</sup>His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

In the ancient Middle East, people believed that dreams were a window into knowing the future. This sentiment proved to be true in Joseph's case, for God sent the dreams to show the superior blessings He would give to Joseph. After he had the dreams, he told them to his brothers and in turn their hatred intensified. Some commentators allege that Joseph was gloating over them, or was arrogant or condescending, but the text does not support these views.

In the first dream, Joseph saw himself and his brothers tying up sheaves of grain when suddenly, Joseph's bundle stood up. Then, his brothers' bundles surrounded Joseph's sheaf and bowed down to it. The brothers interpreted the dream to mean that one day they would bow down to him as their ruler, so his brothers' hatred of him rose higher.

In Joseph's second dream, he saw the sun and moon (the parents) as well as 11 stars (the siblings) bow to him. This time Joseph described the dream to his father and brothers. Jacob chastised Joseph for the dream because he saw that he, his wife Leah (Joseph's mother, Rachel, had died by this time; 35:19-20), and his sons would all bow down to Joseph.

- 6.** *What was the nature of Joseph's first dream?*
- 7.** *What was the nature of Joseph's second dream?*
- 8.** *How did Jacob respond to his son's second dream?*

## Joseph's Enslavement

*Genesis 37:23, 24a, 28, KJV*

23 And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him;

24a And they took him, and cast him into a pit. . . .

28 Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

*Genesis 37:23, 24a, 28, NIV*

<sup>23</sup>So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing—<sup>24a</sup>and they took him and threw him into the cistern. . . .

<sup>28</sup>So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

After Joseph's dreams, most of Jacob's sons took his flocks about 50 miles north to Shechem (37:12). Then, Jacob sent Joseph to find out how they were doing. When Joseph reached his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, a symbol of his status that he wore out of respect for his father. The brothers, by harming Joseph, dishonored Jacob. As the siblings previously planned (vss. 18-22), they threw Joseph into a nearby cistern, then callously sat down to eat some food (vs. 25).

Sometime during the meal, the brothers spotted a caravan of traders (referred to as both Midianites and Ishmaelites; 37:28). The merchants were carrying spices down to Egypt (vs. 25). Judah recommended that, instead of murdering Joseph, his brothers should sell him as a slave to the caravan. The group liked Judah's idea and so went along with it (vs. 26-27).

When the siblings pulled Joseph out of the cistern, he may have thought that he would be freed, but his brothers brazenly sold him into slavery for 20 silver coins. The amount paid for Joseph was the usual slave price for a young male.

**9.** *What despicable actions did Joseph's brothers take against him?*

## Love Never Fails

“Train up a child in the way he should go,” said 19th-century Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon, quoting Proverbs 22:6 (KJV), “but be sure you go that way yourself.”

It is human nature for most of us to place higher expectations on others than we do for ourselves, and this is particularly true for other members in our own family. As a Christian minister, Spurgeon undoubtedly observed this to be frequently true within families in the church, and that’s why he ardently urged Christians to stay the course in their walk with the Lord Jesus.

The apostle Paul himself cautioned Christians about the consequences of abandoning Christian virtues and behaving selfishly: “For I am afraid,” he wrote in anticipation of his visit to the believers in Corinth, “that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be. . . . I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder” (2 Cor. 12:20 NIV).

The key to evading such bad behavior for Paul was demonstrating the love of Christ, saying “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails” (1 Cor. 13:4-8).

When the love of Christ guides what we think and what we say and what we do, our relationship with others, especially those who are dearest to us, will be seasoned with God’s blessings, for ultimately Christ’s love never fails.

**10.** *Why are families the nucleus of the Church?*

**11.** *Why is it crucial for a church to have leaders who have strong and stable families?*

**12.** *In what ways does expressing Christ’s love heal family discord?*

## Focus on Your Family

After many years of deep resentment, Jacob's sons could no longer tolerate their brother's annoying presence, and so, they sold him into slavery. Problems within our families will never become so tragic. Nevertheless, disputes and conflicts even on a far minor scale can still destroy families. That is why we all need to be empowered with Christ's love in overcoming any strife that may emerge between a family member and us.

► *Take a few minutes to write a letter to God. In this letter, thank Him for blessing you with either a caring family or a supportive church family. Then, praise Him for adopting people of all races and cultural backgrounds into His heavenly family through the atonement of His Son Jesus Christ.*

### KEY VERSE

And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

—Genesis 37:11, KJV

His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

— Genesis 37:11, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

September 7 through September 13

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

**Mon.** Acts 13:1-5—Paul and Barnabas Appointed for Ministry.

**Tues.** Genesis 41:9-13—Joseph, Chief Interpreter of Dreams.

**Wed.** Genesis 41:14-24—Dreams of Cows and Corn Explained.

**Thurs.** Genesis 41:34-36—Preparing for the Expected Famine.

**Fri.** Genesis 41:41-49—Storing Grain for the Future.

**Sat.** Genesis 41:53-57—Egypt Feeds the Middle East.

**Sun.** Genesis 41:25-33, 37-40, 50-52—Leadership During Crisis.

## Obedient Love

**D**orinda was standing behind her table at her mother's nursing home garage sale. The active 60 year old was one of 12 vendors who had set up on this gorgeous morning. Dorinda had retired early from her job after being unfairly laid off. She learned only two months later that her company hired a woman half her age.

She did not heed the advice of many to sue her old boss. Dorinda had spent the past six months working at her house and volunteering at the nursing home. While she was financially solvent, Dorinda's checkbook had slimmed down, and she missed working with the public.

The activities director walked up and suddenly asked Dorinda what new things she would like to see the residents at the home do. "What about having a fashion show, a carnival, or taking them out to an oldies concert?" Dorinda said.

"Those are great ideas! I believe this is fate," said the director. "Would you be interested in replacing me? I am retiring in two months. You have been working with us for the past six months, and you have many great ideas. Your business degree and background make you an excellent candidate, and the staff and the nursing home administrator love you!"

"I could see you even more!" exclaimed Dorinda's mother.

"I think you will be pleasantly surprised at how much the job pays," continued the director. "What do you say?"

"I say yes!" said Dorinda. "I didn't come here for a job, but to be a blessing and help out."

Dorinda's mother thanked God in her heart.

**1.** *Is obeying rules, regulations, and laws difficult for you? Explain your answer.*

**2.** *Why are you more apt to obey someone you love?*

**3.** *Why does being confident in God's love for you make it far easier to be obedient to His commands?*

## Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dreams

*Genesis 41:25-32, KJV*

25 And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do.

26 The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one.

27 And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine.

28 This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh.

29 Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:

30 And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land;

31 And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous.

32 And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

*Genesis 41:25-32, NIV*

<sup>25</sup>Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. <sup>26</sup>The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. <sup>27</sup>The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine.

<sup>28</sup>"It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. <sup>29</sup>Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, <sup>30</sup> but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. <sup>31</sup>The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. <sup>32</sup>The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon."

Genesis 40 details two dreams Joseph interpreted concerning Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker while they were in prison with him. In Genesis 41, Joseph was brought out of prison to interpret a pair of troubling dreams Pharaoh had (vss. 1-7). Neither Pharaoh nor his most trusted advisors could fathom the meaning of the dreams, but the king's cupbearer remembered his encounter two years earlier with Joseph. Pharaoh sent for Joseph to interpret the set of dreams. When questioned, Joseph credited God with revealing the meaning of Pharaoh's dreams (vss. 9-16).

The first dream showed seven healthy cows, followed by seven sickly cows. The second dream involved seven heads of full-bodied grain, followed by seven heads of withered grain. Pharaoh saw the ugly cows devour the healthy cows, and the shriveled grain consume the thriving grain (vss. 17-24).

The God whom Joseph worshiped and served—despite about 13 years of hardship and isolation (compare 37:2; 41:46)—was using him to disclose to Pharaoh what God would soon do (41:25). The seven fat cows and plump heads of grain both represented seven years of prosperity. In contrast, the seven gaunt cows and withered heads of grain represented seven years of severe famine so widespread and horrific that all the prosperity would be forgotten and wiped out due to the devastating effects of the famine. Pharaoh's seeing two versions of the same dream was God's way of signaling that the matter was divinely decreed and would soon occur.

**4.** *What reason did Joseph give for Pharaoh's two dreams?*

**5.** *To what circumstances did Pharaoh's dreams point?*

## Joseph's Advice to Pharaoh

*Genesis 41:33, 37-40, KJV*  
 33 Now therefore let Pharaoh  
 look out a man discreet and

*Genesis 41:33, 37-40, NIV*  
<sup>33</sup>And now let Pharaoh look  
 for a discerning and wise man

*KJV*

wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

37 And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.

38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?

39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

*NIV*

and put him in charge of the land of Egypt."

<sup>37</sup>The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials.

<sup>38</sup> So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?"

<sup>39</sup>Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. <sup>40</sup>You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you."

Because God was sure to act as He had declared through Joseph, he urged Pharaoh to take immediate action to find someone who had good judgment to head a nationwide grain program. This person would gather the excess food and grain during the seven abundant years and stockpile the food in various cities throughout Egypt (vs. 35). Pharaoh would thus ensure that there would be enough food to eat when the seven years of famine came. To do otherwise would bring about widespread starvation and the eventual ruin of the nation.

As the royal court deliberated who should be appointed to oversee the entire operation, Pharaoh openly wondered whether they could find a more suitable person than Joseph, someone in whom resided "the spirit of God" (vs. 38). Since Pharaoh accepted Joseph's statement that God had revealed to him the meaning of the dreams, Joseph was therefore the wisest person in Egypt, so he would be the national overseer.

For Joseph to direct the project, he would manage the household of Pharaoh and have charge over all his officials

and inhabitants. Only Pharaoh would rank higher than Joseph and retain supreme authority over the kingdom.

**6. What recommendation did Joseph make to Pharaoh?**

**7. What pivotal decision did Pharaoh make?**

## Joseph Begins a Family

*Genesis 41:50-52, KJV*

50 And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him.

51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.

52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

*Genesis 41:50-52, NIV*

<sup>50</sup>Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On.

<sup>51</sup>Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." <sup>52</sup>The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."

During the seven years of abundance, Joseph married Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, an Egyptian priest who served at On, a shrine for the worship of Ra, the sun-god.

Before the famine came, Asenath bore Joseph two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. "Manasseh" (vs. 51) possibly means "he who brings about forgetfulness." The term sounds like and possibly is derived from a Hebrew verb that means "to forget." Most likely, "Ephraim" (vs. 52) means "to bear fruit" and is derived from a verb that means "twice fruitful" or "double fruitfulness." The name reminded Joseph that in a land where he had endured so much "affliction" (KJV), God had made Joseph fruitful.

**8. What did Joseph's two sons' names indicate about the time he had spent in Egypt?**

## Joni Eareckson Tada

On a warm summer day in 1967, a 17-year-old girl dove into the Chesapeake Bay and fractured her vertebra, paralyzing her from her shoulders down. This athletic teenager, who was named after her father, an Olympian himself, discovered that she could never in the same way ride horses, go hiking and swimming, and play tennis as she had before the accident.

In her autobiography, *Joni*, Joni Eareckson admitted that she wallowed in depression, entertained suicide, and cried out in anger against God. Nevertheless, she still clung to her Lord Jesus, and in her struggles her faith deepened so that anyone who has met her is immediately struck by her humility, courage, and kindness. As years have gone by, God has blessed her with a husband, a gift for painting with her teeth, and a ministry that includes more than 40 books, several musical albums, and a film about her life and in which she starred.

In obedience to Christ, Joni founded the Christian ministry Joni and Friends in 1979. This organization has ministered to tens of thousands of people. Its radio programs have received numerous awards, and she has served on the National Council on Disability, as well as sitting on other boards that deal with the disabled.

Joni, however, is not alone in rising above hardships and setbacks to express a dynamic faith in Christ. Countless faithful believers have put their trust in God as they obeyed the demands He has placed on them. And in so doing, God's guidance has set them on a path full of the blessings only His love can provide.

**9.** *Have you clung to God's love through a great hardship? Explain your answer.*

**10.** *Why is giving up on God's love not the best option?*

**11.** *Why is the path to God's best life for you found in obedience to Him?*

## Abide in the Lord's Will

Joseph would not have been in a position to save his family had he not experienced so many adversities. His story reminds us that God does have a plan for each of His children, a plan that abounds with His love and blessings.

► *How could you be more obedient to the Lord this coming week? Write some things here you could do each day of the coming week. At the end of each day, describe what you did and how your obedience displayed God's love to yourself and others.*

### KEY VERSE

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art. Thou shalt be over my house, and unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

—Genesis 41:39-40, KJV

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you."

