

Scripture: *"If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3).*

A young girl was dying. Her only hope lay in a complete blood transfusion, but she had a very rare blood type. Only her brother, even younger than she, had the same type blood. His parents and doctors explained the situation, giving him time to ask questions. He agreed and, without delay, he was laid on a bed, the needle was pushed into his tiny vein, and slowly his blood seeped from his small body into the bag hanging from his bed. He lay quietly as the nurse stood next to him, ready to attend to any need he might have. "How do you feel?" she asked. "Ok," he answered, "but, nurse, when do I die?"

What love this little boy had for his sister. What must he have thought when his own parents seemingly agreed, even asked him to sacrifice his life to save his sister's?

Another parent did, in fact, ask His Son to give His blood to save His children. He sent that Child from the glories of Heaven to earth, to be born in poverty and obscurity, in order to become our Brother and earn our right to join Him in Heaven with our Father. This Brother, too, willingly made the sacrifice to save us. *"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down His life for His friends"* (John 15:13). He demonstrated His tremendous love not because of our worthiness, but because He is a God of tremendous love. Jesus' love for His heavenly Father and for us changed the world. Through His birth, life, death, and resurrection from that death, we through faith have received the forgiveness of our sins and life eternal. God's love to us in Christ is that power that enables us to love Him. *"We love because He first loved us"* (1 John 4:19).

The love of Jesus empowers us to be His stewards. Because of Jesus' love, we become people responding out of love to serve those He places in our lives. When needs arise, Jesus opens our eyes and hearts so we can respond. Because Jesus' love for us motivates us, we find joy in our serving and giving. Love changes our giving from an obligation to a privilege.

We, as God's people always have, live in difficult and changing times. How wonderful it is that, as Christians, we know there is the certainty that Jesus always reaches out to us and loves us. May our lives and our giving genuinely reflect His love for us.

Prayer: Dear Father, help me to respond to Your love and to serve You where you call me to serve. Show me opportunities to help those in need. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



Jesus Taught us how to Serve Others

Daily Devotions *for the whole family!* *Faithful Stewards of God's Gifts*

WEEK 2 *As We Have Opportunity, Let Us Do Good to Everyone - Galatians 6:10*

Sunday:..... "Love Filled the Need"

Monday:..... "God Working through You"

Tuesday: "Changing Me to We"

Wednesday: "Blessed to Be a Blessing"

Thursday: "Serving Others"

Friday: "Loving People"

Saturday: "Love Makes Us Do It"

Week 2 - Sunday

“Love Filled the Need”

Scripture: *“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:11).*

The word “love” is used in many different ways: “I just love pecan pie!” “I love my child.” “I love to play basketball.” The word is thrown around so carelessly that its meaning has deteriorated.

If we want to know what love truly means, we can go to God’s Word. There we find that *“God is love”* (1 John 4:8). We understand what that means only as we continue to delve into Scripture. We find that, since God is love, He acts in love. Everything He does, He does out of love for us, His creation. He doesn’t give us everything we want; He does give us everything we need.

What do we need? We need a Savior, for we are sinners, condemned to die eternally for our sins. *“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”* (1 John 1:10), the Apostle John states positively, but his following words demonstrate what God’s love does: *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:8-9).

That’s love. Because of love, Jesus did not remain in Heaven but came to Earth to become one of us, to suffer and die for us, and then rise again, a resurrection that we celebrate every Sunday as we gather together to rejoice in this great love that makes us His own.

He gave us Himself, and He wants us to give ourselves to Him in return. Having given ourselves to Him, it becomes a joy and a privilege to share our resources, our time, our abilities with Him by sharing them with others, just as Christ, out of love for His own, shared His very self with us.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for loving me so much that You would send Your Son to live among us and to have Him take our sins upon Himself on the Cross. Help me to show my gratitude to You by reaching out and serving others. In Jesus’ name. Amen.



