LOVE ONE ANOTHER

John 13:34-35
ACTIVITY: Get a small tub and fill halfway with water
Gather a few towels
Place the tub and towels by a chair

As a family sit in a circle. Open your Bible to John 13:1-17. Have someone read the passage, taking turns reading to help keep attention. While someone is reading have family member wash the feet of another family member. Take turns so everyone has the experience of washing and being washed.

Why were the disciples surprised when Jesus washed their feet?
Why did Jesus do it?
How did you feel washing someone’s feet?
How did you feel having your feet washed?

FOCUS: Jesus was showing love by serving.
Note: Do not be concerned if your kids have more fun splashing in the water than answering questions. This can be a building block moment for future conversations.

STEP IT UP: (if you are able to make more time in your week)
Get a large piece of paper.
Make a list of ways you can serve others either individually or as a family. For inspiration search “Random Acts of Kindness” or visit oprah.com/spirit/35-Little-Acts-of-Kindness.
Agree as a family on a prize you will earn if you accomplish one of the service ideas.
Note: the prizes should be for motivation and encouragement, keeping in mind we don’t serve to get something.

GO DEEPER: (have older kids or are just ready for more?)
Read John 13:10 Do you think Jesus meant more than actual dirt when talking about clean?
Continue and read Verse 11. Discuss what this verse meant.
Turn to John 18:25-27 to see what Jesus was talking about.
Have you ever been humbled (made to feel less important) by someone’s kindness to you when you know you didn’t deserve it?

Think of someone you really don’t like. They make you feel sad about yourself, they annoy you, they make fun of you. With that person in mind.

Pray: Lord, I pray for _________________. Please be with them today. Provide for their needs. If they do not know you please bring someone to tell them about you. Please show me today how I can follow your example in how I treat _________________. AMEN.
ADULT DEVOTIONALS
WEEK 1: MONDAY

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

- John 13:34-35

We live in a broken world: broken relationships, broken promises, and broken people. Drug overdoses are now the leading cause of death among Americans under 50. Forty percent of marriages end in divorce. The suicide rate is steadily on the rise. How can we mend this brokenness? We are all part of Jesus’ solution—love one another.

In John 13:34-35, Jesus commands his disciples to “love one another.” Love is the glue that holds us together as a body of believers. Love is what sets us apart as Christ followers, and makes us an example to the world—“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples.”

But this is no ordinary love. Jesus’ love is a different kind of love. The Greek word used for “love” in these verses is “agape,” a sacrificial and selfless love. Tim Keller defines agape as: “It means to serve a person for their good and intrinsic value, not for what the person brings you. Its opposite is fear: self-protection and abusing people. Its counterfeit (a fake version) is selfish affection, where you are attracted to someone and treat them well because of how they make you feel about yourself.”

Agape love doesn’t expect anything in return. We are to love one another unconditionally and to seek the good of others despite the impact that it may have on us. Loving others this way will take up our time, our finances, possibly our reputation, and most definitely our patience. It is a sacrifice, but it is this kind of love that can heal a broken world.

So how are we supposed to live out agape love? What does it look like in action? Jesus tells his disciples, “As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” Jesus should be our model. He displayed the ultimate example of agape love by dying on the cross for us. Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Throughout this week, we will spend time studying Jesus’ life to find examples of how Jesus displayed agape love, and learn how we can apply agape love in our lives.

Take a moment to pray and thank Jesus for his true example of agape love by dying on the cross. Ask him to open your eyes to opportunities to display selfless and sacrificial love to those hurting within your church, community, and office.
“Jesus said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

- Luke 14:12-14

We find it easy to love someone when we get something in return. We don’t mind giving our time to a friend or family member when they will return the favor. We are more willing to give money to someone when we know they will pay us back. But when we meet people that are sick, poor, or needy, caring for these people can be challenging.

Agape love isn’t about loving those who can repay us. Agape love is a sacrificial love. We know that we won’t gain anything from loving those in need, however, Jesus commands us to love without expecting anything in return.

The verses today are a part of Jesus’ parable of the great banquet. Jesus was invited to dine at the house of a prominent Pharisee, and he tells the man not to invite friends and rich neighbors, because they will invite you in return, but instead, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind because they cannot repay you. Interestingly, Jesus points out that the very reason to invite those in need is because they can’t repay us. This is an example of true agape love.

