

# Week 3

## Day 15: Teach Me to Love

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

*"About brotherly love: You don't need me to write you because you yourselves are taught by God to love one another." 1 Thessalonians 4:9*

Most problems in any church can be overcome by love. Love causes dissensions to be settled. Love prompts a church to serve the poor. Love moves us to do missions and evangelism. Love even makes us want to give more financially, work with children, paint the nursery walls, or build a new building for the youth. Love is the greatest motivator to church action of all types. But what if we just don't have that much love?

1 Thessalonians 4:9 gives hope to those of us who come up a little short in the love department. It reveals that God can teach us to love. Love is not so much an emotion to be experienced but an action to be taken. The greatest act of love in history was Christ on the cross. The good news for us is that the one who called Jesus to the cross can teach us to love people in our own congregation. Love really does change everything and is a real key to church growth.

Would you ask God today to increase your love for a person or group of people in your church for whom you do not feel much love?

Prayer

Consider praying a prayer like this: Dear God, I do not feel much love for (you know which name to put in the blank). I'm asking, and counting on you to teach me to love the way you love him or her. Thank you for hearing my prayer.

## Day 16: Be a Peacemaker

*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." Matthew 5:9*

We see so much unrest in our world, even to the point of conflict. When conflict erupts, hate wins! Sides are drawn, and people are placed into two or more groups. When conflict permeates a people, we see trust broken and lives affected for years.

In the church today, we see the same thing; people choose sides, and conflict impacts the church. When conflict happens inside the church, the only winner is Satan. Most church conflict has little to do with biblical issues and more to do with individual choices such as color, styles, and practices.

Jesus teaches us that peacemakers are needed. The people with the gift of being a peacemaker find ways to squish conflicts to help the church work in peace.

The actions of a few can cause the church to lose its effectiveness in the community. The conflict side of the church has divided families, friends, and neighborhoods. Conflict holds bondage, where peace gives freedom.

For a church to find growth, there must be peace in the body. We must find ways to broker peace in the body.

Prayer

Is there conflict in your church? Ask God to help you identify ways for you to become a peacemaker in your church.

### **Day 17: Be a Servant**

Read Mark 10:42-45

*"And whoever wants to be first among you must be a slave to all." Mark 10:44*

In churches today, there are many who would be labeled as people of influence. These folks make a lot of the decisions about direction. There are also those folks who talk a lot without any real direction. The church is made up of many different types of individuals with varying characteristics.

Jesus tells us that many want to control others, but He has called us to be "servants." For church growth to become part of your church, servants are needed. Servants who will give their time to impact people with their hands. The value of servanthood is critical as we seek to make an eternal impact.

Prayer

In what ways do you serve others in your church? Pray, asking God to show you ways you can serve the Body of Christ through your church. Ask God to give you the best understanding of where to serve in the church. Also, pray that your church understands its BEST place to serve as the Hands and Feet of Christ in your community.

### **Day 18: Begin with Brokenness**

Read Nehemiah 1:1-11

*"When I heard these words, I sat down and wept. I mourned for a number of days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven." Nehemiah 1:4*

Brokenness is often what God uses to reveal vision. Nehemiah serves as an example of a leader who was broken over a city and its people. The enemies destroyed the wall around Jerusalem, leaving the city in a vulnerable position. The people were in great trouble and disgrace. Nehemiah sought God's heart and followed His leadership. He was available for God to use.

Church health requires bold, courageous leadership. Nehemiah painted a clear picture of what strong leadership looks like in our day. (1) Nehemiah asked questions. He wanted to know about the city and

its people. What questions do you need to ask? Is your church in need of change? Are the people committed to sharing Jesus and developing believers in the faith? When was the last time you baptized a new believer? (2) Nehemiah accepted reality. He heard the news that the wall was broken down, and the people were in trouble. Do you need to accept reality? What is the current condition of your church? (3) Nehemiah acted now. He cried, prayed, fasted, and surrendered. What do you need to do now that will lead to health in your church? Do you need to cry, pray, fast, and surrender?

Are you broken over the “current reality” of Anderson Mill?

Prayer

I challenge you to ask questions, accept reality, and act now. God desires to use you as a catalyst for positive movement within His church.

## **Day 19: Be Salt**

Read Matthew 5:13-14

*“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It’s no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled on by men.” Matthew 5:13*

As followers of Jesus, we have the potential to influence. We have the potential to influence others for good. Our lives, when lived for Christ, can encourage others to glorify God (Matthew 5:16). We also have the potential to influence others in a negative way (Luke 17:1-3). To influence others for Christ is to be “salt.” To influence others in negative ways is to be “salt that has lost its taste.”

When we face the extremes of warm summers and cold winters, we understand the importance of a thermostat. When a room is hot, we adjust the thermostat, and it works in conjunction with the air conditioner to adjust the temperature in the room. We could say that the thermostat influences the room.

We can place a thermometer in that same room, and the thermometer would be influenced by the temperature of the room. If the room were warm, the thermometer would adjust to the surrounding temperature. As the salt of the earth, we are called to influence for Christ, not be influenced by our surroundings.

Prayer

Is your daily life and witness more like a thermometer or a thermostat? Pray that God will give you strength and wisdom to be a good influence for Him.

## **Day 20: Rely on God's Power**

Read 1 Corinthians 4:16-20

*"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power." 1 Corinthians 4:20*

What is powering your church? This question triggers different answers. Some may say prayer, some great preaching; others a loving church family, one or two might even say electricity. Yet some churches have plugged into sources that will never power a church.

The Word of God tells us that the Kingdom of God is not powered by words. We can use words and try to get people motivated, but the reality is that words without action are of no lasting value. Someone once said, "Talk is cheap."

One of the great characteristics of God is that He has great power. For our church to be healthy, we must plug into the power that comes from GOD!

How much God power are you currently using? Throughout His Word, we find God using supernatural power to sustain His people, and He still does!

How much God power is your church currently using? God wants to be the power source of your church! God wants His children to plug into the power of His Word. Are you spending time in His Word daily? God wants His children to spend time in prayer. Are you spending time daily talking with Him and listening to Him?

Prayer

As for you, make a commitment to be in His Word and pray daily. Encourage others in your church to do the same, then see how your church responds. You will see a great power from God envelop your church toward becoming healthy.

## **Day 21: Strengthen Your Faith in the God Who Revives**

Read Ezekiel 37:1-14

*"This is what the Lord God says to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you will live." Ezekiel 37:5*

Parched and bleached by the sun, the brittle bones scattered across the valley presented a vision that summoned two words to the prophet's mind—death and discouragement. The only thing more discouraging than the vision itself was the fact that God's own people were represented by these abandoned bones. They had died, and their growth required significant intervention by God.

This vision challenged Ezekiel's faith. God asked him an unthinkable question, "Son of man, can these bones live?" He replied, "Lord God, only You know." Ezekiel's response revealed his thought, "If these dried bones live again, it will require a miracle from You, God."

In the vision, God did what only He could do. As Ezekiel preached, the bones came together, were wrapped by muscle and skin, and those corpses were resuscitated. The dry bones lived! Likewise, Israel was revived and restored.

There is a lesson we need to learn. God delights Himself in revitalizing that which seems to be dry and lifeless. Do you believe by faith that what God did in Ezekiel's vision and for Israel, He can do for your church?

Prayer

Pray for new life to begin filling our church. New faces, new families, new believers, new leaders.