—Genesis 41:39-40, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

September 14 through September 20

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** Psalm 51:1-12—Have Mercy on Me, a Sinner.
- Tues.** Luke 23:9-15 —Pilate's Judgment of Jesus, "Not Guilty."
- Wed.** Genesis 42:1-5—Brothers Sent to Egypt to Buy Grain.
- Thurs.** Genesis 42:26-28—Joseph Returns Money with Grain.
- Fri.** Genesis 42:29-34—Joseph Questions Motives of Brothers.
- Sat.** Genesis 42:35-38—Jacob Vows Not to Send Benjamin.
- Sun.** Genesis 42:6-25—Joseph Confronts Brothers for Past Behavior.

## Victorious Love

I told Marcio I was sorry," Kolby said.

Leon looked at his 16-year-old son with patience. Kolby and Marcio, his best friend of eight years, had stopped speaking to one another. It was all because of Catlyn. She was beautiful but also, in Leon's opinion, ruthless. She had played the best friends against each other for her affections. Kolby had won, but he had lost his best friend.

Kolby was enjoying the attention of the prettiest girl in the school and all the rep that went with it, but Leon sensed his son was beginning to see Catlyn's true colors. With Kolby now being an officially licensed driver, Catlyn had kept him busy driving her around town. Homecoming was coming up, and Catlyn wanted a driving escort.

Kolby now looked pleadingly at his dad. "I realize what a good friend I had in Marcio."

"You have to show Marcio you are sorry and want to restore the friendship," said Leon.

For the next two weeks, Leon watched Kolby dial down his interactions with Catlyn. Kolby didn't drive her around much, and he didn't ask her to the homecoming dance.

Two weeks later, Leon saw Marcio pile out of Kolby's car.

"Hello, Marcio," Leon said smiling. "Where have you two been?"

"We were playing some basketball," Kolby said. "Is it OK if we hang out downstairs for a while?"

"Certainly," said Leon, as he continued staining the deck.

**1.** *Why do we hurt even those to whom we are committed?*

**2.** *How can you tell the difference between genuine repentance and fake repentance?*

**3.** *Why does fake repentance doom any relationship, particularly with God?*

## Joseph Accuses His Brothers of Spying

*Genesis 42:6-17, KJV*

6 And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth.

7 And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food.

8 And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.

9 And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

10 And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come.

11 We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies.

12 And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

13 And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not.

14 And Joseph said unto them,

*Genesis 42:6-17, NIV*

<sup>6</sup>Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the person who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. <sup>7</sup>As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. "Where do you come from?" he asked.

"From the land of Canaan," they replied, "to buy food."

<sup>8</sup>Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. <sup>9</sup>Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected."

<sup>10</sup>"No, my lord," they answered. "Your servants have come to buy food. <sup>11</sup>We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies."

<sup>12</sup>"No!" he said to them. "You have come to see where our land is unprotected."

<sup>13</sup>But they replied, "Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more."

*KJV*

That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies:

15 Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither.

16 Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies.

17 And he put them all together into ward three days.

*NIV*

<sup>14</sup>Joseph said to them, "It is just as I told you: You are spies!

<sup>15</sup>And this is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. <sup>16</sup>Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth. If you are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!"

<sup>17</sup>And he put them all in custody for three days.

As the second-in-command in Egypt, for seven years Joseph collected the excess of large, abundant harvests (Gen. 41:47). Then came the famine, which God used to bring about a reunion of Joseph with his brothers. Yet, before Joseph disclosed his identity, he put his brothers through a series of tests to see whether they would abandon Benjamin as they had abandoned himself over 20 years earlier.

When the 10 brothers were escorted into Joseph's presence, they showed respect to the "governor" (vs. 6) by bowing. Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him, since Joseph would have shaved his head and beard, worn eye makeup, and put on expensive clothing.

Joseph then grilled his brothers with questions. They said they had come from Canaan to purchase grain. Joseph accused them of being "spies" (vs. 9), scouting the nation's defenses, but they said they had only come to "buy food." They told him about one other brother in Canaan and another presumed dead, but Joseph rejected their story. He swore an oath that nine brothers would remain in Egypt until their "youngest brother" (vs. 15) came back with the tenth sibling. In this way, he would assess whether they were "telling the truth" (vs. 16).

4. *In what way did Joseph treat his brothers?*

5. *What preceded Joseph accusing his brothers of being spies?*

6. *What response did Joseph's brothers give to the claim that they were spies?*

## Joseph Tests His Brothers' Honesty

*Genesis 42:18-25, KJV*

18 And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God:

19 If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses:

20 But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so.

21 And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.

22 And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required.

23 And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.

24 And he turned himself about

*Genesis 42:18-25, NIV*

<sup>18</sup>On the third day, Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God: <sup>19</sup>If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households. <sup>20</sup>But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die." This they proceeded to do.

<sup>21</sup>They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us."

<sup>22</sup>Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood." <sup>23</sup>They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter.

<sup>24</sup>He turned away from them

*KJV*

from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.

25 Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them.

*NIV*

and began to weep, but then came back and spoke to them again. He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes.

<sup>25</sup>Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man's silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey.

After three days, Joseph released his 10 brothers from prison. By now, they were fearing for their lives. Joseph explained that he, like them, “fear[ed] God” (vs. 18), and if they were “honest men,” they would leave one brother in Egypt and return to Canaan with enough “grain” to feed their famished “households.” However, they also had to agree to return with their “youngest brother” (vs. 20) to prove their claims and prevent Joseph from executing them as spies. The brothers decided they were being “punished” (vs. 21) for selling Joseph. Reuben interjected that he told them not to “sin” (vs. 22) by harming Joseph, but they didn’t listen. Now they would pay the price for Joseph’s “blood.”

Joseph could see his brothers were sincerely grappling with the pain and consequences of their actions. He had to turn away so that they would not see him weeping. Then, after Joseph regained his composure, he directed his attendants to tie up Simeon (Jacob’s second-born son) and take him away. They should also place each brother’s “silver” (used in exchange for grain) back in their bags with enough grain and “provisions” (vs. 25) for their journey.

**7.** *How did Joseph treat his brothers after three days had passed?*

**8.** *What assumption did Joseph’s brothers make about the way Joseph had treated them?*

**9.** *What did Joseph’s brothers fail to realize about Joseph?*

## Forgiveness and Remorse

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone,” wrote the apostle Paul. “Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Col. 3:13).

This is easier said than done, especially if the other person admits no fault on his or her part or apologizes superficially. Being a disciple of Jesus, however, is far from easy when dealing with others, particularly those closest to us. Yet, God’s blessings are manifold when we forgive in the same way Christ forgave us, even if there is no reconciliation.

Jesus says to His followers, “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13). And this is what the apostle Peter did for Jesus after the Resurrection. He expressed his love for his friend and master many times: when he preached about Jesus despite ridicule and scorn; when he was imprisoned for defending Jesus; and when he dedicated his life in service to Jesus.

These examples were not only expressions of his love but also indications of his deep and genuine remorse for having betrayed Jesus when the Sanhedrin arrested his friend. And Jesus did for Peter as He has done for all of us: He forgave him, as He has forgiven us. Moreover, Jesus asks that we do the same for others.

When we have been wronged, we must allow God’s Spirit to empower us with the love of Christ, and when we have wronged another, we must express our contrition in similar ways as Peter did. In other words, forgiving and repenting must truly come from our hearts if there is to be genuine reconciliation. And restoration is possible when we and the other person are both faithful to the lordship of Christ Jesus.

**10.** *Why is it important to God that His children have strong and healthy relationships?*

**11.** *Why is it easier to forgive when you know that God has forgiven you?*

**12.** *How does restoration of a relationship affect others?*

## Restoring That Which Was Lost

When Joseph heard his brothers' remorse for having sold him into slavery, he wept. When someone hurts us deeply and unjustly as Joseph's brothers did him, and we see their genuine contrition as Joseph saw his brothers', hopefully we will be truly moved as Joseph was. When we love someone, we hope for their sincere expression of repentance, and when it is expressed, then reconciliation can occur.

► *Write a Bible verse here, other than John 15:13, that relates to reconciling relationships. Memorize the verse at the beginning of this coming week. Throughout the week and in your study book, write how this verse has affected your walk with Jesus and your relationships with others.*

### KEY VERSE

And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required. —Genesis 42:22, KJV

Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood." —Genesis 42:22, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

September 21 through September 27

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Psalm 43—During Trouble, Maintain Hope in God.
- Tues.** Genesis 43:1-15—Benjamin Sent to Joseph with Gifts.
- Wed.** Genesis 44:1-13—Stolen Cup Found in Benjamin's Grain.
- Thurs.** Genesis 44:14-17—Brothers Offer to Become Slaves to Joseph.
- Fri.** Genesis 44:18-26—Judah Pleads with Joseph for Benjamin.
- Sat.** Genesis 44:27-34—Jacob Will Die Without Seeing Benjamin.
- Sun.** Genesis 45:1-15—Joseph and His Brothers Reconcile Their Differences.

## Revealed Love

When Flora had come out of the supply storage room of the daycare, she noticed an elderly woman with a toddler. Her face seemed so familiar. Then Flora's eyes grew wide. It was Phyllis!

The two women had not seen each other in about five years. Phyllis had lived in Flora's neighborhood when she operated a daycare out of her home. Phyllis had repeatedly accused Flora of daycare violations, the majority of which were not true and based on incomplete information.

The constant back and forth and a state investigation caused Flora to close up her home daycare. However, she developed a few good contacts with the state.

Four years later, with the support of her church, friends, city officials, and her state contacts, Flora opened up the Little Blessings Daycare Center.

"Hello, Phyllis," Flora said coming up to her. "Is this your beautiful grandbaby?"

"Yes," said Phyllis. "It's Dion's third child."

"She is precious," said Flora, "and it's so good to see you!"

"Do you work here?" asked Phyllis.

"Yes," replied Flora. "I own the daycare."

After the two women spent about 15 minutes catching up, Phyllis rose and repeated her apologies for "being concerned about the welfare of the children" at Flora's home daycare.

"All is forgiven," Flora repeated. "Who would have thought I'd be able to care for your grandbaby? God has it all under control. He blessed me to open this daycare, and these children are truly little blessings!"

- 1.** *How difficult is it for you to trust God?*
- 2.** *What does it take for you to trust someone? To trust God?*
- 3.** *What blessings occur when you trust the Lord?*

## Joseph's Disclosure

*Genesis 45:1-7, KJV*

1 Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

2 And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

3 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.

4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

6 For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

*Genesis 45:1-7, NIV*

<sup>1</sup>Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. <sup>2</sup>And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it.

<sup>3</sup>Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

<sup>4</sup>Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! <sup>5</sup>And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. <sup>6</sup>For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. <sup>7</sup>But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance."

In Genesis 44:33-34, Judah concluded an impassioned

request on behalf of Benjamin, his younger brother, to Joseph. Judah offered to become a substitute in slavery for Benjamin. As Judah spoke, Joseph must have listened to see whether the once egotistical, vengeful brothers had changed.

Finally, Joseph commanded his attendants to leave the room (45:1). His emotional outburst was so intense that his weeping could even be heard by the servants who had departed.

Joseph's brothers were shocked to hear the second-most powerful person in Egypt declare, "I am Joseph!" (vs. 3) and ask about his father whom he had not seen since he was 17.

Joseph's brothers made no reply to his question, but wondered whether he would execute them on the spot. Instead, Joseph called them closer to look at his face. He was Joseph, the brother whom they had sold into slavery. Only Joseph could have known that detail. The person they had terribly wronged now had absolute power over them.

However, like his brothers, Joseph was a different person and not interested in revenge. He was able and willing to forgive them because he saw his trials from a godly perspective.

What follows signifies the theological high point of Joseph's story. Instead of concentrating on his brothers' evil intentions, he focused on God's supreme plan of blessing him with success and saving people from destruction. He urged his brothers not to be angry with themselves. Though their past actions were deplorable, God had used their decisions to place Joseph in a position to rescue Egypt and even his own family.

Joseph explained that the two years of famine that had already past would extend to seven, but God would use Joseph to preserve a "remnant" (vs. 7) of His chosen people. This implied they would be rescued only because God had something special in store for this family.

**4.** *What prompted Joseph's strong reaction?*

**5.** *What prevented Joseph's brothers from responding to*

*him in a positive way?*

**6.** *What would have caused Joseph's brothers to feel distressed and angry with themselves?*

**7.** *What explanation did Joseph offer his brothers to calm their nerves?*

## Joseph's Instructions

*Genesis 45:8, 10-15, KJV*

8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

10 And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:

11 And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.

12 And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you.

13 And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.

14 And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck.

15 Moreover he kissed all his

*Genesis 45:8, 10-15, NIV*

<sup>8</sup>So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.

<sup>10</sup>"You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have.

<sup>11</sup>I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'

<sup>12</sup>"You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you. <sup>13</sup>Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly."

<sup>14</sup>Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin

*KJV*

brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

*NIV*

embraced him, weeping. <sup>15</sup>And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

The main point of Joseph's explanation was that ultimately God sent him to Egypt. Joseph said that the Lord had made him a "father" (vs. 8) to Pharaoh, speaking figuratively about someone giving others trustworthy advice.