Jesus dedicated a large portion of his ministry seeking out the sick and healing them: he heals a man with leprosy; he makes a lame man walk; he raises the daughter of a distraught father from the dead; he gives sight to a blind man. These are just a few examples of Jesus’ love for those who could never repay him. And above all, Jesus’ death on the cross for our sins was an act of love for all of us, which none of us can repay.

Think about those in your life that are in need. Are you caring for them? Are you sacrificing your time and resources to love them like Jesus would? Let us seek out our troubled coworkers, ailing neighbors, and poor in our community, and care for them despite the fact that we may never be repaid. Let us invite the crippled, the lame, and the blind to our banquet tables, and let them taste agape love.
ADULT DEVOTIONALS
WEEK 1: WEDNESDAY

“The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” … When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” …
At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time...until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

- John 8:3-11

When we meet someone for the first time, what do we do? We typically judge them based on their gender, skin color, appearance, and how they talk. Before we even get to know them, we have assembled a picture in our subconscious of who they are. Judging others based on our opinions and perceptions is part of our sinful nature.

As Christians, one area where we are quick to judge is someone else’s sin. Despite the fact that we are all sinners, we find it easy to carelessly and hastily accuse someone else of sin. This causes us to treat them as inferior, and we do not love them as we should. In today’s verses, we see the teachers of the law bring a woman caught in adultery to Jesus. They want to stone her for her sin, but Jesus replies, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”

Jesus’ reply to the Pharisees is a good reminder to us who the real judge is. Jesus wants us to go out and love everyone despite their appearance, gender, skin color, or sin. We need to leave the judging to God. Even Jesus does not act as a judge to the adulterous woman: “Then neither do I condemn you.” How can Jesus say that to a woman who was caught in adultery? Because he paid for her sin on the cross. Like this woman, we have been forgiven, so we shouldn’t be condemning others for their sin.

Jesus leaves the woman with a challenge as well, “Go now and leave your life of sin.” It is important to remember that while we shouldn’t judge others, it does not mean that we are to condone the sin. But it is the gospel that truly changes hearts, not our condemnation.

Let us go out into the world and love others with compassion, not judgment. Will you put down your stones today, and show someone agape love?
“Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy... When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a ‘sinner.’””

- Luke 19:1-2, 5-7

We all have people in our lives that seem impossible to love: a cheating spouse; a violent, short-tempered father; an alcoholic brother; a demanding, and self-centered boss; the IRS.

Tax collectors aren’t popular today, but during Jesus time, they were some of the most despised people in the Roman Empire. They were seen as traitors by working for the Romans instead of their Jewish community. Many were also corrupt. Tax collectors earned a percentage of what they collected, so they would wring as much money out of people as they could.

In today’s passage, we read about a tax collector named Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus had heard that Jesus was passing through Jericho, so he went to see him. When Jesus walked by he picked Zacchaeus out of the crowd and said, “I must stay at your house today.” Having a meal with a tax collector was an egregious insult to the Jews. They were appalled. “He has gone to be the guest of a ‘sinner’,” they muttered.

But Jesus knew exactly what he was doing. In verse 10 he says, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” He was showing love to someone that was lost and unlovable.

Loving someone that may seem impossible to love can cause powerful and life-altering reactions. Here we see Zacchaeus, within only a few hours of being with Jesus, stand up and declare, “Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

When we show love to our adulterous spouse, or demanding boss, they take notice. There is no guarantee that they will be changed like Zacchaeus, but showing love rather than hate can soften hearts.

**Ask God to give you the courage and patience to love the people in your life who you feel are impossible to love.**
“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.”


Before he died, Jesus was brutally beaten, relentlessly mocked, and humiliated. When he hung on the cross, he experienced one of the most excruciating and barbaric methods of execution known to man. Yet, as he hung there, Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34a) Jesus showed love to his enemies even while they were torturing and killing him.

Loving our enemies is the most difficult type of agape love. An enemy is a person who is actively opposed or hostile to someone. We all face enemies in our lives. Maybe, for you it is a coworker that undermines your work in order to get ahead or a competitor that lies about your company to land a project or a manipulative and controlling family member.

Our society teaches us to fight back, and conquer our enemies. Society thinks Jesus’ words in Luke 6 display weakness and inferiority. It can’t comprehend a person blessing someone that curses him or turning the other cheek. But therein lies the beauty of loving one’s enemies.

