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Resources for personal and lifegroup use

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Quotable Quotes

- "Everybody can be great because everybody can serve." Martin Luther King, Jr.
- "The Church is not a gallery for the better exhibition of eminent Christians, but a school for the education of imperfect ones." Henry Ward Beecher
- Let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another!" Hebrews 10:24-25
- "There's many wonderful things that will never be done if you don't do them!" Charles Gill
- "Christian community is not an ideal we have to realise, but rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate." Dietrich Bonhoeffer
 - "Not all of us can do great things. But all can do small things with great love." Mother Teresa
 - "You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you." John Bunyan
 - "The fragrance always stays in the hand that gives the rose." Heda Bejar
- "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." Mahatma Gandhi
- "By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:35
 - "Christian fellowship is the medicine of life and the banishment of all misery. Without it, there is no life." Francis Schaeffer



There are about sixty references in the New Testament to 'one another'. This emphasises our Christian teaching to live in good relationships with each other. Our relationship with God is lived out in our relationship with others.

- How can we say we love God if we hate those we have seen. 1 John 4:20
- The parable of the vine and the branches emphasises our dependence on one another and on God. John 15:5
- We are all parts of the same body but have different functions. Romans 12:4-8.

Although we believe each one of us needs to have a personal relationship with God, we know that when we are born again, we become members of a family. The whole concept of the church, the family of God, is central to our understanding of God's relationship with his people. In the Old Testament, God chose the nation of Israel, and going back to the Garden of Eden, we are told that it was not good for man to be alone. Even our understanding of God himself, the Trinity, three persons but one God, suggest the idea of community in the Godhead.

The 'one another' commands are deeply intertwined. How can we serve or pray without love? How can we love without forgiving? How can we live in harmony without caring for others? No, "love one another" trumps them all. Without love, we can't do any of the others. We are called to do things for others as a reflection of God's love for us, and our lack of love has a direct impact on our ability to witness: John 13:35. Often, to be able to do anything for another person, we need empathy for them and an understanding of their situation. Sometimes we need to put ourselves in their shoes and identify why there is a problem and what it is they need — and at times this might be prayer. Jesus always leads by example to encourage us to live a shared life with one another. He conveyed this message many times.

POSITIVE COMMANDS: how to treat one another!

- Love one another. John 13:34 *This command occurs at least 16 times!*
- Be devoted to one another. Romans 12:10
- Honour one another above yourselves. Romans 12:10
- Live in harmony with one another. Romans 12:16
- Build up one another. Romans 14:19 & 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- Be likeminded towards one another. Romans 15:5
- Accept one another. Romans 15:7
- Admonish one another. Romans 15:14 & Colossians 3:16
- Greet one another. Romans 16:16
- Care for one another. 1 Corinthians 12:25
- Serve one another. Galatians 5:13
- Bear one another's burdens. Galatians 6:2
- Forgive one another. Ephesians 4:2 & 32, Colossians 3:13.
- Be patient with one another. Ephesians 4:2 & Colossians 3:13.
- Speak the truth in love. Ephesians 4:15 & 25.
- Be kind and compassionate to one another. Ephesians 4:32.
- Speak to one another with psalms, hymns & spiritual songs. Ephesians 5:19
- Submit to one another. Ephesians 5:21 & 1 Peter 5:5.
- Consider others better than yourselves. Philippians 2:3.
- Look to the interests of one another. Philippians 2:4.
- Bear with one another. Colossians 3:13.
- Teach one another. Colossians 3:16.
- Comfort one another. 1 Thessalonians 4:18.

- Encourage one another. 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- Exhort one another. Hebrews 3:13
- Stir up – provoke & stimulate one another to love and good works. Hebrews 10:24
- Show hospitality to one another. 1 Peter 4:9
- Employ the gifts that God has given us for the benefit of one another. 1 Peter 4:10
- Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another. 1 Peter 5:5
- Pray for one another. James 5:16
- Confess your faults to one another. James 5:16

NEGATIVE COMMANDS: how not to treat one another!