Joseph had worked out a plan for the family. He would quickly settle them in Egypt to survive the famine, which had several more years to go. The entire clan—family members, livestock, and all their possessions—would settle in the "land of Goshen" (vs. 10, KJV), in the Nile Delta region. Joseph promised to provide what they needed and would watch over them, especially in the five remaining years of famine.

Joseph also wanted there to be no doubt among his siblings that he truly was their brother. Here we find Joseph dispensing with an interpreter and speaking directly to his brothers. He urged his siblings to tell their father how much Joseph was honored in Egypt and the collaborating details of what they saw. Joseph reasoned that their personal testimony would convince Jacob to relocate his entire family from Canaan to Egypt.

With the important explanations over, Joseph embraced and wept with his brothers, beginning with the youngest. Benjamin was Joseph's full brother and the only innocent one.

This mutual display of emotion and the conversation that followed completed the family reunion. Whatever bitterness Joseph may have felt toward his brothers was all gone. They had nothing to fear from him, for he had forgiven them.

**8.** *What plan for Jacob's clan did Joseph describe to his brothers?*

**9.** *How did Joseph try to convince his brothers of his true identity?*

## From Scraps Come Great Art

The Chinese sculptor Wang Zhiyuan [jehr-yoo-ehn] is famous for taking refuse and creating amazing works of art. Struck by the immense garbage on the streets of Beijing, he has dedicated his life to transforming trash into art. One of his sculptures is titled “Thrown to the Wind,” which appears as a whirling tornado and is made entirely of discarded water bottles.

Similarly, the Lord God does the same with us; we who were spiritually lost and discarded, He has transformed into His beloved and radiant children. And yet, as wonderful and inspiring as is the art of Wang Zhiyuan, what God has done in our lives is far more remarkable. Moreover, the Lord continues to mold us by redeeming even the worst things about us so that we can be better servants for His heavenly kingdom.

We can see how Christ dealt with the weaknesses of His closest followers and made them into His dynamic servants: Peter cowardly betrayed Jesus, but later he bravely faced execution for preaching the good news; John had a violent nature, but later he exuded kindness and gentleness in his letters; and Thomas doubted Jesus’ resurrection, but later, church tradition says, he was martyred for his faith in the Lord.

Furthermore, the Lord is doing the same with us. He is stretching out His hand and reaching into the darkest regions of our past and our character and is transforming them with His light and His love. Although we have suffered terrible hurt, like with Peter and the other disciples, He comforts and strengthens us, and He teaches us to be more caring and more faithful than we ever were before.

**10.** *How do you know that God loves you?*

**11.** *Why is that important to you?*

**12.** *How has God made your path straight by redeeming your past hurts?*

## Mending a Broken Heart

The human heart is fragile both physically and emotionally. The heart of Joseph's soul was deeply hurt on several occasions, but his brothers' hearts were also scarred by what they had done to Joseph in his youth. Nevertheless, the Lord's love abided with Joseph, and, therefore, there was reconciliation and healing. Likewise, when we place our trust in the Lord's love, healing of our hearts will invariably occur.

► *Draw a simple picture of a heart broken in two. Above the heart, write a pledge to trust God that His love for you will continue to heal your heart. Throughout the coming week, in words and in this drawing, describe how God's love is mending your heart.*

### KEY VERSE

Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

—Genesis 45:5, KJV

And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.

—Genesis 45:5, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

September 28 through October 4

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** 1 Thessalonians 3:1-6—Timothy, My Brother and Co-worker.
- Tues.** 1 Samuel 17:41-51—David Slays Philistine with a Stone.
- Wed.** 1 Samuel 18:1-5—David and Jonathan Bond Together.
- Thurs.** 1 Samuel 18:12-18—Saul Jealous of and Fears David.
- Fri.** 1 Samuel 23:14-18—Jonathan Asserts David as Next King.
- Sat.** 2 Samuel 9:1-10—David Provides for Jonathan's Son Mephibosheth.
- Sun.** 1 Samuel 19:1-7—Saul Promises to Preserve David's Life.

## Love that Intercedes

**A**londra was laughing with her brother Brendon, his wife, and other relatives when she noticed her brother Dewayne standing in the doorway of the hotel room.

It was Friday night, and the Robinson family had begun their reunion weekend festivities with a meet and greet in the hotel lounge area.

Only a year ago Alondra had learned about having an elder brother named Dewayne. After the death of his mother, Dewayne had come to Indianapolis looking for his birth father. One look at Dewayne, and there was no denying his parentage or his family resemblance,

Alondra touched Brendon and leaned close to him: "You see that man in the doorway? That's our brother."

"You mean that's your brother," Brendon said.

Brendon, because of bad blood with their father, did not take to the news of an elder brother well.

"He can't help it that Dad got his mother pregnant. Or that his mother left and raised him in another state," Alondra had said. "Dewayne is so anxious to meet you. Why don't you give him a chance?"

"Don't be that way, Brendon," Alondra said, touching her brother's arm again. "Want me to go with you and introduce you?"

Alondra left it alone after Brendon scowled at her.

Later that evening, she heard the laughter of her brother Dewayne. She turned and saw him in the corner talking with Brendon.

**1.** *On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the highest, what is your risk tolerance?*

**2.** *Fill in the blank: Loving others as God loves is risky because \_\_\_\_\_.*

**3.** *Why is it important to take risks for love?*

## Warning David about Saul

*1 Samuel 19:1-3, KJV*

1 And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.

2 But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself:

3 And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee.

*1 Samuel 19:1-3, NIV*

<sup>1</sup>Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David. But Jonathan had taken a great liking to David <sup>2</sup>and warned him, "My father Saul is looking for a chance to kill you. Be on your guard tomorrow morning; go into hiding and stay there. <sup>3</sup>I will go out and stand with my father in the field where you are. I'll speak to him about you and will tell you what I find out."

Saul harbored a murderous hatred toward David, which was fueled by the fact that David received more praise for a military victory against the Philistines than the king did (1 Sam. 18:5-11). Anger is the heart condition that leads to all manner of evil acts against another, including murder.

On the other hand, Jonathan loved David, which was the reason for his desire to warn his friend. It would not be a stretch to conclude that Jonathan's friendship with David was an extension of his love for his country and his love for God. Prior to meeting David, Jonathan had already distinguished himself in battle in the name of the Lord against the Philistines (1 Sam. 13:3; 14:1-14). Therefore, it is little wonder that when David stood up for the God of Israel and defeated Goliath on the battlefield, "Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself" (18:1b). Unlike his father, Jonathan displayed the kind of love and friendship that God's people are to have for one another.

Such was the love that Jonathan had for David, which is why when Saul spoke of killing David, Jonathan took

immediate action to warn his friend. The first step that the king's son took to protect David was to seek him out and meet with him. With a death sentence hanging over his friend's head, Jonathan was taking a risk in meeting with David. But their friendship overrode any sense of fear there may have been. Jonathan would not have known how long it might take for someone else to find David and try to carry out the king's edict, so he hastened to get to his friend first.

Upon meeting with David, Jonathan immediately told his friend of the danger he faced because of the king's edict. Though the anguish in Jonathan's heart must have been immense, he did not hesitate to tell his friend everything. Then he urged David to be very careful and to hide himself. The final part of Jonathan's plan to help his friend was to go to the king and intercede on David's behalf. The king's son purposed in his heart to do everything he could for his friend and then let him know what he found out from Saul. And David was to wait to hear word one way or the other.

Like Jonathan, Christians today should warn all people of the death sentence of sin hanging over their heads. But the good news is that God has provided the way of eternal life though our Lord Jesus Christ (see Rom. 3:23; 6:23).

**4.** *What was Saul's edict against David?*

**5.** *How did Jonathan respond when he heard his father's edict?*

**6.** *What warning do God's people have for the world today?*

## Reminding Saul about David

1 Samuel 19:4-5, KJV

4 And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against

1 Samuel 19:4-5, NIV

<sup>4</sup>Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and

*KJV*

thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good:

5 For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?

*NIV*

what he has done has benefited you greatly. <sup>5</sup>He took his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine. The LORD won a great victory for all Israel, and you saw it and were glad. Why then would you do wrong to an innocent man like David by killing him for no reason?"

Having warned David about the danger he faced and taking steps to protect him temporarily, Jonathan then set out to keep his promise by speaking to the king about his friend. Jonathan made a three-fold argument to persuade the king to revoke the death sentence against David.

First, Jonathan told his father that David was innocent of any wrongdoing. The most basic defense against injustice is proving a person's innocence. Since they were close friends, Jonathan had firsthand knowledge of David's heart for the king and kingdom.

Second, not only was David guiltless of any wrongdoing against the king or kingdom, but everything he had done was for Saul's great benefit. Not only was there no evidence of David's guilt, but there was also plenty of evidence to the contrary.

And third, Jonathan gave a specific example of the truth of what he told his father, namely David's victorious battle against Goliath. Jonathan knew that his father was quite aware of what David had done for the king and kingdom that day, and every day since that time. He reminded Saul of that glorious battle to help him see the truth of David's innocence. Having pleaded very effectively on behalf of his friend, Jonathan then paused and awaited Saul's decision.

**7.** *What were the first two points Jonathan made in his intercession for David?*

**8.** *What example did Jonathan use to underscore his arguments to Saul?*

**9.** *Why is it important to be reminded of the good things that others have done for us, and especially of what the Lord has done for us?*

## Reconciling David and Saul

*1 Samuel 19:6-7, KJV*

6 And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain.

7 And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past.

*1 Samuel 19:6-7, NIV*

<sup>6</sup>Saul listened to Jonathan and took this oath: "As surely as the Lord lives, David will not be put to death."

<sup>7</sup>So Jonathan called David and told him the whole conversation. He brought him to Saul, and David was with Saul as before.

Jonathan knew that everything David did for Saul was worthy only of praise and reward. So out of love for his friend, Jonathan took the risk and asked his father to reconsider. Saul responded by swearing an oath that David would not be executed. This pattern repeated itself several times in the lives of Saul and David. The king would seek to kill David, only to be reminded of David's faithfulness. Saul would then temporarily repent and relent from trying to kill David. Each time the repentance did not last for long.

As in Jonathan's case, we may have the opportunity to intercede for someone else, and it might be somewhat risky to do so. But out of love for us, God reconciled the world to Himself; therefore, out of love for Him, we are to be ambassadors for Christ, warning others of the need to be reconciled to Him.

**10.** *What was Saul's response to Jonathan's intercession for David?*

**11.** *Then what did Jonathan do?*

**12.** *How can we show this kind of love today?*

## A Risk Motivated by Love

Faith brings the confidence needed to take risks—risks motivated by love. “The confidence I had to donate my kidney came from my faith in God,” said Andrew, the big brother who gave his youngest sister, Anna, the gift of life by giving his kidney. “I knew I could do something to save her life, and that I would be the one to donate a kidney to her,” the faithful big brother continued, “I felt like it was my duty as her oldest brother to do so. And when my mind was made up, I didn’t look back.”

Andrew is the oldest of the four Copley children and Anna is the youngest. They have a close relationship and understand the power of love. Their relationship is even closer now bonded by a kidney.

When Anna was a baby, her parents knew she would eventually need a kidney donor, but they didn’t know exactly when. The transplant took place years later when Anna turned 15. “As parents, we are continually blown away by what our oldest son did for his little sister,” said their mother Rebecca. She continues, “Andrew told us from the time she was diagnosed with chronic kidney failure, that he was the one who would give her a kidney when she needed it.”

“It’s a really big thing to say, that you’re going to give up a kidney,” said Anna. “He’s an amazing big brother. He gave me my life back.” Anna eventually began to do the things she enjoyed in life like playing music in her school’s band. She’s grateful. Some of the risk Andrew took by donating a kidney included perhaps developing hypertension, a hernia, possible kidney failure that could lead to a need for dialysis, and finally death. These are all serious risks done in the name of love.

**13.** *How are faith, love, and taking risks intertwined?*

**14.** *What risks would you take for someone you love?*

**15.** *What risk would you take for someone you didn’t know?*

## Take the Risk

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” Whether it is our friends or someone we barely know, when we see people who need help, we can show Jesus to them by being there for them and doing whatever we can for them. It may be uncomfortable, and it may not be popular, but taking the risk to show God’s love is worth it.

► *Think of a person you know who needs to see God’s love in action but doing so is a risk for you. Write their name here and pray about how you can love them this week.*

### KEY VERSE

And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good. —1 Samuel 19:4, KJV

Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, “Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly.” —1 Samuel 19:4, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

October 5 through October 11

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

**Mon.** Psalm 103:1-14—The Lord Is Merciful and Gracious.

**Tues.** Matthew 5:38-42—Responding to Unwanted Demands.

**Wed.** Leviticus 25:35-39—Handling Family Difficulties.

**Thurs.** Psalm 128—Home Life of the Faithful.

**Fri.** Luke 23:32-36—Forgiving the Ignorant.

**Sat.** Matthew 5:1-12—Blessed and Rewarded.

**Sun.** Luke 6:27-36—Love and Forgive Your Enemies.

## Love for Enemies

**Y**ou are going to do what?" asked Jada.

"He needs a good mechanic," said Andre.

