

THE CHURCH IS MARKED BY LOVE

YEAR: UNITE / FOCUS: I AM PART OF A FAMILY
SERIES: GOD IS FATHER - I AM PART OF THE FAMILY

BIG TRUTH: THE CHURCH IS MARKED BY LOVE

Romans 12:10; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 1 John 2:9-10; 3:23

BIBLE VERSE: JOHN 13:34-35

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

BIG IDEAS

- Love is selfless and sacrificial action.
- Love labors to help others become like Jesus.
- Love looks like Jesus' pursuit of us.

BIBLE PASSAGE: JOHN 13:34-35

UNITE - I AM PART OF A FAMILY

The Unite Year is an exploration of what it means to be united in Christ as the family of God (Romans 12:5). When we are saved, we are given a spirit of adoption as sons (Romans 8:15-16), are made a child of God, and we are also saved into a family- the Church. The Unite Year explores how we are to live as a part of a family, and to live in light of our calling as servants and disciples of Christ. We use our gifts to build up the church as we pursue unity, humility, and gentleness with our brothers and sisters in Christ (Ephesians 4:1-2).

SERIES AIMS



Every student should know that...

- The church is a family.
- The church is given by God.
- The church exists for God.



Every student should feel...

- Thankful for the unique ways God has gifted them and their church.
- Appreciation for the elders and leaders that God has gifted their church.



Every student should strive to...

- Prioritize gathering to worship each week with their church family.
- Learn more about membership in their local church.
- Do something to intentionally serve someone in their church family each week



Every student should want...

- To devote themselves to pursue holiness with their church family.
- To have their lives be marked by love for the church.
- To live in a way that is sacrificial and generous for the good of others and the glory of God

GUIDES AND WORKOUTS

The Guide provides a commentary page on each week's Bible verse and on each Big Idea that unpacks the Big Truth. Each week also includes a Student Workout as a resource to help the student pursue spiritual disciplines on their own. Additionally, each week has a Family Workout that helps equip parents and guardians to have spiritual conversations with their student.

BIBLE VERSE: JOHN 13:34-35

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Believers are distinguished by their love.

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

- Jesus’ command to His followers to love one another was more than a suggestion that they care for one another. The love that a Christ follower shows is very different from the way the world defines love or shows love. Jesus’ command to them was a call to live lives defined by the way they love Him and others.
- The church should be known for the way it loves people. This love should not just be exclusively for members, but towards the world as well. How we love one another and the people around us sets us apart from unbelievers. Jesus called His followers to this type of life when He commanded them to love one another.

Jesus is the perfect example of love for every believer.

“...just as I have loved you, you are to love one another.”

- Jesus did not and does not ask anything of His followers that He does not do Himself. He is an understanding and gracious Shepherd to His people, and He knows what it means to love others. Jesus is the supreme example of loving others perfectly. He lived the perfect life as a man on earth and all the while He loved others perfectly.
- As believers, we are to follow Jesus’ example. We are to love one another and our neighbors as Jesus loves us. The church is to lead in this by loving the community they live in and loving each other. We can always look to Jesus as our guide when we are faced with difficult situations and people. When we choose to follow His lead, we will love like He loves.

Believers should love sacrificially.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”

- Jesus loves sacrificially. He set aside His deity and He gave up His life because He loves His people. He endured much hardship and many trials while on earth to show His perfect love for His people. We should follow in His example of loving sacrificially. We should give up our preferences and consider the needs of others before ourselves.
- The church should be marked by this type of love within its walls and outside of them. The church should lead in loving one another and existing in peace and harmony with one another. The church should be known for its care and love of its community in a sacrificial way.

BIG IDEA #1: LOVE IS SELFLESS AND SACRIFICIAL ACTION.¹**[THIS]**

God's love is not like the world's love, nor can we define it according to the current cultural trends or shifts. God's love is eternal and defined by His very character. He is love and we can only truly know love by knowing Him. The world's idea of love is man-centered; God's love is centered on others and glorifying Him. In John 13:34-35, Jesus teaches His followers how they are to love. He teaches that His people are to love selflessly, just He does. Selfless love lives out Philippians 2:3 in counting others as more important than themselves and considering the needs of others. When we love selflessly, we aren't thinking of what makes us happy, but of what pleases God first and then how to love our neighbors as ourselves. When we think of how to please God with all of our actions, we will put others first and love selflessly. As we do this as individuals, we will do this corporately as the body of Christ.

[THEREFORE]**What does it mean that love is action?**

Love is more than a feeling. It is action, even when a feeling isn't present. It's an obedience to God's Word to be like Him. 1 John 3:18 helps us understand that we love in action, whether we feel love or not.

What does selfless love look like practically?

Matthew 6:33 tells us to seek the kingdom of God first. 1 John 2:15-17 also reminds us to not love the things of this world. Loving selflessly means not doing something we might want to do, or not expecting others to do what makes us happy. It looks like thinking of other as more important than ourselves and pursuing what pleases God above what pleases us.

[THIS]

Jesus's example of love was to sacrifice for those He loves. He chose to give up everything to make a way for His followers to know God. To sacrifice something is to give up something or someone of great value to us. When we love people who are easy to love or the people we like, we aren't loving sacrificially. When we love only when it's convenient for us or in ways that are easy, we aren't loving sacrificially. Jesus came to the earth, setting aside His deity and His position in order to love us sacrificially. Loving sacrificially involves putting others first and giving up things in order to show that love. It means living in a radical way that allows us to give of our time, resources, and hearts in ways that cost us. It means doing this for strangers, too, not just friends and family.