- Do not lie to one another. Colossians 3:9
- Stop passing judgement on one another. Romans 14:13
- If you keep on biting and devouring each other...you'll be destroyed by each other. Galatians 5:15
- Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. Galatians 5:26
- Do not slander one another. James 4:11
- Don't grumble against each other. James 5:9



Overview of our series

Week 1 - Love one another

Key scriptures: John 13: 34-35 & 1 John 4:12

Key practice: Show love for others by taking a moment to think what they might be feeling or facing. We are all guilty of 'putting on a brave face', but genuine love for others is looking beyond the smile and seeing the person underneath. Show an act of kindness or love to three people in your world, who challenge you and you find hard to like naturally. Nothing we say beats the light that is demonstrated by our love. Day by day: 'Lord increase my love'

Week 2- Show hospitality to one another

Key scriptures: 1 Peter 4:9-11

Key practice: This doesn't need to be the big gestures like offering a meal or welcoming people into your home if you're not comfortable with that, a warm smile, enquiry about family or offer to help carry a bag can make people feel welcome and valued. Extend yourself toward three people you don't normally engage with. Perhaps sit in a different place in church, talk to someone new and offer them hospitality.

Week Three - Live in harmony with one another

Key scriptures: Romans 12:16

Key practice: We don't have to agree with each other to live in harmony. Respect the opinions and values of others even if they are different from your own. After all, yours may seem strange to them. Set yourself an automatic reflex of praying for those immediately you're irritated! They probably need to extend the same grace to you on occasion!

Week Four - Forgive one another

Key scriptures: Ephesians 4:2 & 32 and Colossians 3 v 13

Key practice: We all make mistakes, hurt others and neglect to do what is right. If you know you have caused pain, go and apologise. Reach out to three people who have wronged you, praying God's blessing on them & offering them specific kindness & grace.

If you've been hurt, choose to believe that the person is human, flawed and no different from yourself in their ability to mess up. Forgive them as you would wish to be forgiven, even if they don't ask for it!

Week Five - Pray for one another

Key scriptures: James 5:13-16

Key practice: We can easily say "I'll pray for you". Do you do it? Pick five people in your world & pray for them weekly following contact over the next five weeks. Pray indiscriminately. God will prompt you to pray for those who need it. Pray fervently, pray casually, pray while you're out walking or washing up. Above all pray.

Week 6 - Encourage one another

Key scriptures: Hebrews 10:24-25 and 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13, 4:18 & 5:11

Key practice: Encourage: Choose three people to encourage this week who maybe don't usually get praise. Take time to recognise the goodness and gifts and in others and tell them it is appreciated. A word, an email or even a card can mean so much. Many don't see their own gifts, you recognising them may be the catalyst to something wonderful.

Week 7 - Serve one another

Key scriptures: 1 Peter 4:10,11, Galatians 5:13-14 & Matthew 23:11.

Key practice: 'Where can I bless this person?' Ask the Holy Spirit to show you those He wants you to look out for - cultivate generosity in attending to needs? Share your love and care for others by offering your time, your ear, your smile. Serving can be the smallest of actions, but if it is done with love it shows you to be a follower of Jesus. Go for seven courageous Holy Spirit inspired actions...



Week One

Love one another

John 13: 34-35 A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples.

1 John 4:12 No-one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

God so loved us that he gave his only son to die so that we might have eternal life – sometimes described as the greatest love story of all. Jesus died on the cross for us; what greater love is there than this? How often do we just love those who we like, or those in our social group, or those who love us? How hard is it to love our enemies? Or maybe those who are causing so much pain to others? Think about the Christians in Ukraine, how hard it must be for them to love the Russian troops who are destroying their homes and their country.

Yet Jesus wants us to love one another as he loved us.

1 Peter 4:8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins. This is how we know what Love is; Jesus Christ laid down his life for us (1 John 3:16). Here, John introduces the standard of Love that is required. It becomes the measuring stick for every expression of love.

William Barclay describes Christian love - Agape. If we regard a person with Love, nothing that person can do will ever make us seek anything but their highest good. Even if they hurt us, we love them. So, love must not be just emotional, but of the will. We love the unlovable, those who don't love us, those we don't like. It means no bitterness, no revenge, but only to seek the highest good for someone. It does not count the cost, it is unselfish: it is sacrificial. It is said that although in Greek there are many words for Love, when the New Testament was written an ancient rarely used word was taken to describe Christian love..... agape. Jesus did not ask us to like one another, but to love one another. Can we do one without the other?

1. Is it possible to 'seek only the highest good' for someone who has hurt you or someone close to you?
2. 'Love one another' is the culmination of all the previous weeks' instructions. How does 'love one another encompass everything that Christ taught us.
3. We are told in 1 Peter that 'Love covers a multitude of sins'. What does this mean?
4. Agape love is said to be a conscious decision, rather than romantic love which comes from the heart and often is beyond our conscious control. How can we make this conscious decision to love others as Jesus instructed?
5. "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends" (John 15:13) but Jesus willingly died not only for those who loved him, but also for the people who were nailing him to the cross. Would you give your life for your enemy? Is Christ asking us to do this? Is that the love we are asked to show?
6. In John 13:34-35 Jesus commanded us to love one another. Why was it necessary for Him to 'command' us to do this?
7. Does loving God mean that we are better able to love each other?

