

Session Six



Love One Another

The New Testament contains fifty-nine "one another" statements that show us how to make happiness happen in our lives. But one of these commands appears far more times than the rest, and it is given not only by Paul, Peter, and John, but also by Jesus himself. It is the greatest of all the "one another" commands—and sowing even one act of it can produce an unexpected and abundant harvest of joy. What is this command? Simply this: "Love one another" (1 John 3:11).

MAX LUCADO

Opening Reflection

Each of the “one another” passages we have studied so far in this series—accept one another, bear with one another, serve one another, forgive one another, and carry one another’s burdens—could fall under the umbrella of the ultimate “one another” passage we will study this week. This particular “one another” instruction is given multiple times in the New Testament and is best expressed by Jesus himself: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34).

The type of love Jesus talks about in this verse isn’t in word only. It is not simply saying, “I love my neighbor.” The love Jesus refers to in this passage is a *transformational* kind of love—a love that makes us want to be better people and brings out the best in us. Perhaps you have experienced this type of love. A spouse, friend, or family member made you want to be a better *you* or made you realize that you were capable of more than you imagined. If so, you have experienced the love of Christ through another person.

Jesus’ love for you has changed you. His death, burial, and resurrection have brought you the possibility of new life. When you accept his offer of salvation, your identity changes from sinner to saved, from banished to welcome into his

kingdom, from orphan to beloved child of God. His love is life-changing—and once you’ve experienced that love for yourself, you can then love others in a way that reflects Christ.

Of course, loving one another is often easier said than done. People can be difficult—even the ones we love the most—and we can grow weary of them. It’s easy to run out of love for the people who exhaust us, anger us, and begrudge us. But as we read in 1 John 4:19, “We love because he first loved us.” God’s love for us through Jesus is endless. We will never run out of it. We will always be loved. Because of this, we can always love others.

Can you imagine a world in which everyone loved as Christ loved? We would all be our best selves, filled with confidence, hope, humility, and peace. Can you imagine how happy that world would be?

Talk About It

Begin your group time by inviting anyone to share his or her insights from last week’s personal study. Next, to get things started, discuss one of the following questions:

- Which of the “one another” statements that we have studied in this series has been the most challenging for you? Why?

— or —

- What comes to mind when you think about the command to love one another? What does it look like to love the people in your world?

Hearing the Word

Invite someone to read aloud Ephesians 3:17–19. Listen for fresh insights as you hear the verses being read, and then discuss the questions that follow.

¹⁷ And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

What is one key insight that stands out to you from this passage?

In what ways did that represent a new insight?

Do you feel like you grasp how wide, long, high, and deep the love of Christ is? Why or why not?

Video Teaching Notes

Play the video segment for session six. As you watch, use the following outline to record any thoughts or concepts that stand out to you.

Sowing even one small act of love can produce an abundant harvest of joy . . . for ourselves and the other person.

Agape love writes the check when the balance is low. It forgives the mistake when the offense is high. It offers patience when stress is abundant. It extends kindness when kindness is rare.

We don't love people because people are lovable. We love others because we have come to experience and believe the love that God has for us.

We would think *agape* love has limits. Surely there has to be an end to it somewhere! But David the adulterer never found it. Paul the murderer never found it. Peter the liar never found it. When it came to life, they hit bottom. But when it came to God's love, they never did.

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Agape love finds beauty in the collage of humanity. Apart from each other, we are just brushstrokes on a canvas. But together, we are God's workmanship.

Admonishment is high-octane encouragement. It is to deposit truth into a person's thoughts. It is to refuse to sit idly by while the enemy spreads his lies. It is done out of love.

You have a tool chest at your disposal—encouragements, admonitions, warm greetings, words of prayer. Restore your relationships with patience, kindness, and unselfishness. Do whatever it takes to bring out the best in others.

Today, be the person whom people are glad to see and the voice that people want to hear. Drive the "happiness truck." In the end, you'll see that you are the one smiling the most.

Group Discussion

Take a few minutes with your group members to discuss what you just watched and explore these concepts in Scripture.

1. Think of the metaphor of the art conservator restoring an old painting to its former shine and brilliance. How does this represent the way believers in Christ help others to “shine” by loving one another?

I lived for sixty-eight years being a person of independence and in charge. But in 2017, the doctor told me I had ALS. The biggest concern was the loss of voice, so I was directed to do voice banking. It was a daunting challenge. There are nearly 2,000 phrases you have to repeat, and they're nonsensical phrases, so you really are at the mercy of the program. Stephen not only had the compassion and kindness I needed, but he also had the expertise to understand how to accomplish the task. The actual accomplishment of doing the program took approximately two months, and I learned a lot of lessons in the process. One was that it's always been easier for me to give love than to receive it. I was put in a position where I had to receive—and this taught me how amazing it is just to lean back and receive love and support.

LINDA, FROM THE VIDEO

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2. Read Matthew 22:34–40. How does Jesus say we are to love God? Why is the command to “love one another” truly the greatest “one another” passage in Scripture?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4–8. Based on this passage, how would you define *agape* love? How does it differ from romantic love? From love for your fellow humans?
4. Read Romans 15:14. How would you define *admonishment*? How can admonishing someone show that person the love of Christ?
5. Has anyone ever admonished you? How did that type of encouragement affect you?
6. Who are some of the people in your life who bring out the best in you? How do they do this? How do you feel after spending time with them?

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7. Linda confessed in her testimony that it is hard for her to let others love her. Have you ever struggled with letting others love you? If so, why do you think that is?

8. Accepting the love of Christ can be just as difficult as accepting love from others. Do you feel like you have accepted the love of Jesus? Why or why not?

Closing Activity

To help apply today's study, break up into pairs and speak the following passages over each other. (Note: If you have an odd number of people in your group, one of the pairs can take on an additional member.) Insert your partner's name where you see a blank to make it more personal:

- For God has not given _____ a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV).

- I pray that you, _____, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses

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knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:17–19).

- [Jesus'] grace is sufficient for you, _____, for [his] power is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

After you have finished, talk about which admonishment resonated with you the most.

Closing Prayer

Close your time by spending time with your heavenly Father. Using the prompts below, have one person lead your group in a time of prayer:

- Thank God for the time you have shared together during the past six weeks, and thank him that you have discovered (or rediscovered) where true happiness comes from.
- Confess that you don't always look for happiness in the right places and that you need to learn these lessons again and again.
- Ask God to help you grasp the love of Christ and what it means for you—and that he would help you love others with an *agape* type of love.
- Praise God for sending his Son, Jesus, so you would always know your heavenly Father loves you, cares for you, and is watching over you.