"So, you're going to charge him \$100 for a \$2,500 job!" Jada exclaimed.

"You know our shop is doing really well," Andre said.

"We can afford it. I want to bless him."

"You want to bless Colton? The man who hates, envies, and despises you?" Jada cried, coming from around the kitchen island and taking a seat across from her husband at the table.

Andre had known Colton before he was married. The two had shared a neighborhood. While Andre was finishing automotive school, being elected to city council, and creating a good name for himself, Colton was trying to keep out of trouble and running into one dead end after another.

Colton always said Andre got all the breaks. Then Andre met and married Jada, and the two were happy. Andre could not understand Colton's hostility. He was nothing but a "regular guy."

"I understand you're more spiritual than me," said Jada, "but why would you let Colton, an enemy, take advantage of you?"

"I'm choosing to live by the Word, honey," Andre said.

"He called me, because he knows I'm a good mechanic. It was an opportunity to show him some love."

"I want you to be in agreement with me, all right?" Andre said. "I want to do what Jesus would do."

**1.** *Describe people who irritate you, and why.*

**2.** *Why is loving people who regularly irritate you one of the greatest tests of how loving a person you really are?*

**3.** *How truthful is it to say, "I love everyone just like Jesus said to do"?*

## Loving Unconditionally

*Luke 6:27-31, KJV*

27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,

28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also.

30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

*Luke 6:27-31, NIV*

<sup>27</sup>“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup>bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. <sup>29</sup>If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. <sup>30</sup>Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. <sup>31</sup>Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

To hear Jesus' admonition to love our enemies can be quite challenging. Regardless of the situation, Christians are not at liberty to hate others. Rather, the Lord calls us to love everyone, including those who treat us poorly or simply rub us the wrong way. Choosing to love an “enemy” may be exactly opposite from how we feel about the person.

Jesus admonished His listeners to do good to the people who hate them. Then He went on to describe some specific actions to take, the first of which is to answer a curse with a blessing. This act can diffuse a potentially volatile situation and possibly make a friend out of an enemy, or at least make the enemy less hostile. Then He said to pray for the person who mistreats you. Prayer may change the other person's heart, but more importantly, it will change the believer's heart who entreats the Lord on behalf of the offender.

Turning the other cheek has a specific meaning that has often been misunderstood or misrepresented today. Slapping the face in Jesus' day was not meant as an assault intended

to do bodily harm. Rather, it was an insult against the person. Therefore, Jesus was not speaking against protecting oneself or someone else from an attack intended to harm, maim, or even kill. The idea is to take the insulting slap even-temperedly and offer the other cheek for another slap.

Jesus then gave additional examples of how to show love to our enemy. If someone takes an article of clothing from you, offer another article of clothing with it. True love does not demand back what is wrongfully taken by others.

Then the Lord proclaimed what is often referred to as the Golden Rule, which is to treat others as we would like them to treat us. The principle here is that no matter how we may be mistreated by another, the right thing to do is to treat them in return with the respect, grace, and kindness that we hope to receive.

**4.** *Whom did Jesus say should be the object of our love?*

**5.** *What are some specific things that we should do to show love to our enemies?*

**6.** *What is the “Golden Rule” that Jesus gave to His listeners?*

## Loving Selflessly

*Luke 6:32-34, KJV*

32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

*Luke 6:32-34, NIV*

<sup>32</sup>“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. <sup>33</sup>And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. <sup>34</sup>And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full.”

One characteristic of God's kind of love is that it expects nothing in return. Sinners expect their affections to be returned and will usually withdraw their affection if they get nothing back. When we love others even without any reciprocation, we are adhering to God's holy standard for us. Furthermore, unrequited love is not pleasant; no one likes rejection or worse. What Jesus experienced on the Cross was not pleasant, but He lovingly chose to die despite the rejection and pain.

Another aspect of showing Christlike love is doing good to others who do not return that good, or who even return evil for good. If we do good only to those who return the favor, then we are no different from the world. God's love calls us to a higher standard, and doing good for those who might not even acknowledge our kindness is His high standard.

The same is true when it comes to lending money to others. The world expects not only to be repaid the principle of a loan but also to receive additional funds in interest. This practice, which is so prevalent today, was prohibited under the law, especially when it came to lending to the poor.

Our compassionate God hears the cries of the afflicted and oppressed, so it would not bode well for anyone who took advantage of the misery of others (Exod. 22:25-27). Not taking advantage of a borrower is one thing, but not even expecting to be repaid is quite another. But that is the kind of selfless love our God shows us, and that is the kind of selfless love He expects us to show others, even those whom we consider to be unlovable.

**7.** *When it comes to doing good to others, how does godly love differ from that of the world?*

**8.** *When it comes to lending to others, how does godly love differ from that of the world?*

**9.** *How is it possible to show unconditional, selfless love, even to the "unlovable"?*

## Loving Mercifully

*Luke 6:35-36, KJV*

35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

*Luke 6:35-36, NIV*

<sup>35</sup>“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. <sup>36</sup>Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

The Lord emphasized that despite what our enemies might do to harm us, we are to treat them well and expect nothing in return. For those people who anger us or seek to do us wrong in some way, though we may be tempted to respond in like manner, loving-kindness and generosity toward them are what God expects of His children.

One of the temporal rewards we will have when we treat our enemies well is peace of mind and heart. When we forgive and deal with our enemies kindly, the bitterness that eats away at both body and soul flees, and peace of heart and mind flows abundantly. While it is good to say words of forgiveness, it is even better to do acts of forgiveness.

We are obedient children following our Savior when we show kindness to our enemies. Therefore, because we want to follow His example, we are to be kind and merciful to ungrateful, even evil people, just as He is. God’s mercy runs deep, and considering how merciful He is to sinners—including us, His children—we too are to be merciful.

**10.** *What will Christians receive when they are kind and merciful to their enemies?*

**11.** *What do Christians demonstrate themselves to be when they are kind and merciful to their enemies?*

**12.** *Why are mercy and forgiveness so important in the life of a believer?*

## Deciding to Love, Not Hate

When Gregory Barnes, Jr. was pulled over for speeding by an Indiana state trooper, many things could have gone wrong. Barnes is African American; the trooper, Shawn Cosgrove, is white. Barnes could have accused the trooper of stopping him because of his skin color and created a scene. But Barnes, the vice president of STAR Financial Bank, knew he was being pulled over for a legitimate reason. He was speeding to his house to start packing for a move.

Instead of a confrontation, the website *OpposingViews.com* said Barnes took a photo of himself and the officer, both smiling, and posted it on social media, where it went viral.

As the two talked, they discovered they had more in common than they realized. Barnes said, "We talked more about how our individual days were going, and the situations within our society that have led to interactions such as his and mine to play out much more negatively, some even deadly, than ours. Then we talked about the situation that led to him pulling me over. In the end, we both thanked each other for our mutual displays of respect and agreed to take a 'selfie' together to help tell our story."

Barnes concluded his post with these words: "I can't stress enough that *no* demographic and/or profession of people are all bad. Neither of us is the enemy. We can continue to fight against each other until we are literally 'black and blue,' or we can show one another the respect we inherently deserve, not as 'black man' and 'blue police officer,' but as humans."

We can always choose to love, not hate. That's what Jesus did, all the way to the cross and on the Cross.

**13.** *Why is deciding to love and not hate always the better option?*

**14.** *How difficult would it be to show respect to someone who is your "enemy"? Explain your answer.*

**15.** *How does Jesus' example of love resulting in forgiveness show us the way to love our enemies?*

## Loving ‘Those People’ Like Jesus

In order to love our enemies the way Jesus told us to, we have no better example than Him. What He did is described in the song, “I Want to Be More Like Jesus.” One verse says, “Remember there’s no greater love, then to lay down your life for a friend. The end of all my prayers, Is to care like my Lord cares. My one and only goal. His image in my soul.”

► *Who has wronged you or mistreated you? Who has caused you pain or discomfort? Say this prayer for them and for you: “Lord, I pray for \_\_\_\_\_ today. I forgive them for \_\_\_\_\_. I pray blessings for them and their family, and I pray that I can see them as like me, a sinner in need of Your grace. In Jesus’ name, amen!”*

### KEY VERSE

But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. —Luke 6:27-28, KJV

“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” —Luke 6:27-28, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

October 12 through October 18

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Deuteronomy 15:7-11—Help Your Neighbor in Need.
- Tues.** 1 John 4:16b-21—Love God and Brothers and Sisters.
- Wed.** Mark 12:28-34—Adopt the First Commandments.
- Thurs.** Luke 17:11-19—Jesus Accepts Thanks from Healed Samaritan.
- Fri.** Luke 9:51-56—A Samaritan Village Refuses to Welcome Jesus.
- Sat.** John 4:1-15—Jesus Offers Samaritan Woman Living Water.
- Sun.** Luke 10:25-37—Follow the Samaritan’s Example.

## Love for Neighbors

Caleb slowed when he saw the old, blue pickup truck on the shoulder of the two-lane road. A very muscular-looking white man was bent over the open hood.

“Need any help?” Caleb asked, approaching hesitantly.

The white man’s face was slow to relax. “Yeah,” he said, as smoke continued to come from under the hood.

“Hi. My name is Caleb. If I can help, I will.”

“Hey, my name is Earl,” the man said. Caleb then saw the swastika tattoo on the side of Earl’s neck.

“You are the first person to stop,” said Earl. “I seem to need a new hose, and I’m on empty.”

“I can take you to the nearest gas station,” offered Caleb.

Earl seemed to look over Caleb for a minute, then the two men shook hands before going to Caleb’s car. On the ride to the service station, Caleb learned that Earl had been out of prison for six months and was still trying to find “decent work.” Caleb also found out that the two shared a passion for fishing.

Caleb paid for the gas and hose, and the two drove back to Earl’s truck.

On the ride back, Earl said he was considering looking into how to get tattoos removed. When Earl climbed out of the car, Caleb said he would be at the fishing spot Earl told him about in the morning.

“Hope to see you there,” Caleb said, waving as he drove off.

**1.** *Have you ever experienced segregation? Describe the experience.*

**2.** *Have you ever assisted an improbable person? How did that make you feel?*

**3.** *Why would we not help someone of a different culture if they needed help?*

## How Do You Read It?

*Luke 10:25-28, KJV*

25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

*Luke 10:25-28, NIV*

<sup>25</sup>On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

<sup>26</sup>"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

<sup>27</sup>He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

<sup>28</sup>"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, questions were a very common part of discourse. Luke 10 describes how an "expert in the law" (vs. 25) asked Jesus a question in order to "test" Him. He asked Jesus a commonly asked question during this time—how someone can be assured of living forever in the presence of God.

When interpreting the law, the "experts in the law" often looked to rabbis for help in articulating how a law was to be implemented. Notice that the lawyer was asking Jesus what he needed to "do" in order to inherit eternal life—reflecting the works-oriented mindset of most of the religious leaders.

Jesus asked the man to articulate what it was that he believed—namely, how would he put together the answer he was seeking. Amazingly, this lawyer gave the same answer that Jesus gave in defining the greatest commandment: to love God and to love one's neighbor (see Matt. 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-34). Perhaps to the lawyer's surprise, Jesus agreed with him! Then He encouraged the scribe to

do those very things so he would be assured of eternal life. The lawyer, however, was not really interested in this gift of righteousness—rather, righteousness was something he was convinced he could generate on his own.

**4.** *What questions did Jesus ask the expert in the law?*

**5.** *How did the lawyer respond to Jesus' questions?*

## A Man Attacked

*Luke 10:29-32, KJV*

29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

*Luke 10:29-32, NIV*

<sup>29</sup>But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

<sup>30</sup>In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup>A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side."

Dissatisfied with Jesus' answer, he asked Jesus for further clarification (on the scribe's own answer!). Luke tells us that this expert in the law "wanted to justify himself" (vs. 29). As a scribe, he would have been well-aware of what the law required—even the greatest commandments of loving God and others. Therefore, he should have been keenly aware in the areas of the law where he fell short.

If he could get an answer to the question "who is my neighbor?" that conformed to his idea of who a neighbor

should be, then perhaps his conscience would be clear. A “neighbor” at that time would most likely be a fellow Jew—not foreigners like the Romans. However, Jesus told a parable that clearly defined “neighbor” as “any human being in need,” an answer the lawyer would not have been expecting.

The setting of Jesus’ parable was the 17-mile road that went “down” (vs. 30) about 2,500 feet in elevation from Jerusalem to Jericho. The rugged road’s reputation was one of robberies and violence. More than likely, it was a Jewish man that Jesus said was traveling the road when robbers attacked him. They left the man naked, bruised, and on the verge of death by the road, in plain sight.

