

Living The Dream

4. The Bible says, "God opposes the proud but favors the humble" (1 Peter 5:5b). Lord, I need your favor to shine upon me. I am beginning to see how harboring hatred toward _____ has kept me in the dark, and how my unloving spirit toward _____ is rooted in pride.

Close with this prayer—

Lord, you know my heart. You know I have been harboring hatred toward _____ because _____. Please forgive me, and help me. I don't want to continue spiraling further down into this dark tunnel of unforgiveness. I want to live in Your light and learn to love _____. I ask you to help me, and love _____ through me. Thank you for loving me, Lord. Thank you for salvation. In Jesus' precious name, I pray. Amen.

Text: John 13:10-17, 31-38

The Plain Truth

You can't _____ others until you claim Christ's _____ for yourself.

One sentence could revolutionize your relationships:

"If you try to build _____ with another person before doing the difficult work of getting _____, then all your relationships are an attempt to _____ yourself."

One Year Bible Reading

May 17: 1 Samuel 20:1-21:15, John 9:1-41, Psalm 113:1-114:8, Proverbs 15:15-17
May 18: 1 Samuel 22:1-23:29, John 10:1-21, Psalm 115:1-18, Proverbs 15:18-19
May 19: 1 Samuel 24:1-25:44, John 10:22-42, Psalm 116:1-19, Proverbs 15:20-21
May 20: 1 Samuel 26:1-28:25, John 11:1-54, Psalm 117:1-2, Proverbs 15:22-23
May 21: 1 Samuel 29:1-31:13, John 11:55-12:19, Psalm 118:1-18, Prov. 15:24-26
May 22: 2 Samuel 1:1-2:11, John 12:20-50, Psalm 118:19-29, Proverbs 15:27-28
May 23: 2 Samuel 2:12-3:39, John 13:1-30, Psalm 119:1-16, Proverbs 15:29-30

May 16 & 17, 2015

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Life Group Lesson • Week of May 17

To be alive is to be in relationship. Not one of us can boast that we have called ourselves into existence. God has created this world, and we are surrounded by wonders that ultimately reflect attributes of the Lord Himself—plant life, water, air, sun, favorable living environments, ability to reproduce and care for offspring. Being created in God's image means somewhere there is an innate desire to be rightly related to God, one another, and indeed, all of creation. Even Christ who is the visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15) eternally exists in perfect relation with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

In perfect relationship with the Father, the Son “radiates God’s own glory and expresses the very character of God, and He sustains everything by the mighty power of His command” (Hebrews 1:3a). Jesus Christ is the *Word* of God—the supreme communicator of God’s love toward His creation (John 1:1)—and the Holy Spirit reveals God’s eternal truth to us (John 16:13). To oppose truth (that God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one) is actually the spirit antichrist at work in the world (see 1 John 2:20-23). God doesn’t want His children derailed by lies, but desires that we know the truth, that we learn to love, and that one day, we reflect the perfect unity He has with the Son and His Spirit.

Read John 13:1-17, 31-35

“Jesus knew that His hour had come to leave this world and return to His Father.” Also Jesus “knew that the Father had given Him authority over everything and that He had come from God and would return to God” (vv1,3). On the eve Christ would face betrayal, horrific suffering, and even death, He took the role of a servant and washed the disciples’ feet.

1. What does this say to you about Jesus’ relationship with the Father?

What does this say to you about Jesus’ relationship with His disciples?

How can knowing who we are in Christ free us to love and serve others as Christ—even those who may reject or betray us?

2. According to v34 of this chapter, what is the new commandment Jesus gives His disciples?

To the watching world, what will be distinctive about this commandment? (see v35)

Love for one another is a mark of true discipleship. And yet, we are not capable of loving like Christ apart from His Spirit at work in our hearts. The Bible says, “Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged” (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). If we were to be completely honest, each of us would have to admit there are times when we are impatient, unkind, jealous, boastful, proud, and rude. There are plenty of times we do demand our way and throw a fit if we don’t get it. The only way we can love perfectly is by allowing the perfect love of Christ to flow *to* us and *through* us. Because the Lord has loved us first (1 John 4:19), we can rest in His grace (undeserved favor) and receive what only He can give—untainted, unselfish love. We can never work for it, earn it, or pay for it. His love is free.

3. Have you received Christ’s love for yourself? If so, how have you noticed His love for you starting to flow *through* you to others around you?

Think of a time you knew undeniably the Lord was helping you love a difficult person at church or at work—perhaps it was a family member going through a difficult season. Have you seen a change in your relationship with that person? If so, what difference has Christ’s love (flowing through you) made in your relationship with that individual?

Loving someone with the love of Christ can make all the difference in the world—for you and for the individual. For the other person, Christ’s love flowing through you brings hope, builds trust, and eventually becomes a conduit for God’s grace and healing to pour into that person’s life. For you, choosing to love means living in the light of God’s presence. “Anyone who loves another brother or sister is living in the light and does not cause others to stumble. But anyone who hates another brother or sister is still living and walking in darkness. Such a person does not know the way to go, having been blinded by the darkness” (1 John 2:10-11).

Not only is love a mark of true discipleship, but it proves we are really God’s children. Love is mentioned first as fruit of the Holy Spirit at work in our hearts (Galatians 5:22-23). Refusing to love – holding on to anger and bitterness – works in opposition to the Holy Spirit and closes the door to reconciliation. Hatred blocks the glorious light of God’s favor that He desires His children to reflect. Three times in Psalm 80 the psalmist cries out: “Turn us again to yourself, O God. Make you face shine down upon us. Only then will we be saved” (Psalm 80:3,7,19).