Week 2 - Friday

“Loving People”

Scripture: *“We love because He first loved us. If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him: whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4:19-21).*

Charlie Brown’s young friend Linus made the mistake of confessing to his big sister Lucy that he wanted to be a doctor when he grew up. Lucy was astounded at her brother’s declaration. “You, a doctor!” That’s a laugh! You could never be a doctor! You know why? Because you don’t love humankind!” Young Linus immediately responded, “I do love humankind! It’s people I can’t stand!”

Linus’ comment may give us a chuckle. We find humor in it because we identify with Linus. Apart from the power of God’s Spirit working in us, our love for others is weak and shallow at best. But God calls us to love all people and enables us to do so. Whether we are doctors, carpenters, policemen, teachers, secretaries, or plumbers, we are to love those with whom we work with as well as all people. God places us in different vocations where we can share God’s love. We are His instruments through which He works.

In his letter to the church in Corinth, the Apostle Paul wrote, “Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to Him, and to which God has called him” (1 Corinthians 7:17). God has a purpose, a plan, in mind for each of us. Like Linus, one might consider being a doctor, but God may have a much different vocation in mind. No vocation is to be viewed higher or lower than another, and we are called, regardless of where we are placed by God, to let His love within us overflow to others.

Prayer: Lord, in love You created me and others. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.



GOD IS LOVE

Week 2 - Saturday

“God’s Grace Shapes His Stewards”

Week 2 - Thursday “Serving Others”

Scripture: *“So Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets”* (Matthew 7:12).



Jesus said, *“The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve”* (Matthew 20:28). Though He was/is a king, Jesus put aside the rights of a king to become like common man, to become a servant. He asks no less of us than we serve others as He has served us. The writer of Hebrews tells us that we are called and enabled to *“serve the living God”* (Hebrews 9:14). We serve God by serving others. When Jesus was asked, *“When did we see a stranger and welcome You, or naked and clothe You?”* Jesus replied, *Truly, I say to you, as you did to one of the least of these My brothers, you did for Me*” (Matthew 25:40).

Mother Teresa would offer a resounding “amen” to these thoughts. “Unless life is lived for others,” she said, “it is not worthwhile.” As a young nun she developed a burning desire to work with the homeless and hopeless. Although she was convinced of this calling, her superiors suggested her youth and inexperience would cause her to fail in such an endeavor. Mother Teresa was, therefore, assigned to teach at a convent in India.

Mother Teresa’s mission to serve others unable to meet their own needs burned deep in her heart. Finally, at age 39, she was allowed to pursue her passion in poverty-stricken Calcutta. On her first day, she encountered a man lying in the gutter, so covered with disease and insects that everyone avoided him. Mother Teresa knelt down next to him and began cleaning his infected body. He was so astounded by her caring, he asked her, “Why are you helping me?” Mother Teresa smiled and replied, “Because I love you.”

When service opportunities present themselves to us, may we be ready and available to love and serve others in Jesus’ name.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, I give You praise and thanks for Who You are and what You’ve done and continue to do for me. Use me as Your instrument to provide comfort and help to others. Grant me courage to share the good news of the Gospel with others. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Week 2 - Monday “God Working through You”

Scripture: *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10).

Most of us have done some landscaping and gardening projects. Perhaps you have run across a handy device called a tree pruner. It is used to reach up high into a tree to lop off unwanted branches. Working kind of like an arm extension, it’s much more convenient than getting on a ladder, which may not reach the branch you want to remove.

In a way, that tree pruner is a picture of what serving is like. Just as it reaches beyond your own arm's length, so do your arms and hands reach out to help others as extensions of Christ's love. Jesus walked this earth for approximately 30 years, and, during that time, His hands were always busy touching, healing, lifting, and comforting. With His ascension into Heaven, that job has been left to all of God’s people, including you.



How can you carry out that task? Whom can you touch, lift up, or comfort? You are the most likely person to answer that question. Just by looking around, you can find someone who would benefit from your service. What about the shy person where you work? Could you encourage him or her? What about the lonely person in your church who just seems to want to talk? Could you be a patient listener? What about your neighbors? Maybe there is someone near where you live who would appreciate some help around the house and yard, or just a little time with you!