The next two characters in Jesus’ parable would have been well-known by the expert in the law: a priest and a Levite. Because they worked in the temple, they would have been extraordinarily conscious of remaining ceremonially clean. Some scholars speculate that they both passed by on the other side of the road so as not to ceremonially stain themselves. Touching a corpse would have defiled them and made them ineligible for temple service.

**6.** *What was the motivation behind the lawyer’s follow-up question to Jesus?*

**7.** *Who avoided the assault victim in Jesus’ parable? Why?*

## The Merciful Samaritan

*Luke 10:33-37, KJV*

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

*Luke 10:33-37, NIV*

<sup>33</sup>But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. <sup>34</sup>He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup>The next day he

*KJV*

35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

*NIV*

took out two denarii and gave them to the 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "

<sup>36</sup>"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

<sup>37</sup>The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." innkeeper.

The expert in the law would have expected the priest and the Levite to be the heroes in the story. But to make a Samaritan the hero of this parable? The Jews hated the Samaritans as impure descendants of mixed marriages between Jews and Gentiles. For Jesus to make a Samaritan the hero would have been scandalous to His audience.

Unlike the religious leaders, the Samaritan took pity on the beat-up man, put some clothes on him, and tended to his wounds. He let the assault victim ride his donkey to an inn and gave the innkeeper the equivalent of two days' wages to take care of the beat-up man and offered to pay the difference in case his care exceeded that amount.

Jesus now wanted the lawyer to answer his own question: which of the three proved to be a true neighbor to the fallen man? Begrudgingly (he couldn't even say the word "Samaritan"), the lawyer said it was the one who had mercy on the victim. Jesus' challenge was, "You be like the man you despise in this story. Recognize that everyone is a neighbor, especially those in need of help and mercy."

**8. What did the Samaritan do for the man who was attacked?**

**9. Who did the lawyer identify as the neighbor? Why?**

## Two Worlds Collide

It was the big day—Kendall’s wedding day. Kendall married Isaac, a Nigerian from the Yoruba tribe. Kendall, an African American, wanted Isaac’s tradition included in their wedding to celebrate his culture and community. Months before the special day, the couple received their wedding garments made in the traditional Nigerian cloth which was shipped by Isaac’s Nigerian family. Unlike the traditional American white dress for the bride, Nigerian wedding clothing is very colorful—the brighter the better! Kendall loved how she looked. The wedding day included various elements of American and Nigerian weddings. A traditional hot and spicy Nigerian dinner was prepared by the groom’s mother and friends, whereas the cake was made and decorated by an American bakery. The ceremony concluded with dancing to both American and Nigerian music. Kendall and Isaac couldn’t have dreamed of a better wedding.

When cultures merge—whether it be for a marriage, business events, ministry, etc.—there can be a clash of preferences, unique practices, and varied forms of communication. As sinners, our inclination is often to alienate those who differ from us and label them “other.” However, the parable of the good Samaritan teaches us to see far more similarities than differences when we meet people who are not from our “world.” While we should never compromise our beliefs in God’s Word for differing beliefs, we should always seek to understand, love, and show mercy to those around us—even those who differ from us in many ways.

**10.** *When have you encountered social and cultural differences with people that caused you to “rethink” your own ideas?*

**11.** *Have you ever felt alienated because of your own cultural or Christian beliefs? Explain your answer.*

**12.** *Why do we need to be Christian neighbors to those who live in a different “world” than ours?*

## My Neighbor and His World

The story of the good Samaritan reminds us that our neighbor is not just the person next door but everyone we meet, especially those who are not “like” us in some way. When their world and ours collide, God can use our neighborliness to show His love and mercy to those we might think would never be interested in hearing about Him.

► *Get to know a new neighbor, one who is not in your “world” but needs to see the love of Jesus in a believer’s life.*

### KEY VERSE

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

—Luke 10:36-37, KJV

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

—Luke 10:36-37, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

October 18 through October 25

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

**Mon.** 1 Samuel 30:21-25—Activists and Supporters Share Victories.

**Tues.** Romans 12:1-8—The New Life in Christ.

**Wed.** Philippians 2:1-11—Live by the Mind of Christ.

**Thurs.** Colossians 1:3-8—Faith, Hope, and Love in Action.

**Fri.** 1 Corinthians 12:4-11—Gifts for the Good of All.

**Sat.** 1 Corinthians 14:13-19—Pray with the Mind and Spirit.

**Sun.** 1 Corinthians 13—The Life of Love.

## Love Never Fails

Elesha grabbed the toddler and looked frantically about for his mother.

“I’ll take him, Sister Elesha,” said a teen, quickly rescuing the child.

“We’re almost ready to start. I need everyone in their places,” said Elesha. “We are expecting our gospel radio station host to arrive any minute to do a live commercial.”

Elesha had agreed to be chairperson of the fellowship hall renovation for her church. It included a sizable up-to-date kitchen, a cozy dining area, a coffee bar, and a TV/video/game area. At times, some of the committee members had been less than loving in discussing the project details, arguing and exchanging cutting words. However, Elesha had been patient, loving, and self-sacrificing, even volunteering to step down as chairperson if everyone wanted her to. That had helped calm the situation. Now she saw some of her once-contentious committee members smiling and laughing with each other. Elesha knew the Lord was in this work.

The dedication service was held in the newly renovated space. “We are delighted with our new fellowship area, and are obliged to Sister Elesha and her committee for this great undertaking,” said Pastor Mitchell.

“It was important to renovate the fellowship hall because we want to better accommodate those souls we seek to reach,” he continued, “and the only way we will reach them is through love.”

**1.** *How is the world’s concept of love different from God’s love?*

**2.** *Why are we commanded to love others as we love ourselves?*

**3.** *Do people show you they love you more by what they do or what they don’t do? Explain your answer.*

## Without Love, Nothing

1 Corinthians 13:1-3, KJV

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3, NIV

<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>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.

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul defined God's love by using the Greek word *agape* and describing *agape* as love that is not dependent upon reciprocation but is humble and selfless. It is the motivation and underlying reason for exercising the spiritual gifts in chapter 12. For example, "speaking in the tongues of men or of angels" (vs. 1) means verbally communicating powerful truths, even biblical principles, in incredible ways. But if this is done without love, it is just noise; someone might as well be banging trash can lids together.

Likewise, if someone with "the gift of prophecy" (vs. 2) is able to exhort Christians to action and to expound upon the mysteries of the universe, and yet does that without love, that person is "nothing."

Or, if someone gave up all their earthly possessions to the poor, yet did it without love, they would only end up empty and poor themselves. Even if believers willingly give themselves as martyrs, but do so without love, they're sacrificing themselves for nothing. Doing spectacular things in the name of God, even using the spiritual gifts He has provided,

without love produces no eternal reward—no matter what.

**4.** *Why must spiritual gifts be exercised with love?*

**5.** *What is the result of doing things for God without love?*

## What Love Is

*1 Corinthians 13:4-7, KJV*

4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

*1 Corinthians 13:4-7, NIV*

<sup>4</sup>Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup>It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup>Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup>It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Paul described God’s love with a series of characteristics that have something in common—namely, all of them are expressed voluntarily, without coercion or compulsion. It is the voluntary nature of love that makes it meaningful.

The first characteristic of godly love is that it is “patient” (vs. 4). Sometimes people have quirks and idiosyncrasies that call upon significant amounts of patience. This leads to the second characteristic of love: kindness. You simply cannot go wrong in exercising compassion toward others.

Paul also told three things love is not. Love is not jealous when God blesses other people, but provokes us to rejoice in God’s generosity with them. Love also does not boast when God is generous with us. Everything we have comes from the hand of God, so there’s nothing to brag about! Love pushes us toward humility and away from pride.

These characteristics are followed by four more just like them: love will not dishonor others, seek after itself, become

angry easily, or keep track of the ways people have slighted us. Love compels us to show everyone respect as human beings made in the image of God and treasured by the Lord. Love is ready to put self-interest aside in order to work and live effectively with others. Love has a long, long fuse, and is not easily set off by the indifference or negligence of others. Finally, love does not hold past offenses against others, especially when there has been genuine restoration and reconciliation in the relationship. Love is not happy when the wicked succeed in their plans, but rejoices when the truth wins out.

Paul gave four “always” characteristics of godly love: it always protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres. Love stands up for those whose vulnerability is being exploited. Love trusts people at face value. While we are not required to trust those who have proven themselves untrustworthy (as a pattern of behavior), we still treat them in a loving manner, with grace and compassion. In all these things, love does not give up. It never assumes that a situation or person is beyond redemption but hangs in there waiting to see God at work.

**6.** *What does love not do?*

**7.** *What are the positive traits of love?*

## Love Never Fails

*1 Corinthians 13:8-13, KJV*

8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spake

*1 Corinthians 13:8-13, NIV*

<sup>8</sup>Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. <sup>9</sup>For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup>but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. <sup>11</sup>When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a

*KJV*

as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

*NIV*

man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. <sup>12</sup>For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

<sup>13</sup>And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Paul concluded with reminders about the eternal nature of love. Some gifts of God are only needed temporarily as we await the redemption of our souls. Prophecies, tongues, and knowledge are not only temporal but incomplete in their current manifestations. When Christ comes in the fullness of time, these gifts will have served their purpose, and the Lord will set them aside. But love will remain.

Prior to being reunited with Christ, our lives are akin to the transition from childhood to adulthood. When we are children, we are heavily dependent upon others for our survival needs (food, shelter, clothing). As we develop emotionally and spiritually, we set aside childish things and move forward as a believing adult. But when the perfect comes—that is, when Jesus returns—what we are experiencing now in Christ will be like looking into an unpolished mirror that only gives us a taste of what’s in store for us. We need the temporal gifts now to effectively function in His kingdom before He returns and reveals Himself to us. We understand a little now; when He comes, we “shall know fully” (vs. 12).

But love never goes away. It is the one thing in our lives that never changes or disappears. For that reason, it takes first place in the triad of faith, hope, and love. We need all three to make it as we wait for Jesus. But when faith becomes sight, and our hopes are fulfilled, love will still remain.

**8.** *What will eventually go away?*

**9.** *What will happen when completeness comes?*

## The Greatest of These Is Love

Loving others is the greatest commandment and the most sacrificial. We are commanded to love even those we consider unlovable in the same manner that God loved us. The more tests and trials that I endure, the more in awe I am of the love that Christ demonstrated on the Cross. He told His disciples, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13, KJV). After He told them, He demonstrated for them what true love is.

Too often, our own love is self-centered and less than sacrificial. Love must forgive, or no relationships or marriages would ever survive. We've all been hurt, but we've also hurt others, so in love we don't hold grudges or seek revenge. Jesus' death on the Cross for us reminds us that love is not prideful or self-righteous. Self-righteousness is unrighteousness. Pride is inflated self-perception, an unrealistic perspective of our own supposed goodness. Our love should be hopeful, trusting, and respectful of others. It does not demean others or make them think they are "lucky" to be loved by us. Jesus contrasted that kind of "love" with godly love: "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve" (Luke 22:25-26, KJV). Serving, not commanding or badgering, is the watchword of love.

We will never love perfectly; Paul confirmed that in this chapter. But we are commanded to love as God loves us so others will see His love through us.

**10.** *Why is loving others both the greatest commandment and the most difficult to do?*

**11.** *How do we handle people who say they love us, but their love is not like God's love?*

**12.** *How does pride keep us from loving others as we should?*

## What Love Does

There are countless circumstances throughout life when love isn't our first response—especially when others deliberately hurt, offend, or disrespect us. The great news is that God has given us the grace and faith to walk in love even in the face of pain. If we walk in love, others will see God's love and generosity, mercy and compassion. We've received the greatest love in the universe, and now we must freely give it to others.

► *Think about the love relationships you are now in. Are you showing godly love in all of them? How could you show godly love to someone who may have been hurt by unloving relationships in the past?*

### KEY VERSE

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. —1 Corinthians 13:13, KJV

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. —1 Corinthians 13:13, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

October 26 through November 1

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Genesis 24:24-33—Laban Arranges to Wash Servant's Feet.
- Tues.** Genesis 43:20-25—Brothers Provided Water to Wash Feet.
- Wed.** Ephesians 4:6-9—Servants and Masters, but Same Lord.
- Thurs.** John 13:36-38; 18:15-18, 25-27—Peter Denies Jesus Three Times.
- Fri.** Psalm 41:8-10; John 13:21-30—Jesus Betrayed by a Trusted Disciple.
- Sat.** John 12:1-7—Mary Anoints Jesus' Feet with Perfume.
- Sun.** John 13:1-15, 34-35—Jesus Loves His Disciples and Washes Their Feet.

## Serving Love

Cleavon sat as in a trance beside the hospital bed of his unconscious wife, hooked to tubes and beeping machines. Shianne, their 14-year-old daughter, and six-year-old son Jimar were in the Intensive Care Unit waiting room.

“Mr. Jamison, you have visitors,” said a nurse, who startled Cleavon from his thoughts.

When Cleavon went to the waiting room, he could have burst into tears. His pastor and seven other church members had come to see Renita.