In 1 Peter 3, Peter tells us not to repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but repay with blessing. Then a few verses later he says, “Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed...Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for this hope.”

People start to wonder and ask questions when we do something drastically countercultural like loving our enemies. We should be prepared to tell them how we once were enemies of Jesus, but he loved us despite our rebellion and forgave our sins. And now, with the power of the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to love our enemies.

Find a small, practical way to show love to one of your enemies today. Ask God to give you the strength to love your enemies and the courage to share the gospel when people begin to notice.
MAIN POINT

People will know we are Christ's disciples by the way we love one another.

INTRODUCTION

Today we begin our 2017 Common Ground series, “One Another.” God continues to draw more people to the Chapel through our ministries in Lincoln Park as well as the launch of new sites. As our numbers grow, so will the needs of the Body. People are hurting; we see this in many of our marriages, in our friendships, in the needs of our children and young adults—and there is no reason to think these challenges will diminish or take care of themselves. As we grow, we must all be equipped to care for one another. This year’s Common Ground series will lay the foundation for that, and the ongoing “Soul Care” training that follows will give you the tools you need to do this effectively. We begin today with the foundational command Jesus gives us to love one another.

On the TV show, “Bluebloods,” starring Tom Selleck, the Reagan family is known for its strong ties to law enforcement in New York City. In fact, every adult family member serves the city of New York in the field of law enforcement in some capacity. The Reagan family includes a Deputy Commissioner, a retired Deputy Commissioner, a policeman, a detective, and an attorney who works for the District Attorney’s office. On the show, to be a Reagan, means to be committed to working for justice. Law enforcement is the family business and is the one thing the Reagan family is known for.

As Christ followers, we too, are called to a “family business.” As Christians, we should all share a similarity that identifies what family we belong to. Jesus said our love for one another will be the mark that communicates we are His disciples.

Do your family members share any similarities that make it easy to identify which family you all belong to? (physical characteristics, family business, athletic talent, etc.)

In our culture, do you think Christians have a reputation for loving one another? Why or why not? Explain why you feel the way you do.

UNDERSTANDING

> READ JOHN 13:34-35.

What is the new command Jesus gives to His disciples? How was it new?
Love is the defining mark in our lives that communicates we belong to Christ (v. 35). Glance back at the latter part of verse 34. What guideline does Jesus give His disciples (and us) as to how we love others?

As Jesus prepared to go to the cross, He instructed His disciples on what was expected in His absence. His new command was that His followers are to love one another. The command is not new in the sense that nothing like it had ever been communicated before. In fact, the Mosaic covenant included two love commandments (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18). Rather, it was new because Jesus said His disciples are to love others in the same way He had loved them. For the first time, Christ followers were called to demonstrate Jesus’ love to a watching world. The way we love one another should communicate to others that we belong to Jesus.

How would you describe Christ’s love? Can you name several ways He showed sacrificial love to His disciples? If so, what are they?

Practically speaking, how can we show love to one another in our community of believers?

How might seeing Christians love each other well be enticing to non-believers?

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus modeled love through sacrifice and service. The ultimate demonstration of that love was His death on the cross for our sins. But He also showed love every day of His earthly ministry. Jesus was never rushed, and He intentionally made time for all types of people. He cared for the sick and suffering, rich and poor, believers and those who were struggling with doubt and discouragement. Jesus was always meeting needs and He made people a priority.


What do you think Jesus meant when He spoke of “laying down one’s life for one’s friends”?

Has anyone ever demonstrated sacrificial love to you? If so, what were the circumstances? How did you respond?

We live in a society where many people are hurting. In fact, there are people hurting in our own church community. Christians aren’t exempt from the suffering that comes
from living in a fallen world. In every biblical community, there are members who are struggling with illness, marital problems, bereavement, broken family relationships, financial strain, unemployment, and other losses. As the body of Christ, it is both our privilege and responsibility to show the love of Christ to those who are hurting. This is what we mean when we talk about Soul Care. Jesus commanded us to love one another and said our love would be the one way the world knows we belong to Him.

> READ 1 THESSALONIANS 3:12.

What is Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians?

What are common obstacles that keep us from loving one another as Jesus commands us?