Jesus was never too rushed to stop and talk to someone in need. Although He had much to accomplish, He never raced from one task to another. Sometimes their needs surfaced at inconvenient times (See Matthew 9:18-26.) Sometimes, in order to reach someone, He had to risk offending them (See John 4:1-26.) He always spoke to them in love, carrying out the reason for His coming into this world: *“...the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many”* (Matthew 20:28). God, Who gives you all you need to do whatever He asks you to do (Philippians 4:13), will give you the opportunity and ability.

Prayer: Dear Lord God, You alone are the source of every good gift. I thank You for Your faithful love. Grant me a loving heart for those who You place in my midst. Use me as Your hands, feet, and mouth to help others. In Jesus’ holy and precious name, I pray. Amen.

Week 2 - Tuesday “Changing Me to We”

Scripture: *“But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and who-ever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26-28).*



By nature, we are self-serving, proud people. The world and our flesh promote the thought of “looking out for number one” at any cost. We want what is best for ourselves, often at the expense of others. We want to be in control, and we live as if we are invincible. To illustrate this idea, there is a story about Muhammad Ali who was the boxing champion of the world. He was on an airplane and was told by the stewardess to buckle his seat belt. Ali said, “I don’t need to buckle my seat belt, because I am superman and superman doesn’t need a seat belt.” In response the stewardess said, “You may call yourself superman, but superman doesn’t need an airplane.”

We are probably not as obnoxious as Ali was reported to be on that airplane; however, don’t we struggle with the same problem of our own self-importance? In our humanity, we place ourselves on a pedestal. Without God’s presence in our lives, this attitude of self-importance will not change. By our own reason or strength, we can’t change. Only through God’s love and grace can we truly live with love toward others and with servant hearts. In Matthew 20:26 Jesus said, “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.” Jesus lived for His heavenly Father and others. Through God’s Word and Sacraments, He changes us from being interested only in ourselves to seeing others as brothers and sisters in Christ. Through the Holy Spirit, God opens our eyes so we see the opportunities to reach out and serve others with His love. In Jesus’ life, we see the life that He wants us to emulate. Jesus told His disciples, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matt 20:28).

The entire life of Jesus was one of love and service, but the one act of serving most often referred to is His washing of His disciples’ feet during the Passover Feast before His crucifixion. After washing their feet, Jesus said, “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:16-17). As Jesus came to serve, so must all of us joyfully accept a life of service to others. As we change from “me” people to “we” people, we begin to share God’s love with others.

Prayer: Dear gracious Heavenly Father, thank You for Your love, grace, and mercy that are with us each and every day. Help me to commit my time, talents, and money in service to others. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Week 2 - Wednesday “Born to Be a Blessing”

Scripture: *“But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him” (1 John 3:17).*

Benjamin Franklin, one of our country’s founding fathers, developed a challenging habit. Every day of his adult life, he set aside time to examine two questions. In the morning, he asked himself, “What good shall I do today?” As the day drew to a close, his question was: “What good have I done today?” As Christians, it is easy to relate to Franklin’s attitude because a common theme throughout God’s Word is that we are to do good to others as we help, love, and serve them. We are called to love others as we love ourselves. In his letter to the church in Galatia, the Apostle Paul wrote, “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

God has created, forgiven, and redeemed us, and we become His instruments of love and compassion in the world. God blesses us so we can serve Him by serving others. He honors us with the privilege of being the channels through which He works. We are blessed to be a blessing. God wants us to be His channels who live in total devotion to Him and are His faithful stewards. He empowers us to do the “good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). The same strength that was available to Paul is available to us. As the Apostle Paul wrote the people in Philippi, “I can do all things through Him Who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

God is our source of strength. Through our weakness, God is able to display His divine power. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we can make the serving of others a priority in our lives.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, I give You praise and thanks because You are the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the beginning and the end. Be with me each day, I pray, and by your Holy Spirit, let me seek to glorify You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