Hugs were exchanged and a group prayer offered. The group had also brought takeout from one of the family’s favorite restaurants. His children devoured the food.

The group sat with Cleavon for more than three hours, taking turns going in to visit, pray, and sing over Renita. At about 8:30 P.M., Sister Carol announced that Cleavon should go home and get some rest or take a break from the hospital. Four of the sisters were prepared to stay the night.

One of the younger couples offered to take Shianne and Jimar home with them for the weekend.

“Can we go, Daddy?” asked Jimar hopefully, who loved going to the Simpson’s technology-filled home. Shianne also pepped up at the invitation.

“I don’t want to be any bother,” Cleavon said.

“We’d love to have them stay the weekend,” said Brother Simpson.

“I don’t know what I would have done without you all,” Cleavon said, his voice cracking.

“And you won’t have to find out,” said Sister Carol.

**1.** *What are some ways the world sometimes perceives Christians?*

**2.** *What are some consequences of this?*

**3.** *What should we be known for? Why?*

## An Unexpected Act

*John 13:1-5, KJV*

1 Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

2 And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;

3 Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

*John 13:1-5, NIV*

<sup>1</sup>It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

<sup>2</sup>The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. <sup>3</sup>Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup>so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup>After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

On the night before He was crucified, Jesus spent time with His disciples explaining what was going to happen and providing some words of encouragement that would be of help in the difficult days that lay ahead.

When they arrived at the place where they were to share a Passover meal, no servant was waiting to wash their feet. That was a custom in those days when visitors arrived at a home with their feet covered from the dust of the roads they had traveled on. It seems that no one was willing to step forward to assume this role—except for Jesus. Sometime during the meal, Jesus removed His robe, wrapped a towel around

his waist, and began washing the feet of those reclining at the table with Him.

By all rights, Jesus could have demanded more honor, respect, and support from His disciples during what was to become a time of great personal need. He would soon face the most painful event someone in that day could experience—He would be betrayed by one reclining at the table and would be handed over to those who wanted Him killed; He would be tortured and would then die in agony, abandoned by those who hours earlier claimed to be among His followers. At a time when Jesus' need for encouragement was the greatest, He showed the extent of His love by taking on the role of a servant and performing a task that only the lowliest of that time would typically do.

**4.** *What was unusual about what did not happen when Jesus and His disciples arrived at the place where they were going to share a Passover meal?*

**5.** *Why was Jesus' response unexpected?*

**6.** *What did this reveal about Him?*

## A Spiritual Implication

*John 13:6-10, KJV*

6 Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also

*John 13:6-10, NIV*

<sup>6</sup>He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

<sup>7</sup>Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

<sup>8</sup>"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

<sup>9</sup>"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

*KJV*

my hands and my head.

10 Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

11 For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

*NIV*

<sup>10</sup>Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you."

<sup>11</sup>For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

Peter initially refused to let Jesus wash his feet. He may have been embarrassed that one he'd followed and respected was taking on such a menial task, or he may have been too proud to believe he was unclean in some way—so dirty that someone of such a high position had to clean him up a bit.

Those who came to an event such as this would often bathe themselves before traveling. If they'd done so, the only part of their body that would need additional cleaning when they arrived would be their feet. Even if they'd bathed beforehand, this final bit of cleansing was sometimes required before they could enter the place where the event was taking place.

Jesus' actions had a spiritual implication. Although those who followed Him could do some things on their own to contribute to their spiritual cleanliness, before they could enter His house—the kingdom of God—they had to be washed of those things that only He could cleanse them of.

**7.** *Why may Peter have initially been reluctant to let Jesus wash his feet?*

**8.** *Why was what Jesus did important from a social standpoint?*

**9.** *What did it symbolize spiritually?*

## A New Command

*John 13:12-15, 34-35, KJV*

12 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments,

*John 13:12-15, 34-35, NIV*

<sup>12</sup>When he had finished washing their feet, he put on

*KJV*

and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

*NIV*

his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. <sup>13</sup>"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup>Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.

<sup>15</sup>I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

<sup>34</sup>"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

After hinting that there was spiritual significance to what He had just done, Jesus noted a more practical implication of His actions. Jesus wanted His disciples to love one another; and one way they could do so was by serving others.

Earlier that evening, Jesus' disciples were arguing about who among them was the greatest (Luke 22:24-30). Jesus told them that it is not those who lord it over others who are the greatest, but rather it is those who serve others. By washing their feet, Jesus was providing His disciples with an example of how this type of service is demonstrated. Jesus then told His disciples to do likewise, not perhaps by literally washing the feet of others, but by demonstrating God's love through practical acts of service.

**10.** *What incident may have prompted Jesus to perform this act of service?*

**11.** *How did Jesus want His disciples to respond to His example? Why?*

## A Servant-Leader

I once had a boss who understood the concept of what it meant to lead by serving. Although he could have come around the office telling us what we needed to do, his approach was to ask us what he could do to make our jobs easier and to then do whatever he could to make that happen. The result of this leadership was a happier and more productive work place. Ironically, his commitment to serve us resulted in our company becoming more profitable.

The day before he left for greener fields, I asked him about his philosophy of leadership. He said that he considered himself to be a servant-leader. Rather than driving us to succeed, he felt that we and the company's interests were best accomplished when he served those put in his charge.

I have thought about his example often in the years since I left the company. How might my own positions of leadership have been more effective if I had taken my responsibility to lead as an opportunity to serve rather than to lord it over others? How might my relationship with my wife and children have been different if I had chosen to lead by serving them rather than being domineering toward them? Would more people in my neighborhood have been attracted to me and perhaps to Jesus if I had learned how to be a servant-leader?

I suspect that over the years more have seen the "I want to be in charge" attitude in me than the "I want to serve" one. Thankfully, I can now be more committed to serving others so that they can see Jesus more clearly through me.

**12.** *What does it mean to be a servant-leader? Share examples of someone you've observed being one.*

**13.** *Do you consider yourself to be more a servant-leader or one who wants to be served or in charge? What are some consequences of this?*

**14.** *What are some ways you can demonstrate what it means to love by serving?*

## Demonstrate Love through Service

It's easy to fall into the trap of wanting to be served rather than being the first to step up to serve; and sometimes when an opportunity to serve presents itself, we wait, hoping perhaps that someone else will step forward so that we don't have to. But as Jesus noted, others will know we are Christians by the love we have for one another, and one of the ways we can demonstrate His love is by serving others.

Jesus has called us to serve. And so let's go and do it—let's go and love.

► *What can you do this week to demonstrate Jesus' love by serving others?*

### KEY VERSE

For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. —John 13:15, KJV

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. —John 13:15, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

November 2 through November 8

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Isaiah 5:1-7—God Is Disappointed with Israel.
- Tues.** Isaiah 27:2-6—God Will Redeem Israel.
- Wed.** John 14:8-14—Believers Continue God's Work.
- Thurs.** John 10:11-18—Jesus Freely Lays Down His Life.
- Fri.** John 15:18-25—Facing the World as Jesus Did.
- Sat.** John 15:1-3—Jesus Tends to His Vineyard.
- Sun.** John 15:4-17—Always Love One Another.

## Abiding Love

**W**asn't she like a movie star or something? What happened?" asked Irvin the mechanic. He was talking to Dale about his customer Roderick's wife.

Dale had been pleasantly surprised to see Roderick walk into the garage. He shook Roderick's hand and sent best wishes to Nala, Roderick's wife.

After Roderick left, Dale explained, "She was an actress. She had a few roles in drama series and was a regular cast member in one of those soap operas."

"What is she doing in Cleveland?" asked Irvin.

"She came back home because her mother was diagnosed with stage two breast cancer," explained Dale. "Later, after her mother's death, she stayed to help family."

Nala had told Dale and his wife that she had enjoyed her life in Los Angeles, but felt God was calling her back home. The beautiful, talented actress gave up her soap opera role so she could direct her energies to another one of her passions—young people. She founded her own non-profit drama arts foundation that emphasized Christian principles.

Then at the age of 48, Nala and her new husband adopted her niece's newborn twin boys. Because her niece was sentenced to prison, she was keeping the boys from being put into the care of the state.

"Wow! That's a lot," said Irvin. "And to think, she could have stayed in Hollywood and been a big star."

"She said she was glad she didn't," said Dale, "because she would have missed out on all the beautiful things God produced in her life."

**1.** *What are some of the greatest acts of love you've seen demonstrated?*

**2.** *What does it require to exhibit this type of love?*

**3.** *Why is it important that we demonstrate significant and sacrificial love?*

## A Crucial Connection

*John 15:4-8, KJV*

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

*John 15:4-8, NIV*

<sup>4</sup>“Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

<sup>5</sup>“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. <sup>7</sup>If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

Jesus’ disciples would have been familiar with the use of the vine as a symbol. Not only was agriculture a dominant feature of local life, but also the Old Testament writers had often referred to Israel as a vine (see Ps. 80:8-16; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 15; 19:10; Hos. 10:1). In this case, Jesus referred to Himself as the only true source of life and power, the only true vine, through which God, the gardener, brings forth fruit for His kingdom. In the same way a gardener prunes a grapevine in order for the plant to yield the maximum number of grapes, our heavenly Father removes and discards deadwood and trims productive branches.

Apart from the life-giving resources of the vine, no branch

can bear fruit of itself. In the same way, Christians must wholly depend upon God to live productive lives.

Jesus promised to give the believer whatever is asked, with certain conditions. First, abide in Him so your desires will be in line with God's will. Second, remain obedient to His teachings so you will pray for the things God wants, and He will give them to you. When you show that you are Christ's followers by the fruit you bear, you bring glory to God.

**4.** *How are a vine and its branches a symbol of the connections we should have to Jesus?*

**5.** *What must we do as disciples if we want to bear the type of fruit that God wants?*

## A Clarification of Purpose

*John 15:9-13, KJV*

9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

*John 15:9-13, NIV*

<sup>9</sup>"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.

<sup>11</sup>I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

<sup>12</sup>My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

<sup>13</sup>Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."

Although Paul would point out later that there are many qualities that come from having a healthy "fruit-bearing" relationship with Jesus (Gal. 5:22-23), he as well as Jesus emphasized the priority love has on the list of these. Love is

the first aspect of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) and has precedence over the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 13).

Love originates with God. It is demonstrated first in the love the Father has for His Son; it is revealed in the ways that His Son Jesus loves us; it is exemplified when we love others the same way that Jesus loves us.

This type of love will occur only if we remain in a personal, intimate, and committed relationship with Jesus. For this to occur, we must be obedient to Him. Some think of obedience as a cross to bear rather than an opportunity to experience God's best. The result of obedience should be joy, the second quality of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

Jesus allowed Himself to be crucified so that we could experience the joy that comes from having our sins forgiven. Although Jesus' disciples did not comprehend the full implication of this until well after His resurrection, they would eventually understand that love is best expressed by a willingness to lay one's life down for the benefit of others.

**6.** *What is the importance of love in our relationship with Jesus?*

**7.** *What is required in order to love others the way that God loves us? What should it result in?*

**8.** *How is love best expressed?*

## A New Relationship

*John 15:14-17, KJV*

14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

16 Ye have not chosen me, but I

*John 15:14-17, NIV*

<sup>14</sup>"You are my friends if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup>I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup>You did not choose

*KJV*

have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

17 These things I command you, that ye love one another.

*NIV*

me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. <sup>17</sup>This is my command: Love each other.”

Jesus told His disciples that He considered them friends and not slaves or servants. Servants don't need to know anything about their master's goals; the only responsibility they have is obedience. Jesus wanted to be in partnership with His disciples so they knew His goals and what part they played in helping to get them achieved. This type of partnership would be possible only if they kept a healthy, fruit-bearing relationship with Him.

One result of having a relationship with Jesus like this is a more productive prayer life. Jesus wants our prayers to be oriented toward what will help Him to accomplish His will. When our prayers are more closely aligned with what He wants and less with what we want, it is more likely that our prayers will be answered.

Jesus finished by returning to the importance of loving others if His disciples wanted to be bearers of fruit that lasts. He reminded them that they did not come to Him in order for Him to help them achieve their goals, but that He chose them so that they could help Him to achieve His. This could be accomplished only if they remained in a fruit-bearing relationship with Him, were obedient, and loved like He loves by being willing to lay down their lives for others.

**9.** *Why is important that we consider ourselves to be friends of Jesus rather than His servants or slaves?*

**10.** *What would make our prayers more productive?*

**11.** *What is required if we want Jesus' will to be accomplished in and through us?*

## Give It Up!

Although some who read today's passage may have been in a situation where they had to risk their life for someone else, few of us will be asked to make this degree of sacrifice. But though we may not be asked to physically die in order to save another, all of us will at times be challenged give up something we place significant value on so that someone else can benefit from what we're willing to sacrifice.

One of those things is our time. Sometimes we hold on to our time as if it's our own or act as if none of it belongs to anyone else. Though having some "alone time" is important (Jesus often went off by Himself to pray), one measure of our love for others is a willingness to sacrifice significant portions of our time so that others can have more of it.

