

Session 1: Love one another

After Judas Iscariot left to carry out his plan to betray Him to the Jewish leaders, Jesus began to prepare the remaining disciples for His departure. He said to them:

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

John 13:34-35_{NIVUK}

It is worthy of note that Jesus described this as a new command. He had taught previously that all of the commands of Scripture hinge on two general and fundamental commands:



Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.'

Matthew 22:37-40_{NIVUK}

Disciples of Jesus will be intentional about obeying these two commands, and must then understand that Jesus added, specifically for His disciples, the command to love one another. It is not optional; it is not a suggestion. Anyone who is not intentional about loving fellow believers, is being disobedient to Jesus and must repent. Loving one another is proof that we are indeed disciples of Jesus.

This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.

1 John 3:10_{NIVUK}

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

1 John 4:11-12_{NIVUK}

Persistently demonstrating godly love, even to fellow believers can be difficult for a number of reasons. Despite the challenges, disciples of must obey Him and not become discouraged and weary with regards to loving one another.

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Galatians 6:9-10_{NIVUK}

This course is about helping disciples of Jesus to obey His command to love one another, despite any challenges.

Session 2: Love that covers

Loving fellow believers can be difficult for a number of reasons.

Believers are not yet perfect and are at different levels of maturity.

All true disciples of Jesus must be intentional about living according to the will of God every day. Jesus made that clear. Jesus did the will of God. Those who truly follow Him daily will also do the will of God.

Then he said to them all: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me

Luke 9:23^{NIVUK}

Despite the perfect intention to do the will of God, no one has reached that perfection in practice. Therefore the reality among even genuine believers, at different levels of maturity is that mistakes are made and sins against one another are committed.

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us. 1 John 1:5-10^{NIVUK}



Loving one another as Jesus commanded becomes essential if we are to have true fellowship with one another as children of God, maintaining the unity of the Spirit and pursuing peace.

The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use 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, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen

1 Peter 4:7-11^{NIVUK}

Some practical suggestions

- Always forgive those who harm you, intentionally or unintentionally.
- Remember that you are not perfect yet.
- Aim to be proactive in pleasing God in the way you treat others. *Psalms 15*

Session 3: Love never fails

The word love is used in so many different ways in the world today, to the extent that even believers are sometimes conflicted about how to demonstrate love in a godly manner. Godly love never fails to produce results that are in keeping with the will of God. The love that Jesus commands us to demonstrate to one another is not primarily about superficial feelings, but a deep commitment to act in the best interest of others, in line with the revealed will of God.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour 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 Corinthians 13:4-8_{NIVUK}

Godly love, given and received properly will maintain peace in the Church, and the very important unity of the Spirit, even though people are not yet perfect.

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:1-6_{NIVUK}

Godly love does not pander to the will of others. This can be practically difficult when believers do not want to hear the truth, because it upsets them. Godly love demands that we should speak the truth regardless, but with deeply loving intention. It is cowardly to withhold the truth when it will help someone to grow in discipleship. We must follow the examples of Jesus and His apostles.



Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Ephesians 4:14-16_{NIVUK}

Some practical suggestions

- Cultivate humility, patience and kindness in your dealings with other believers.
- Let your love for others be genuine - from the heart, bearing in mind what is best for them, but always in accordance with God's will and purpose.
- Always aim to help other believers to become better disciples of the Lord Jesus.

Session 4: Love in households

There are two households to consider - believers (disciples of Jesus - especially the local Church and the various teams within it) and our immediate natural family. The best-case scenario is when the natural household is also made up of believers.



Loving one another must be intentionally practiced when we are in close contact with others. People who have to be in close contact with one another may be regarded as members of the same household. It is easy to take such people for granted and people may not always demonstrate godly love to one. There is a common saying that "familiarity breeds contempt". Jesus experienced this from some in His hometown as recorded in the Bible.

When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there. Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. 'Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?' they asked. 'Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things? And they took offence at him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honour except in his own town and in his own home.' And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

Matthew 13:53-58^{NIVUK}

Disciples must remain intentional about demonstrating godly love to members of our "households", even though it may be particularly challenging.

Some sources of unloving behaviour in the households of believers:

- Cultural indoctrination that is contrary to godly teaching.
- Exaggerated generational differences - e.g. *young versus old*.
- Entitlement based on an unbalanced view of oneself.
- Unresolved past traumas.

Some practical suggestions

- Continually replace exposed ungodly thought patterns with the truth.
- Listen attentively, with compassion and interest, to understand others.
- Know that your position is not always right. Humbly learn and grow.
- Seek to expose and resolve your past traumas. Seek help if necessary.
- Actively obey the commands of Scripture about loving one another.

Refer to Colossians 3

Session 5: Love serves

Jesus commands His disciples to love one another. Love is essential if we are to maintain unity. Jesus demonstrated how we should show love to one another in very practical ways. Unlike many leaders, Jesus who is God, stooped down to practically take care of His disciples. He said we should do the same to one another. He made it clear that He came to serve, not to be served.

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him. John 13:3-5_{NIVUK}

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. 'Do you understand what I have done for you?' he asked them. 'You call me "Teacher" and "Lord", and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. John 13:12-17_{NIVUK}



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

John 13:34-35_{NIVUK}

God has given disciples of Jesus His Holy Spirit, enabling them to administer God's grace in various forms, by serving one another.

The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use 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, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen

1 Peter 4:7-11_{NIVUK}

Some practical suggestions

- Know what gifts the Holy Spirit has given you and your place of service.
- Be a faithful steward where God has placed you. Be reliable. Serve others without seeking for recognition and human praise.

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

Galatians 5:13_{NIVUK}

Session 6: Love acts

God's work is done by faith and is motivated by love.

We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3^{NIVUK}

Genuine faith is not about mere talk. Faith is demonstrated through deeds that are prompted by the love of God, which is obedience to Him, and love of others, especially those in the household of God.

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. James 2:14-18^{NIVUK}



Believers should follow the example of Jesus. He not only preached the truth to people, but He also met their felt needs. He fed them and healed them. *Matthew 14:14-21*

Believers were warned about false prophets and false teachers who will aim to exploit people for their own benefits, bringing the way of truth into disrepute. There are so many of those around today. They claim to have faith but do not really obey the command to love others. They love themselves and boast about the riches they have amassed as though that is the proof of their faith. It is in the interest of believers to stay away from such people and their teachings.

True faith is demonstrated by acts of love towards others, in obedience to God.

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them - bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

2 Peter 2:1-3^{NIVUK}

Let us aim to be proactive in demonstrating faith in God by our deeds of love to one another.

Session 7: Love overcomes

Faith, hope and love - but the greatest of these is love. We need faith now because we believe in God, even though we do not see Him physically. In glory, in the New Creation we will be able to see Him. Hope keeps us going in this challenging world, but true believers who stand firm to the end will realise the amazing things we hope for, when we see Jesus.



But love continues....

No wonder the goal is love. Love for God and love for one another will go on and on and on ... The word of God assures believers that this is so.

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For,

'All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures for ever.'

And this is the word that was preached to you.

1 Peter 1:22-25^{NIVUK}

In obeying the command to love one another deeply from the heart, we may have to overcome challenges from the world, from within ourselves, and from the very people we are trying to love.

In **Romans 12** we are taught how to overcome these challenges.

From the world...

The world and its cultures have various ways of understanding love and how to show it. Believers must understand that they have not been immune to these patterns. We must obey the Bible and make every effort to replace those contrary thought patterns with truth from the word of God, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 12:1-2

From within ourselves...

Romans 12:3-13

From the people we are trying to love...

Romans 12:14-21

Love truly overcomes.