[THEREFORE]**What does loving sacrificially look like for you?**

Hebrews 13:16 and Romans 12:1 teach us that to love sacrificially, we must first recognize that our lives and our resources are given to us by God to be used for Him. When we realize that God has given us much in order to give to others and to serve Him, we can love sacrificially. We can set aside our own wants, desires, and preferences in order to have harmony and peace with others.

In what situations/relationships is it hard to love? How can you overcome those obstacles this week?

Often our pride, jealousy, and selfishness stand in the way of our sacrificial love. We love this life on earth more than God. Matthew 16:24 reminds us that we are to die to ourselves every day in order to follow Jesus. Difficult people can be hard to love as well. People who annoy us or don't seem to love us in return can be difficult to love.

1. John 15:13: Agape love is sacrificial love. To love like Jesus is love sacrificially and selflessly.

BIG IDEA #2: LOVE LABORS TO HELP OTHERS BECOME LIKE JESUS.²**[THIS]**

1 Corinthians 13 explains in detail what it looks like to love like Jesus loves. The church is to be marked by this type of love known as agape love. This love is willing to sacrifice and to labor with others for the glory of God. Part of the church's purpose is to help believers grow in their Christlikeness. Love works to make sure this happens in people's lives. The goal is becoming more and more like Jesus and helping others do the same. This means believers are seeking to make disciples. We do this by first evangelizing the lost around us. In order for a person to be a disciple, they must first hear and believe the Gospel. It also means coming alongside of other believers to build them up and encourage them in their walk with God. When we love like Jesus loves, we will commit our lives to laboring with others and we will seek to help them become more and more like Jesus.

[THEREFORE]

Discuss ways your life has been impacted by the love of an older believer who has labored with you. How has this impacted your walk with God?

In 2 Timothy 1:1-7, Paul opens his letter to Timothy by recounting the faith he first noticed in Timothy when Timothy was younger. Paul encourages Timothy to continue to grow out of his love for Timothy. We should love like this and labor with other believers in order to help them become more like Christ. Our lives are marked by people investing in us; therefore, we should invest in others.

[THIS]

As we labor in love as individuals, we will labor in love as God's church. It's important that the church commits to this type of discipleship. God's church should be marked by this kind of love for its members and for its community. To be like Jesus requires time, patience, and endurance. Making disciples is not something that is easily done or even quickly accomplished. Just as Jesus labors with us patiently as we are sanctified, we must labor with others. Laboring together in love means we commit to build up others and to hold one another accountable. Jesus set the example of this type of love and He commanded it in John 13:34-35 when He told His followers to love others as He has loved them. Jesus labors with us and lives committed to our sanctification. We should do the same for those God has placed in our lives.

[THEREFORE]

How does Jesus' example of loving us encourage you to love others?

Romans 14:9, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, and Hebrews 10:24-25 teach us to encourage one another and to build one another up. This is what Jesus did while on earth and this is what He does today. His love is an example to us all. As we seek to be like Him, we will commit to living life with others so that we might help them become more like Jesus.

One of the challenges to laboring in love with others is that we can grow weary. How should we respond when this happens?

Galatians 6:9 and Hebrews 12:2 encourage us to continue living for Christ. Often, we may grow weary or tired of laboring with others. We may not see immediate progress, or we grow frustrated. We must remember to remain steadfast and to labor unto the Lord for the sake of bringing Him glory.

1. 1 Corinthians 9:20: Paul gave up comforts and labored with many that they might grow in their Christlikeness.

BIG IDEA #3: LOVE LOOKS LIKE JESUS' PURSUIT OF US.³**[THIS]**

Loving like Jesus means pursuing Him and others. In order to truly pursue another person, we must first pursue Christ. If we want to be like Jesus, then we must learn all about Him. We learn about Jesus by studying and growing in our knowledge of God's Word. We know that no one seeks God. Believers are pursued by God and we know Him because He seeks after us. In order to pursue others, we must learn what Jesus' pursuit of us looks like. As we seek after God, we will pursue others because we will become more like Jesus. It is God's heart to seek people. He chooses to use His redeemed people as those who seek people and share His good news with them. Our love grows as we understand this truth and begin seeking people as Jesus seeks us.

[THEREFORE]**What does Jesus' pursuit of us look like?**

Ezekiel 34:11 and Luke 19:10 teach us that Jesus pursues His people. When we truly understand that He seeks us out and chooses to save us, we will in turn understand our responsibility to seek out others. He pursues us even when we are rejecting Him. He doesn't give up His pursuit of us.

How has a pursuit of Jesus grown your love for Him?

Jeremiah 29:13 and Deuteronomy 4:29 remind us of the promise that we will find God when we seek Him. As we pursue Jesus, our love for Him will grow because we will know Him more intimately and personally.

[THIS]

To love others like Jesus does, we must pursue them. When we pursue others, we will seek after them in order to help them know Jesus and become more like Him. Jesus seeks after His people to save them and to sanctify them. Jesus draws people to Himself and makes them more like Himself that they might be fully sanctified and prepared for their eternal home. In order for the church to pursue others, she must seek God's kingdom first. This means that the values that drive the church are God's glory, making Him known in the world, and helping believers grow in their Christlikeness. As the church seeks to love like Jesus, she will pursue the lost around her and in the world. She will make disciples and seek the glory of God above all else.

[THEREFORE]**What are some distractions that keep a church from pursuing others?**

A love of the world and the things of the world can keep a body of believers from pursuing others. 1 John 2:16,17 helps us understand that we can't love both the things of this world and Jesus. We must seek the Kingdom of God first and then we will pursue others because this is the will of the Father.

3. John 13:34-35: Jesus pursues us and loves us continually and we should love in this same way.