Key practice: Show love for others by taking a moment to think what they might be feeling or facing. We are all guilty of 'putting on a brave face', but genuine love for others is looking beyond the smile and seeing the person underneath. Show an act of kindness or love to three people in your world, who challenge you and you find hard to like naturally. Nothing we say beats the light that is demonstrated by our love. Day by day: 'Lord increase my love'



Week Two

Show hospitality to one another

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should share whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides... 1 Peter 4:9-11

Hospitality has been defined as the act of generous and friendly welcoming of guests and visitors.

Showing hospitality is more than just offering a cup of tea and a biscuit. We are encouraged to reach out to others, the poor, the disadvantaged, just as Jesus did. We should be using the gifts given to us to serve others, in our church and community, everywhere in our lives. This might be in practical service, by prayer or just by our love for each other. Hospitality is given without grumbling and comes from a loving heart and gentle spirit. It is easy to offer hospitality to those we like but needs to be given expecting nothing in return. Often the gift of offering hospitality is given to someone who is not a preacher or pastor, but is an essential gift in the church. Jesus rebukes Simon for not showing hospitality in Luke 7:44, after the woman washes his feet.

Questions:

1. What does 'hospitality' mean to you personally and how do you live this out?
2. What should hospitality mean to us as a church and how does corporate hospitality differ from personal hospitality?
3. Are there people you can think of in your life, or in church life, who are naturally hospitable? What makes them appear that way?
4. Should 'hospitality' be the responsibility of those we perceive to be gifted with that quality?
5. Where do you feel that the church does well at being hospitable and where could we do better?
6. 1Peter says 'If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides' How does that translate in our busy lives?
7. It has been said that you can't be hospitable unless you are generous. Do you agree?
8. What examples of Jesus's hospitality are particularly significant for you?

Key practice: This doesn't need to be the big gestures like offering a meal or welcoming people into your home if you're not comfortable with that, a warm smile, enquiry about family or offer to help carry a bag can make people feel welcome and valued. Extend yourself toward three people you don't normally engage with. Perhaps sit in a different place in church, talk to someone new and offer them hospitality.



Week Three

Live in harmony with one another

Live in harmony with one another, Romans 12:16.

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus.” Romans 15:5.

The definition of harmony in musical terms is “the simultaneous sounding of different notes that create chords with a pleasing effect. The notes are spaced with just enough distance to create a pleasing sound”. To take the musical analogy further, in an orchestra everyone has to take their correct place, being aware of each other and playing their part. Sometimes they may take the lead, sometimes they may just have a few notes to play, but they play together and this makes a beautiful sound.

By living in harmony, we can achieve more than we can on our own. We live together to create a pleasing image for God. We should build each other up and encourage others to live life in all its fullness as God intended us to.

People are flawed and sometimes insensitive and hurtful. To maintain harmony, sometimes we have to be the ones to “adapt our voices” to match others. Also in Romans 14 we are told that we must be aware of each other's maturity in the faith and not judge each other being aware of each other's weaknesses. Sometimes it's better to be loving than to win an argument.

Other similar verses worth considering are:-

- Romans 15:7 Accept one another
 - Ephesians 4:2 Tolerate one another
1. How can we as a church model harmony to the watching world, particularly with the current controversial issues facing church governance?
 2. Focussing on Jesus's perfection helps us live with each other's failings - discuss.
 3. It has been said that 'second violin' is the hardest instrument to play in the orchestra. How does ego get in the way of harmony?
 4. How has becoming a Christian changed the way you view other people?
 5. Is living in harmony with other Christians easier than living in harmony with non-Christians?
 6. Is it actually possible to 'agree to disagree'?
 7. What can we do when we feel the chaos of life and that harmony has been replaced with discord?
 8. Are there particular people in your life that help you stay 'balanced'. What qualities do these people have?

Key practice: We don't have to agree with each other to live in harmony. Respect the opinions and values of others even if they are different from your own. After all, yours may seem strange to them. Set yourself an automatic reflex of praying for those immediately you're irritated! They probably need to extend the same grace to you on occasion!