Another thing we are often asked to lay down for others is our financial resources. Some tithe and conclude that this is enough. But laying down one's material possessions for the sake of someone else may require giving beyond the minimum. It may require saying "No" to something we want and to use what we save for the benefit of someone else.

We may also be asked to give up our right to be honored or rewarded so that someone else can be honored or rewarded; we may be asked to forgo following a particular path so that others can follow theirs; we may be asked to sacrifice our comfort so that others have more of it.

Loving others like Jesus loved—love that is significant and sacrificial—may require letting go of something we're holding on to that we treasure. We need to be willing to "give it up" so that others can see through us what Jesus is like.

**12.** *What are some ways you can demonstrate significant and sacrificial love?*

**13.** *How would others benefit if you were willing to do so?*

**14.** *What would help you be more willing to demonstrate this type of love?*

## Love Extravagantly!

Love is perhaps best expressed when we are willing to go beyond what is easy or mundane and for the sake of others, do what is uncomfortable, inconvenient, or even painful. This is the type of love Jesus demonstrated when He laid down His life on a cross to secure our redemption. And it's this type of love that He wants us to express toward others—love that is significant, sacrificial, and sometimes extravagant!

► *What can you do this week to demonstrate significant, sacrificial, and extravagant love?*

### KEY VERSE

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. —John 15:5, KJV

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” —John 15:5, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

November 9 through November 15

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** 1 Thessalonians 2:1-10—Example of Faith and Obedience.
- Tues.** Ephesians 5:8-16—Then Darkness, Now Light.
- Wed.** John 3:16-21—Live by the Light.
- Thurs.** 1 John 2:28—3:10—Children of God Love One Another.
- Fri.** 3 John 1-4—Walking Faithfully in the Truth.
- Sat.** 3 John 9-12—Imitate What Is Good Not Evil.
- Sun.** 1 John 3:11-24—Believe Jesus Christ; Love One Another.

## Confident Love

“What is it about Kala?” asked Coleen. “She’s never been married. She’s not rich. She’s not a supervisor who can give people more money.”

“She’s nice,” offered Lakesia.

The two women were talking about their 46-year-old co-worker, Kala. She seemed genuine and regardless of the office politics and gossip, Kala always rose above it. Her love was consistent and without bias.

“She’s more than nice,” countered Coleen.

“Right, she’s a Christian,” said Lakesia.

“A lot of people say they are Christian,” said Coleen.

“Yeah, but she really lives like it,” replied Lakesia.

Coleen had to admit that Lakesia was right. Kala went out of her way to love the people in the office, and yet it seemed effortless to her. Coleen also had to acknowledge that she had started out feeling uncomfortable around Kala, and then eventually began a subtle slander campaign against her.

Coleen would make negative remarks about Kala and her work performance. However, over the years, Coleen’s campaign seemed to backfire, and Kala appeared to be getting sweeter and certainly not upset or vengeful.

Coleen was irritated this morning because try as she might, Kala continued to show her love and kindness.

“You know,” Lakesia broke into Coleen’s thoughts. “Kala once told me that before she came to Christ, and even for a while after, she was a mean, angry, and vengeful person. I guess you should be glad she’s not that way anymore.”

- 1.** *Is it natural for us to love those who have wronged us?*
- 2.** *Why do we need to experience Jesus’ love before demonstrating unconditional love toward others?*
- 3.** *How can our practice of loving unconditionally make a difference in the world?*

## Proof of Life

*1 John 3:11-15, KJV*

11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

*1 John 3:11-15, NIV*

<sup>11</sup>For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. <sup>12</sup>Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. <sup>13</sup>Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. <sup>14</sup>We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. <sup>15</sup>Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

The command for believers to love one another was not new even in John's day. Decades before John wrote this letter, Jesus gave this instruction to His disciples as something that should characterize His followers (John 13:34-35). We do not know John's reason for renewed emphasis on love, but it might have been false teachers among his readers.

Cain, on the other hand, exemplifies not only those who hate their brother, but also the contempt of the world toward believers. The devil still stirs up envy for the righteous behavior of those in Christ just as he did with Cain toward his brother. Though everyone in the world will not oppose us, its hatred should not surprise us (John 15:18-20).

How do we know we belong to Jesus rather than the evil one? We reveal our identity through our love for each other. That is the proof "we have passed from death to life" (vs.

14). As Jesus said, “Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24).

We cannot feign genuine love for others in order to look like those who are truly alive spiritually in Christ. Genuine love for one another comes from Jesus’ presence inside those who know Him. It’s the proof that we have passed from spiritual death to true life in Christ. Those who continue in murderous hatred for believers demonstrate that they remain in spiritual darkness.

**4.** *How does our behavior stir up hatred on the part of the world?*

**5.** *How can we know that we have passed from spiritual death to true life in Christ?*

## Sacrificial Love

*1 John 3:16-18, KJV*

16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

17 But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

*1 John 3:16-18, NIV*

<sup>16</sup>This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. <sup>17</sup>If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? <sup>18</sup>Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

We pass “from death to life” through faith in Jesus’ sacrificial death on the Cross. His death in our place represents the essence of sacrificial love as well as an example for us to follow. Biblical love, like that of our Lord, always seeks the well-being of fellow believers through both actions and words. Jesus died so that we might inherit eternal life.

While very few of us, if any, will be called to give up our lives to save that of another person, we can display sacrificial love in other ways. John gave us one such situation where someone sees a fellow believer “in need” (vs. 17). Refusing to give assistance to that other believer, however, brings into question the genuineness of the first person’s faith.

Sacrificial love results in physically meeting the need rather than mere talk. John said our love must produce “actions” (vs. 18) that reveal the genuineness of our faith.

**6. *What does it truly mean to love one another?***

**Confident Hearts**

*1 John 3:19-24, KJV*

19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

*1 John 3:19-24, NIV*

<sup>19</sup>This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: <sup>20</sup>If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

<sup>21</sup>Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God <sup>22</sup>and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. <sup>23</sup>And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. <sup>24</sup>The one who keeps God’s commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

Visible expressions of our love for others do not save us, but they do provide evidence we truly know the Lord as our Savior. When these expressions spring from within us, they reassure our hearts and give us confidence of our salvation even when our hearts condemn us.

For those walking in love but feeling insecure, John assured them that “God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything” (vs. 20). Assurance comes from Him rather than how we feel at any one moment. Doubt can spring from our conscience as well as from the enemy. Our confidence comes from the changes in our desires and behavior toward others that reveal Jesus’ work inside us.

When we experience confidence in our hearts toward God, it increases our boldness in His presence and results in answered prayer. First John 5:14-15 tells us that this is not a blank check for anything we want, but that we can know the Lord will graciously respond to requests within His will.

In verses 23-24, John summed up his message regarding our love for fellow believers. First, we must believe in Jesus’ name. Apart from saving faith we cannot show genuine love for others. Once in Christ, He tells us to love one another.

It’s not a matter of our obedience leading to our salvation, but it’s always a matter of our abiding in Him that shows itself outwardly in moral purity and love for others. The Lord’s work inside us produces love for others.

**7. What could have caused the hearts of John’s readers to condemn them unnecessarily?**

**8. What is the cure for hearts that condemn us?**



*John tells us not to be like Cain, shown murdering Abel in this medieval stained-glass illustration from York Minster, England.*

## A Changed Heart

Jason's heart raged every time he heard the words "father" or "dad." He remembered his dad coming home drunk and beating his mom. His mom would continually make excuses for his father, but Jason believed his life was better without his father, so he moved out as soon as he could. Jason didn't speak to or see his father for the next five years.

His best friend kept inviting him to church, but he couldn't imagine gaining anything from it. He was fine without it. Finally, he agreed to go out of obligation to his friend.

The church service was more interesting than Jason had imagined. On this Sunday, instead of a sermon, people gave testimonies. As Jason listened to the testimonies, he realized that these people really had a relationship with God through Jesus. Who was this Jesus who gave them such joy and peace? Then, the pastor shared how Jesus' love for us led Him to come and die for our sins. Jason wanted to know more about Jesus and invited Him into his life that day.

He grew spiritually, but his heart was still filled with hatred for his father. He knew he needed Jesus to replace the hatred with love. He prayed for a changed heart.

The next Christmas, Jason's mom asked him to come home for Christmas. She said his father had changed; he wasn't drinking anymore or mistreating her. When Jason arrived, he wasn't sure how he would feel when he saw his father, but his father came and hugged him. Jason couldn't remember the last time his father did that. Returning the hug, he felt God's love building in his heart toward his father.

**9.** *Why is it impossible to turn our hatred to love in our own strength?*

**10.** *How does accepting Jesus and His unconditional love enable us to love those we hate?*

**11.** *What role does prayer play in changing our hearts?*

**12.** *Is there someone you need Jesus to give you unconditional love for?*

## Changed

When Jesus commanded us to love one another, even our enemies, He knew we couldn't do it in our own strength. The Holy Spirit comes to live inside us as we surrender our lives to Jesus. The song "Changed" by Walter Hawkins expresses what this change looks like: "A change, a change has come over me. He changed my life and now I'm free. He washed away all my sins, and He made me whole. He washed me white as snow."

► *If you have not accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, now is the time to do so, and let Him transform you through the power of the Holy Spirit to love others as He loves us. If you are already a follower of Christ, ask yourself, "Am I truly loving everyone, or are there people I hate, even though I might hate to admit that?" Pray about how the Spirit might transform that hate this week into brotherly love.*

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

November 16 through November 22

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** 1 Timothy 3:8-13—Preparing to Become a Deacon.
- Tues.** Acts 5:12-16—Healing Ministry Grows the Church.
- Wed.** Acts 6:1-7—Church Sharing Plan Enlarged.
- Thurs.** Acts 6:8-15—Stephen's Ministry Opposed.
- Fri.** Acts 2:42-47—Sharing All of Life Together.
- Sat.** Acts 4:23-31—Prayer for Boldness and Signs.
- Sun.** Acts 4:32-5:11—Sharing All Possessions Challenges the Church.

## Responsive Love

**A**s Latrell drove to the apartment, he reminded himself again that he was doing this because God told him to, not because it would look good to the church.

Keenan was a responsible 38 year old who had been part of Latrell's church for the last six years. Keenan had been in an accident that totaled out his car and did not have the money to get a new one. Keenan put the money he got from the insurance claim in the bank and was saving until he could get another car that was not just a junker. In the meantime, Keenan and his family were having hardships getting around. Keenan had a 45-minute commute to work that included walking two blocks to the bus stop and then after his stop walking several blocks to the office. His wife was catching rides to do the grocery shopping and other chores.

On the other hand, Latrell had two vehicles. In addition, Latrell lived two blocks away from the city's light rail system that dropped him off one block from his job.

Latrell had told Keenan, his wife, and their nine-year-old daughter that he was coming to take them to lunch and had a surprise for them.

"I can't borrow your car," said Keenan at the restaurant.

"You can, and you will," said Latrell. "We are brothers in Christ. We have to help each other. If I have something you can use, you got it."

"Besides," he added, "what do I have that God didn't give me?"

**1.** *Why do people want others to see them as good people?*

**2.** *What does Jesus say about those who do good for man's approval?*

**3.** *Why should we test our motives before serving God and others?*

## A Sharing Community

*Acts 4:32–35, KJV*

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

*Acts 4:32–35, NIV*

<sup>32</sup>All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. <sup>33</sup>With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all <sup>34</sup>that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales <sup>35</sup>and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

The early Jerusalem church exhibited remarkable harmony and unity generated by the Holy Spirit (4:31-32). This unity led to sacrificial giving on the part of many to meet the needs of the poorer members in the church. As a result of this generosity, Luke could say "there were no needy persons among them" (vs. 34). However, this sharing of wealth did not happen all at one time. As needs became known, those who could afford to do so stepped forward, sold land or houses, and provided for the poorer members.

This did not lead to communal living. Believers still maintained residences for their families, many becoming gathering places for the believers (Acts 2:46, 12:12-14).

Besides meeting the needs of the poor, the sharing accomplished two additional purposes. First, it enabled the apostles to devote themselves full time to the Word, to prayer,

and to their testimony regarding Jesus' resurrection (4:33, 6:1-7). Second, caring for the poor was a powerful testimony of their love for each other.

**4.** *How did the believers in Jerusalem demonstrate their oneness with each other?*

**5.** *What purposes did the sharing of possessions accomplish in the Jerusalem church?*

## Barnabas's Positive Example

*Acts 4:36–37, KJV*

36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

*Acts 4:36–37, NIV*

<sup>36</sup>Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), <sup>37</sup> sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

To illustrate the generosity of those in the Jerusalem church, Luke told the story of Barnabas. Although he grew up with the Hebrew name of Joseph, the apostles gave him the nickname of Barnabas because as Luke said, "Barnabas" means "son of encouragement." Barnabas sold land and placed the entire proceeds from the sale at the feet of the apostles. But at least one couple in the church did not give to the ministry in the way that Barnabas did.

