

PERSONAL STORY

When I first surrendered my life to Jesus, I had a strong desire to share and show his love to others. However, after a few years, I found that my desire to go out of my way to show love to others began to subside. During that time, my small group watched a DVD about sharing the Gospel with our actions. Our small group was convicted by the Holy Spirit to “walk the walk” and not just “talk the talk.”

Later that evening, I went grocery shopping and met this talkative middle-aged woman, Helen, in the greeting card aisle. After a few seconds of small talk, she began talking about how terrible the United States government was and has always been. I thought to myself, “Oh boy! Here we go...” In addition, she made some very insensitive comments about how Jewish people were corrupting our country. I wanted to argue with her and confront her, but I felt the Holy Spirit guiding me to just listen to her and show her God’s grace.

Two days later, as a result of the desire God had placed in my heart to “go out of my way” to love others, I decided to spend an evening serving

LOVE

AUGUST 22 & 23, 2015

STUDY QUESTIONS

Name someone who impacted your life in a positive way. How did they impact your life?

What is the best “thank you” you have ever received for an act of kindness?

Read *Romans 5:6-11*

How did Christ help humankind in our helplessness?

What is your view or perspective of God? What is He like to you? How can He simultaneously be our friend and sustain and uphold the universe?

Read *John 3:16-17*

Jesus, the Son of God came down from heaven to walk this earth as a human being. How did Jesus show humility by leaving heaven to come to earth? God loves you enough to give his Son for you. Are you living like someone who is loved by God? What does that look like?

Read *Deuteronomy 6:4-9*

What does this passage tell us about how we should lead our families? Is it easy for you to talk about God and His ways in your family? Why or why not? What is one thing you can do differently to lovingly encourage your family this week?

Read *Matthew 22:35-40*

In your life, how do you try to love and worship God with your commitments? Emotions? Thoughts? Body?

When Jesus is asked what the most important commandment is, He quotes *Deuteronomy 6:5*, saying, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” (NIV) but He doesn’t stop there. He adds, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” What does it mean to truly love your neighbor as yourself? Who is a “neighbor” that you can reach out and show love to this week?

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dinner at the Salvation Army. As I was cleaning up some of the tables, I noticed that Helen was eating dinner there! She noticed me right away and talked non-stop for about 15 minutes about her views on politics and Jewish people. Once she was done with her rant, I was able to talk with her about my faith in Jesus. She didn't seem very interested at first...but as I continued to show up at the Salvation Army twice a week, we continued our conversations. I found that the more I listened to her and showed her kindness, the more her heart was being softened by God. After about six months of getting to know Helen, she agreed to attend our church, after avoiding church for over 40 years! She admitted that she was warming up to the idea of Jesus being real. There were plenty of uncomfortable moments in our conversations. We didn't share the same worldview or opinions, but by God's grace, He used my listening ear and some acts of kindness to plant seeds of His hope, truth and love into her life. There are plenty of people in this world who look and live differently than we do, but if we simply live out the greatest commandment to love God and love others, who knows what God will do with that to change our world!

STUDY QUESTIONS

Read *Galatians 4:4-6*

Jesus called out His heavenly Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Abba", which is similar to calling Him "Dad", "Daddy", or "Papa." What does this passage say about us becoming children of God? How has your relationship with your earthly father impacted your relationship with your heavenly Father?

Read *Romans 8:15-17*

How does it make you feel to know that God makes followers of Christ His heirs? How should viewing yourself as God's son or daughter change your view of yourself? How does your view of yourself impact how you view and treat others?

Read *Philippians 3:20*

How can remembering your true identity in Christ keep your eyes fixed on eternity? How can you carry yourself like an heir, a child of God and a "citizen of heaven" this week?

Read *1 John 4:7-13*

How is your love for others connected to your love for God? How is the Holy Spirit proof that we live in Him and He lives in us? When was a time that you were sensitive to the nudge of the Holy Spirit? What happened next?

Read *John 13:34-35*

Take a look at the context of this passage. What happened right before these verses and what has happened after? Who in your life would say that the way you treat them reflects the love of God? Who would say how you treat them does not reflect His love? How can you improve that this week?

PERSONAL DEVOTION

In *Matthew 22:37-40*, the greatest commandment reminds us, "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: "Love your neighbor as yourself." The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments." It seems to be a lot easier to love people who are kind and loving towards us. Often times, we are much more willing to go out of our way for someone who will go out of their way for us. If a friend gave you \$3,000,000 and then called you three days later at 2 am because they had a flat tire, you would probably go and help them out, because they had been kind to you recently.

RESOURCES

Is God Anti-Gay? by Sam Allberry

The Truest Thing About You by David Lomas

Is the Bible True...Really? by Josh McDowell & Dave Sterrett

With this series we've chosen to provide what we believe to be valuable resources that can facilitate the spiritual growth and development of our people. By recommending these resources, Connection Pointe is not necessarily endorsing or agreeing with every aspect or teaching associated with them. If you have questions, please contact Brandon Faust, Brandon.Faust@connectionpointe.org.

PERSONAL DEVOTION

However, when it comes to going out of our way for someone we don't know well (a stranger, or someone we don't like), our willingness to help and show them God's love seems to dissipate.

Here's the tension: Jesus teaches us to, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Period. He does not say, "Love your neighbor as yourself if they have been kind to you, if they have given you money recently, if it is convenient for you, or if you think they deserve love." He instructs His disciples and us to love our neighbor with His love in all circumstances and situations.

Take a few minutes and read *John 13*. What significant things are happening at this meal? How does Jesus show love to Judas Iscariot during this meal?

Background:

People wore sandals during this era of history in this part of the world. The people of the day most commonly traveled by foot and often had to walk through feces of the animals in the streets. Needless to say the feet of the disciples were probably smelly and gross.

So, why does Jesus wash His disciples' feet? Why is that significant? How can we metaphorically "wash someone's feet" this week?

Read *John 13:34-35* again.

Our standard for loving others is Christ. This is a standard that we all fall short of on our own. Our time on earth is an opportunity to thank Jesus for his sacrificial love for us and make Him known in our world. When we show love to others, it is a way we can thank and praise Jesus.

How is your love for God connected to your love for other people? How are you showing His love at home, in your workplace, school and neighborhood?