Week Four Forgive one another

- Ephesians 4:2, 32
- Colossians 3 v 13
- Parable of the unforgiving servant. Matthew 18:21-35
- The prodigal son. Luke 15:21-35
- Joseph forgave his brothers. Genesis 45: 1 – 15

Like many of the “one another” themes, successfully forgiving someone can depend on who we need to forgive and what impact their actions have had on us. It's harder to forgive someone who has hurt us deeply. How easily could we forgive someone who has harmed (or maybe even killed?) our child, or a member of our family? Do we only forgive if the person accepts their fault and asks for forgiveness?

We are told in the Lord's Prayer that we should ask for forgiveness as we in turn forgive those who sin against us.

In everything we must remember that Jesus came and gave his life for each one of us to pay the price for our sin and reconcile us with God. (Colossians 2:13-14 and Hebrews 10:10,14,17).

If Christ did this for us, how can we refuse to forgive others?

When Corrie ten Boom met a former Nazi concentration camp guard who had tortured and killed her sister, she knew that she had to forgive him if she truly believed what Christ taught. That day, she said, she really understood what Christ had done by dying to free her from sin and how much God loved her.

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you've needed to ask for forgiveness? How did it make you feel?
2. Is it easier to forgive others when we recognise our own failings?
3. Find an example in the Bible where Jesus has resolved a dispute. How did He do it?
4. What do you think is the biggest obstacle to being able to forgive others?
5. What is the difference between forgiving and accepting behaviour?
6. When you forgive, do you forget? What does the Bible say about this?
7. Is genuine repentance necessary before we can forgive the actions of others?
8. If we witnessed Christ die on the cross *today* so that we could be forgiven by God, how would this affect our attitude to our own behaviour? Does 2000 years' distance blunt our reactions?

Key practice: We all make mistakes, hurt others and neglect to do what is right. If you know you have caused pain, go and apologise. Reach out to three people who have wronged you, praying God's blessing on them & offering them specific kindness & grace.

If you've been hurt, choose to believe that the person is human, flawed and no different from yourself in their ability to mess up. Forgive them as you would wish to be forgiven, even if they don't ask for it!



Week Five Pray for one another

James 5:13–16 “... the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”

In Ephesians 6:18 we are told to be alert and always keep on praying for God’s people.

But how much easier is it to pray for someone we like? How often do we pray for a friend we think is in need of our prayers, but neglect to pray for those who we don’t think are in need-worthy of our prayers?

"You cannot pray for someone and hate them at the same time." Billy Graham

Matthew 5:43 – 47

You have heard that it was said “Love your neighbour and hate your enemy” But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Not even the tax collectors are doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

Praying for others blesses the person praying too.

"I prayed to dispel my fear, until suddenly, and I do not know how the idea came to me, I began to pray for others. I prayed for everyone who came into my thoughts - - people with whom I had travelled, those who had been in prison with me, my school friends of years ago. I do not know how long I continued my prayer, but this I do know - - my fear was gone! Interceding for others had released me!" Corrie Ten Boom

1. Give an example of when your prayers for someone have been answered. What was the timescale? Was this significant?
2. Why is it so difficult to pray for people you don’t personally know, for example those in war torn countries? How can we approach this form of prayer without making it impersonal?
3. Christ tells us to pray for our enemies, and Billy Graham tells us that we can't hate those we pray for. Discuss!
4. Have you started to pray for one person and found yourself praying for someone else completely? What do you think God is doing in those times?
5. Why do we need to pray for others when God already knows their needs and difficulties?
6. If we are praying for others and feel that God has given us a message for them, how can we check that this is really a word from Him and not our own interpretation?
7. Have you been through difficult times and known that other people were praying for you? How did that make you feel?
8. Praying for others is also good for us. What is God teaching us when we pray persistently and patiently for others?

Key practice: We can easily say “I’ll pray for you”. Do you do it? Pick five people in your world & pray for them weekly following contact over the next five weeks. Pray indiscriminately. God will prompt you to pray for those who need it. Pray fervently, pray casually, pray while you’re out walking or washing up. Above all pray.



Week Six Encourage one another

Hebrews 10:24,25 and 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13, 4:18 & 5:11

This should be easy to do but the easiest to overlook in our relationships with others. We take so much for granted, maybe even too busy to acknowledge the actions of others or say thank you sometimes. It's an easy thing to do, to tell someone what a good job they have done, or how we appreciate their kindness, but how often do we do it? We are all quick to email a complaint when we have had bad service, how often do we email to compliment someone on their good service?