**6.** *Why did Luke include the story of Barnabas in his narrative of the generosity of the Jerusalem church?*

## Ananias and Sapphira Test God

*Acts 5:1-11, KJV*

1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

*Acts 5:1-11, NIV*

<sup>1</sup>Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property.

*KJV*

2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men

*NIV*

<sup>2</sup>With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

<sup>3</sup>Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?

<sup>4</sup>Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God."

<sup>5</sup>When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. <sup>6</sup> Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

<sup>7</sup>About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. <sup>8</sup> Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?"

"Yes," she said, "that is the price."

<sup>9</sup>Peter said to her, "How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."

<sup>10</sup>At that moment she fell

*KJV*

came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

*NIV*

down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. <sup>11</sup>Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

As the story of Barnabas' generosity became known among the believers in Jerusalem, Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of land they owned. They likely saw the praise Barnabas received for his generosity and desired it for themselves.

As Ananias brought the money to the apostles, the Lord revealed to Peter the deceit of claiming it represented the total sum from the sale of the land. Peter attributed the behavior of the couple to Satan, the father of lies (John 8:44).

Peter clarified that Ananias's sin did not consist in holding back some of the money, but in deceitfully claiming to give all of it. The couple had every right to keep a part or even all of the proceeds. They sinned by claiming to give all the proceeds while holding back some of the money for themselves.

The apostle did not pronounce a death sentence on Ananias; his sudden death may have surprised him as much as anyone else who witnessed it. His death represented God's judgment.

Sapphira arrived three hours later, not knowing about her husband's sudden death. Peter exposed the fact that she was a willing participant in the deception.

After seeing what happened to Ananias, Peter assumed Sapphira would suffer the same fate. As a result of God's swift action against the sin of this couple, great fear fell on those who heard of it (vs. 11). They all realized the extreme danger of testing the Lord through deceit in attempting to appear spiritual before others.

**7.** *What was sin that Ananias and Sapphira committed?*

**8.** *What factors may have contributed to the couple's attempt to test the Lord in such a way?*

## Emptiness or Fullness

Joe loved volunteering at his church. He proudly taught Sunday school classes, served on the worship team, cooked food for newcomer lunches—you name it. While he was serving, however, he always had an eye to see if the pastoral staff was watching. Joe not only served, but he also eagerly attended all the church Bible studies offered to him. His knowledge of the Bible was keen, and he used it by answering any—and every—question he could. Sadly, the more Joe sought the approval of others, the less his focus was on loving God. Soon, Joe was doing everything in his own strength, which led to exhaustion and spiritual emptiness.

James rarely stood before a large crowd. He preferred to meet one on one with people and share God's truth. He loved having people over for dinner, even though he could barely afford food for his own plate. When he wasn't meeting with people, he was praying for them. Few people noticed James's servant heart, but he didn't serve for others to notice. James served God and others because he daily experienced God's joy, grace, and peace in his life.

Often, we desire the tangible applause and approval from others instead of the less visible joy and peace from God. In order to receive the visible approval of men, we serve others openly seeking to appear sacrificial in our actions. Yet, God sees our motives and often reveals it to others. Seeking the approval of man over God's approval leads to emptiness. As we desire to grow in our relationship with God and serve Him and others, we will find ourselves spiritually full, regardless of whether we gain favor from others or not.

**9.** *Why do we often prefer the applause of others over God's less boisterous approval?*

**10.** *Do we naturally stop and think about how temporary human approval and gifts are? Explain your answer.*

**11.** *When was the last time you stopped to ask yourself, "Why are you serving someone?"*

## Only One Life

British missionary C.T. Studd (1860–1931) wrote a poem entitled “Only One Life” that includes these lines: “Only one life, ’twill soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last. Only one life, the still small voice, gently pleads for a better choice, bidding me selfish aims to leave, and to God’s holy will to cleave.” We all need to ask ourselves, are we doing what we do for His glory, or for praise and glory we want to be given to us?

► *Pray silently and ask God to examine your heart for any unconfessed sins, especially in the area of serving with wrong motives.*

### KEY VERSE

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. —Acts 4:32, KJV

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. —Acts 4:32, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

November 23 through November 29

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Matthew 12:1-8—Extending Mercy More Important than Sacrifice.
- Tues.** 1 Peter 1:17-23—Love One Another from the Heart.
- Wed.** Galatians 3:6-9, 13-14—In Christ Gentiles Share Abraham’s Faith.
- Thurs.** Exodus 2:1-10 —Faith of Levite Mother Saves Moses.
- Fri.** James 2:14-17—Unexpressed Faith Has No Value.
- Sat.** James 2:18-26—Faith and Works Complement Each Other.
- Sun.** James 2:1-13—Disdain the Practice of Partiality.

## Impartial Love

Those seats are for the council and planning commission members,” Jeanette said adamantly to Sister Michelle. The 10 white-linen-covered folding chairs were carefully placed at the head of the long table on either side.

Bethel Peace Church was having its dedication service for its daycare and Christian ed center. The church had worked for the last five years in the planning and building of the center. The city and planning commission had presented more than one roadblock, but the church had overcome them all.

Jeanette, chair of the church’s hospitality committee, had worked hard to put on a “perfect lunch” for the guests today. The smell of chicken and soul food dishes drifted from the kitchen, as well as the smell of steak.

“Sister Jeanette said steak is only for the special guests and the pastor,” one of the cooks said.

The lunch began when the guests spilled into the fellowship hall. Only three people from the city attended. During the mingling, Sister Michelle spotted four of the city’s interns, who helped work on the center.

Michelle greeted the young people and escorted them to the linen-covered chairs. Jeanette took Michelle by the elbow and directed her to a spot away from the table.

“You know those are special seats for the council and planning commission members,” she said again.

“The interns helped us in the building of the center,” countered Michelle. “Why not show love to everyone?”

**1.** *What would cause people to respond differently to a rich person compared to a poor person?*

**2.** *Consider Jesus’ demonstration of love on the Cross—is there any difference for the rich versus the poor? Explain.*

**3.** *Why do people need to experience impartial love despite their positions, especially from Christians?*

## Do Not Favor the Rich

*James 2:1-4, KJV*

1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

*James 2:1-4, NIV*

<sup>1</sup>My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. <sup>2</sup>Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. <sup>3</sup>If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," <sup>4</sup>have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Even at this early time in the life of the church, believers fell into the trap of favoring people based on position and wealth. Their partiality to the rich failed to measure up with their profession of faith in the Lord Jesus, who endured poverty so they might possess eternal life (2 Cor. 8:9).

James presented a hypothetical example of the type of bias based on outward appearance that existed among his readers. Two people with much different positions in life visit their church and receive diverse receptions, to say the least.

The one speaking, presumably the leader of the group, offers the rich visitor a choice seat due to his obvious high status. The gold ring immediately marks him as someone with both high social status and wealth. Those wishing to impress others in the first century A.D. could rent rings to wear at special occasions so they could also appear to be people of great importance.

The shabby and filthy appearance of the poor person

points to that of a beggar. The speaker tells this one to either stand in the back or sit on the floor. Because the church met in the homes of its members, it's likely some needed to stand or sit on the floor. By demonstrating favoritism to the rich over the poor, James said they had "become judges with evil thoughts" (vs. 4). He thus exposed their motives as cruel and without just cause, as he explained in the following verses.

**4.** *How does the reception of the rich man differ from that of the poor person?*

**5.** *Why did James condemn such partiality on the part of his readers?*

## Partiality Lacks Common Sense

*James 2:5-7, KJV*

5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?

7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

*James 2:5-7, NIV*

<sup>5</sup>Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? <sup>6</sup>But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? <sup>7</sup>Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

In response to such favoritism, James passionately appealed for them to reconsider their actions. The poor visitor was much more likely to place his or her faith in the Lord. The church at this time consisted largely of people from the poorer class as they had responded much more readily to the Gospel. James reminded his readers of the Lord's choice in the matter: He had chosen the poor to be rich in faith and partake in His coming glorious kingdom.

The rich visitor represented those who oppressed early believers with a variety of lawsuits (vs. 6). The word for “exploiting” depicts intense harassment and ruthless force to deprive these early Christians of their rights as well as their money. In spite of this oppression, James’s readers still favored the wealthy when they appeared in their meetings.

In verse 7, James further demonstrated the inconsistency of favoring those of high social rank. Not only did the rich harass them, but they even blasphemed the name of Jesus. James was not suggesting they treat the rich with cruelty, but that they treat the rich and the poor alike.

**6.** *Why did their favoritism toward the rich lack common sense?*

## Favoritism Breaks God’s Law

*James 2:8-11, KJV*

8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convicted of the law as transgressors.

10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

*James 2:8-11, NIV*

<sup>8</sup>If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. <sup>9</sup>But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. <sup>10</sup>For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. <sup>11</sup>For he who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

James anticipated that some of his readers might justify their preferential treatment of the rich on the basis of the command to “Love your neighbor as yourself” (vs. 8). The issue, however, was not that of treating the wealthy man with respect, which was a good thing. Their sin was treating

the poor with contempt thus revealing their favoritism. Such behavior also breaks God's law since the poor visitor is just as much a neighbor as the man of high position.

We also cannot pick and choose which law we want to keep while ignoring the others we might deem as less important. If we break just one of God's commands, it makes us a lawbreaker in God's eyes. The One who commands us not to commit adultery also commands us not to murder.

These verses demonstrate the absolute necessity of a Savior who died in our place taking upon Himself the penalty due for our sins. If possession of eternal life depended on keeping the law, no one would ever receive it.

**7. How do these verses demonstrate our need for Jesus' righteousness versus that of our own?**

## Mercy Triumphs over Judgment

*James 2:12-13, KJV*

12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

*James 2:12-13, NIV*

<sup>12</sup>Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, <sup>13</sup>because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Rather than a law that enslaves people as did the Old Testament laws in the hands of the Pharisees, the Holy Spirit empowers us to obey its moral demand. It's thus a "law that gives freedom" since in Christ there is no condemnation (vs. 12; Rom. 8:1). Although we can no longer be condemned, there is another judgment when the Lord will examine our lives and service to Him. James said that our show of mercy to all regardless of outward appearance or social standing will result in Christ extending mercy to us.

**8. What is our motivation for treating everyone with mercy regardless of their social standing?**

## Exhibiting Impartial Love

The four elders of the church sat at the front, waiting for the Christmas celebration to begin. But it couldn't start until the fifth elder made it to his chair on the podium, though he had nothing else to do with the service. It seemed like the Christmas celebration was less about Jesus' birth, but rather centered on those in power.

The food bank burst with vegetables, meats, fruit, and other necessary items needed to feed the hundreds that lined the street to receive food to survive. Most of the people woke up early in order to make sure they received food before it ran out. Everything ran orderly and was given as needed, but no one knew the manager's secret. Every morning the manager would put aside at least 10 huge bags of food for those in his family and close friends. He didn't care that many of those outside slept on mats in the cold just to get the much-needed food, while his family members slept in warm beds and received food that they could purchase themselves. Giving to and loving the least of them was replaced with favoritism for those closest to him.

What if the Christmas service started without all five elders? What would happen if the manager distributed the food to those who patiently waited in line for the food because they needed it? James 2:9 clearly states that showing favoritism is a sin. Therefore, real, impartial love would be the service starting on time regardless of who is present—or giving out *all* the food to those who wait in line to receive it. Exhibiting impartial love means remembering that at the Cross of Jesus we are all equal and loved.

**9.** *Why do you think that showing love to someone because of their position or something else is sin?*

**10.** *As a leader, how could you demonstrate impartial love to those you lead?*

**11.** *Share a time in Jesus' ministry when He demonstrated impartial love.*

## Loving Impartially

Showing Jesus' love impartially has been my goal over the last 30 years in leadership as an educator. Recently, I received a confirmation from one of my teachers, who is now in leadership, that she learned the importance of showing impartial love through my example: "Thank you so much. In no small way, you inspired me when I worked with you. It was how you treated *all* of us with dignity. You showed us by example; by being fair, consistent and considerate."

► *Examine your actions toward people and ask God to show you if there is someone you are showing favoritism to at work or church because of their position. Ask the Spirit to teach you how to show impartial love to everyone you encounter.*

### KEY VERSE

Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? —James 2:5, KJV

Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? —James 2:5, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

November 30 through December 6

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Psalm 2—God's Anointed Ruler of All Nations.
- Tues.** Ephesians 1:1-14—Blessed and Chosen in Christ.
- Wed.** Ephesians 1:15-23—Christ, Head over All People/Things.
- Thurs.** Matthew 1:6-15—In the Family Line of David.
- Fri.** Hebrews 1:6-9—God Anoints Jesus King.
- Sat.** Hebrews 1:10-14—Jesus: Creator and Eternal Ruler.
- Sun.** Hebrews 1:1-5; Matthew 1:1-6, 16-17—Expectations of Jesus before His Birth.