

Day 8 Love

Silence (2 minutes) Take some time to be quiet, to calm down, and to listen. What has God been teaching you? What are the next steps He wants you to take? How is your spirit doing?

Scripture *"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. 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. 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. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."* Luke 6:32-36

Discussion Do you love people who don't deserve it? Do you return good to those who harm you? It's not a natural response, but when we are faithful to live out the love of God to those who show us hate, who slander us and spread lies, and those who intentionally seek to bring us trouble, our natural response to treat them in kind or to even retaliate with greater hatred or harm. It's easy to love people who are like us, people who care about us, and people who have blessed us in some way. But when someone is mean or hurtful, even if they are unaware, it can be difficult to choose to love them in return. Perhaps some names come to mind. A bully on the playground. An unfair supervisor. A spouse. A wayward child. It's also hard to love people who are different. People with different political or religious views. People who dress differently, act differently, think and speak differently.

God wants us to love people unconditionally because He is able to see past their sin into their heart and He loves them. He wants us to look past their unkind actions, past their appearance, past their decisions, and peer deeply into their soul to see something precious; the image of God. God desires for us to see them through His eyes and to love them the same way that He has shown love to us.

In order to truly live this out, we need to not allow people's actions to affect our spirit. We forgive people from the heart and pray for their wellbeing. We return kindness instead of revenge. And when we do, they won't know how to respond. They may be skeptical. If you are faithful to continue loving them without strings attached, it will certainly make an impact upon those around you.

Application Think about the people in your past and in your present that you find hard to love. Perhaps they've hurt you. Maybe they annoy you. You might find them hard to understand. God loves them with all His heart! God sees potential when we cannot. Take time to write down three to five names of people that are difficult to love and make a list for each person about their good traits. Pray that God would help you to love them the way that He does. Ask God to bless them and then go and be their blessing!

Prayer God, it's hard enough for me to love the people that I care about. You ask us to love our enemies and that seems impossible to do. I know that you have loved me while I was your enemy and your love transformed my heart. Please increase my capacity to love people - especially those that I find hard to love. Thank you for showing me how, now give me the strength to live it out. Who do I need to forgive? Who is it hard for me to love? God, help me to love my enemies and to be gracious to those who offend me. Thank you for your love for me. I ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Silence (2 minutes) Talk to God about what you are learning. What are your fears? Where are your hangups? Pray for direction.

Scripture memory for the week: *"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."* Mark 12:29-31