In Thessalonians ch3 Paul tells how the church leaders are encouraged by hearing of the Thessalonians' faith, but he is in fact giving them encouragement and praise to persevere. In the Thessalonians ch4 passage Paul encourages them with the truth about what will happen in the end times. It is interesting that Paul in Thessalonians ch5 is telling them to do something (to encourage others) but adds 'as you are doing'. He's encouraging them while he is in fact rebuking them; our rebukes don't need to be harsh. In the passage in Hebrews the writer gives the reason for the encouragement, to spur you on to love and good deeds. Encouragement is not just flattery, but telling the truth in love, looking for the best in someone. We should especially encourage those who are not usually praised, those who often go unnoticed, those who are stepping out in faith for a new task or ministry.

Barnabas is usually associated with the gift of encouragement. Also known as Joseph, Barnabas was Jewish and a member of the Christian community in Jerusalem. His name, which means "son of encouragement," aptly describes his steadfast support of many in the church. Acts 11:24 describes him as "a good man, filled with the Holy Spirit and faith".

When we need encouragement we can turn to God's Word, the bible, because His word is true and encouragement must always be based on truth. *So when we seek to encourage others there is no better way than sharing scripture.* Deuteronomy 31:8-9. The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.

1. Why do you think we are so quick to complain but slow to encourage? Is this a cultural thing?
2. How does it make you feel when someone offers a compliment or encouragement?
3. How do we ensure that encouragement sounds sincere and not empty praise?
4. Find your favourite example of Jesus praising someone for their faith. What words does He use? How does He make the praise fit the person he is talking to?
5. When you are feeling unsure or worried, which scriptures help encourage you?
6. Do you know a (or are you a) natural encourager? What characteristics do encouragers have within the church?
7. The Bible speaks of Barnabas as a great encourager. What responsibility do we have to encourage others? Do you think we should leave it to those we consider 'good at it'?
8. Give an example of when you achieved something unexpected due to the encouragement of others.

Key practice: Encourage: Choose three people to encourage this week who maybe don't usually get praise. Take time to recognise the goodness and gifts and in others and tell them it is appreciated. A word, an email or even a card can mean so much. Many don't see their own gifts, you recognising them may be the catalyst to something wonderful.



Week Seven

Serve one another

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve one another in love. 1 Peter 4:10-11 Serve one another in love & love your neighbour as yourself. Galatians 5:13-14 The greatest among you will be your servant. Matthew 23:11.

Serving means giving ourselves for the good of others. Only through God's love for us can we fully serve and love our neighbour. Through God's love he turns our eyes outward from ourselves and we now see opportunities to serve those in our midst. In serving others we are fulfilling God's law and we do this because God first loved us and sent Jesus to die for us. We are told in John 13:15 that Jesus set an example for us to follow when he washed his disciples' feet, showing love, humility and service. He tells them "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you".

To be a servant means we need to care about others and be aware of the needs of those about us. No task should be beneath us, no person should be judged unworthy. Our prayer should not be "Here I am Lord, send that person!" In Philippians ch2 we are told to value others above ourselves, not to look at our own interests but to look to the interests of others. We are told that in our relationships with others we should have the same mindset as Jesus.

Mark 2:3-4. The story of the man who was lowered through the roof of the house by his friends to see Jesus. Each took a corner of the stretcher to ease the load. Is there a message here for us in our church life– the friends worked together with the stretcher to ease the load. Many hands make light work. Can we make lighter work of something by serving one another in our church? Matthew 5:16 tells us "Let your light shine before others so they may see your good works and give glory to your father in heaven". We need to take great care here and not 'perform' our good works in front of others. The great servants in our church are those that go unnoticed by us, who work behind the scenes, who don't look for thanks or praise... the ones who God alone knows.

1. What does serving others look like in our busy day to day lives?
2. In serving other people we are serving God. Is this always the case? Discuss!
3. Why did Peter find it so hard to have his feet washed by Jesus? Do you find it difficult to be served by others?
4. We are all given different gifts. How can we use these to serve others?
5. How do you feel when you think your efforts to serve others have been overlooked or taken for granted? What does the Bible say about this?
6. It's easy to serve people we like, others not so much... why is it important to serve without prejudice?
7. Is humility necessary for us to serve effectively?
8. 'Your reward will be in Heaven' is a phrase we often use to thank people for their sacrifice, but we are told that we don't get to Heaven through 'good works'. Discuss.

Key practice: 'Where can I bless this person?' Ask the Holy Spirit to show you those He wants you to look out for - cultivate generosity in attending to needs? Share your love and care for others by offering your time, your ear, your smile. Serving can be the smallest of actions, but if it is done with love it shows you to be a follower of Jesus. Go for seven courageous Holy Spirit inspired actions!