Paul prayed that the Lord would make the Thessalonians’ love for one another increase and overflow. This is a wise thing to pray for our church community and ourselves. Paul said that without love we are nothing (1 Cor. 13:2). It is God’s will for us to love each other as we have been commanded, so it’s a wise thing to ask God to empower us to love as we should. In our own flesh-oriented nature, we are more prone to think only of ourselves. But the gospel calls Christ followers to a new standard of living. We must be people who pray that God will give us His supernatural love for others so we can love the way Jesus instructed. As Christ told His disciples before He went to the cross, “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). The good news is that in Christ we have every spiritual blessing, and in His power we are able to carry out all that He commands, including loving each other in the same manner that He loves us.

APPLICATION

What is the greatest challenge that prevents you from loving others in your church community as Christ commands? What steps can you take to overcome this challenge?

Practically speaking, who can you reach out to in your faith community this week who could use some encouragement and Christ-like love?

What would it look like for you to start praying as a group that God would increase your love for one another to the point that it overflows to your whole church community?
As a group, is there an individual or group in your church that you could collectively minister to and show the love of Christ to on a regular basis? (i.e. single mothers, pastoral care needs, bereavement, unemployed, homebound)

**PRAY**

Father, we thank You for showing us the ultimate Source of love in the Person and work of our Savior, Jesus Christ. We ask that You would empower us to love in the way Jesus commands us. Give us opportunities to demonstrate the love of Christ. And Father we pray that the outside world will recognize we belong to You, because of the way we love each other.

**MEMORIZE**

34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34-35).

**COMMENTARY**

**JOHN 13:34-35**

Jesus invited His followers to embrace His love and to express His love through their interactions with each other. His commandment to them was not new in the sense that it was different in substance. Rather, it was new in application—one’s neighbor was anybody. It also was new in its model—Jesus’ self-sacrificing love, especially displayed later on the cross. In an encounter with a scribe, Jesus summarized the commandments in the Mosaic law (Mark 12:28-31). Stated in two Old Testament passages (Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:4-5), the Mosaic commandments directed believers to love God wholeheartedly and to love one’s neighbor as one’s self.

As Jesus prepared His disciples for their future in His body, the church, He yearned for them to experience the new commandment in their relationships. He had corrected their earlier ambitions over position and greatness by His own humble service of washing their feet. As Judas left the Passover supper the disciples were eating with Jesus, He focused attention on their covenant commitments to one another. Three times in two verses, Jesus repeated the essence of His teaching. To love one another was the supreme means of identification for His disciples.

The kind of love Jesus commanded the disciples to give was not merely the brotherly love of human fellowship. Even unbelievers related to others on that level of love. Jesus wanted His followers to experience and to express God’s love. Each of the four
occurrences of the Greek word translated “love” and “loved” in John 13:34-35 uses a Greek word meaning God’s kind of love. This love seeks the good of another rather than benefit for self. It sacrifices without condition and serves without motive of personal gain.

The source of such love is the Lord Himself. Jesus knew human nature does not love sacrificially and unconditionally as God loves. He reminded the eleven disciples of the way He loved them. The words Just as meant they were to love one another in the same way and to the same degree He loved them. Their only hope for success in loving this way lay in their relationship with Him. As they were channels, receiving and passing on Christ’s love, they could fulfill His intention for their lives.

The object of the disciples’ love was one another. Jesus certainly was not excusing the disciples from loving other people who were not His disciples. He was not suggesting they form an exclusive club in which they loved each other but not those outside their group. Rather, Jesus was setting a new standard for love among believers.

The disciples’ purpose in showing godly love was to witness for Jesus. According to Him, only the disciples’ love for one another showed the world they were His disciples. Only by love would they endure together and impact their world.

Jesus calls Christians to love one another, as He said, “Just as I have loved you.” We who have received Christ’s sacrificial love are to extend that same love to others. His love transforms our hearts so we cannot help but love. If we fail to love, we should examine ourselves to see if His love truly resides in our lives (1 John 4:7-8).

Love among believers provides the foundational testimony to the lost. Unbelievers may criticize Christians, but many do have high expectations of those who claim Christ’s name. They look for holy lifestyles among believers and love in their relationships with one another. Weak love among believers results in weak witness to nonbelievers. Worse, when Christians argue and fight with one another, lost people use their bickering as an excuse to reject Christ. The world judges our love for God by the love we have for one another.

Christians should love one another to glorify God. Just as children’s behavior reflects on parents’ character, even so our love paints a portrait of our Heavenly Father. Just as you are glad when people comment on the good behavior and loving attitudes of your children, so our Heavenly Father rejoices to see His children living in harmony and love.