

40 Days of



ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE

WE WERE MADE

For Relationships

**A Daily Devotion Guide and
Group Study Guide**

Table of Contents

	Page #
INTRODUCTION	
Week #1 - If I Don't Live a Life of Love	1
Week #2 - How Can I Become a Kinder Person	3
Week #3 - Love Does Not Envy	7
Week #4 - Love Is Forgiving	11
Week #5 - Love Is Humble	15
Week #6 - Love Is Respectful	19
Week #7 - Love Is Patient	23

40 Days of Love Daily Readings

INTRODUCTION

The greatest relationship a person can ever have is with Jesus Christ. After you have come to know Him in a personal way you need to grow closer to him daily. That will help you make it in today's world. This group of daily readings is designed to help you grow closer to Jesus and to other people in your life. This will help you share the hope of Jesus Christ with your world. Each day be sure to **spend some time in prayer** (talking with and listening to God), and **Reading the daily Bible verse from this Booklet. Then think about the questions at the end try to put it into practice that day.** This daily reading only does six days of the week. You are encouraged to go to church on the weekend and worship and listen to your pastor.

Memory Verse

Each week you will be encouraged to memorize a verse from the Bible. Work on it each day. Get another person to check you. Share it with your group when you come together. This will really help you in your daily walk with the Lord.

Just reading and studying the Bible is not enough. We must learn to live it out each day. Listen to one of the main verses for this study. You will also find it on the bracelets that will be given out at church.

1 John 3:18 *Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

Let's learn to practice this kind of real love everyday.

May God bless you as you begin this journey of love.

In Him,



Chuck

*"If what he has built **survives**, he will receive his reward."* 1 Cor. 3:14 NIV

IF I DON'T LIVE A LIFE OF LOVE...

40 Days of Love

WEEK 1

During the next 40 days I hope you will make an extra effort to love God and others. Jesus said we were to keep only two commands: Love God with our heart, soul, mind, and body, and second, love others as my neighbor. Take five minutes a day and recite the memory verse 5 times in the morning and 5 times in the evening; read your scripture verse each day and answer the two questions. You may want to begin a new spiritual journal to answer your daily questions on this new journey.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Keep company with God and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something back but to give everything of Himself to us. Love like that.

Ephesians 5:2(MES)

MONDAY

...NOTHING I SAY WILL MATTER.

If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal.

1 Cor. 13:1 (NLT)

- ? What does 1 Cor. 13:1 say my life could be like.
- ? How do I appear to others when I treat them unlovingly?

TUESDAY

...NOTHING I KNOW WILL MATTER.

I may have the gift of prophecy. I may understand all the secret things of God and have all knowledge. But if I do not have love, then I am nothing.

1 Cor. 13:2a (NCV)

- ? Do others think I am a know-it-all? Do I sound like someone who knows everything?
- ? What is the main lesson Paul is teaching me from this verse?

WEDNESDAY

...NOTHING I BELIEVE WILL MATTER.

Even if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, I would still be worth nothing at all without love.

1 Cor. 13:2b (LB)

- ? Why does it take more than belief to please God?
- ? What spiritual gift do I have and how am I presently using it with love?

THURSDAY

...NOTHING I GIVE WILL MATTER.

If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, but didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever.

1 Cor. 13:3a (NLT)

- ? What have I given to others when I expected something in return?
- ? What steps can I take to overcome my own barriers in giving?

FRIDAY

...NOTHING I ACCOMPLISH WILL MATTER.

So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love.

Cor. 13:3b (Mes)

- ? Why do I put more value on my accomplishments than loving others?
- ? What can I begin to do to love relationship more than accomplishment?

SATURDAY

...NOTHING I VALUE WILL MATTER.

Love means doing what God has commanded.

2 John 1:6

- ? When I don't love others am I sinning?
- ? What actions can I take to tune-in with God's plan for my future?

SUNDAY

...NOTHING I PLAN WILL MATTER.

God is love. If we keep on loving others, we will stay one in our hearts with God and He will stay one with us.

1 John 4:16

- ? What can I do to show others I'm committed to them?
- ? What does my relationship with God reveal to others?

Consider praying this prayer this week: "Dear God, I really do want to become a more loving person. I don't want to be a shallow lover. I want to be a mature loving person. I want to develop healthy, authentic relationships, so I'm willing to take these five first steps in faith. I'm going to give You the next 40 days of my life. I know it will be busy, but I want to thank You, God, in advance for all that You're going to do in my life and in my relationships during the next 40 days. I'm going to focus on what matters most. In Jesus' name.

HOW CAN I BECOME A KINDER PERSON?

40 Days of Love

WEEK 2

During the next 40 days I hope you will make an extra effort to love God and others. Last week we learned if I don't live a life of love nothing I do will matter. This week we're learning "loving others makes me a kinder person." What do you need to do to fulfill God's second command? Take five minutes each morning and recite the memory verse five times. By the end of the week you'll have God's word memorized and planted within your heart.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Always treat others as you would like them to treat you.

Matthew 7:12

Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' So which of these three do you think was a neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Luke 10:30-37

MONDAY

Fellowship

Your Objective: Understand your attitude toward others affects your relationship with God.

3 ATTITUDES TOWARD OTHERS

"Keep my distance"

There was a man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when robbers attacked him, stripped him, and beat him up, leaving him half dead. It so happened that a priest was going down that road; but when he saw the man, he walked on by on the other side.

Luke 10:30-31 (GN)

"Curious but uninvolved"

In the same way a Levite also came there, went over and looked at the man, and then walked on by on the other side.

Luke 10:32 (GN)

"Treat others how I want to be treated"

But a Samaritan who was traveling that way came upon the man, and when he saw him, his heart was filled with pity.

Luke 10:33 (GN)

According to Luke 10:31

- ? What would cause the priest to walk by Him?
- ? What attitudes cause you to overlook the needs of others?

According to Luke 1:5-10

- ? What should your attitude be toward others?
- ? What can you do to change your attitude?

TUESDAY

START SEEING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE AROUND ME

When he saw the man's condition, his heart went out to him.

Luke 10:33b (Mes)

Look out for the good of others.

1 Corinthians 10:24 (NCV)

The person who plants selfishness, ignoring the needs of others ...harvests a crop of weeds. All he'll have to show for his life is weeds!

Galatians 6:8a (Mes)

According to Psalm 38:10-11

- ? How do the attitudes of others affect the way you solve your problems?
- ? How does it make you feel when your friends stand away from you or desert you when you experience trouble?

Fellowship - God created you for relationship with Him and others. Your attitude affects your relationships with God and others. God wants you to have concern for the needs of people around you.

WEDNESDAY

Discipleship (Maturity)

Your Objective: Realize ministry to others is necessary for spiritual growth.

SYMPATHIZE WITH PEOPLE'S PAIN

When he saw him, his heart was filled with pity.

Luke 10:33 (GN)

Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2 (NLT)

(God) comforts and strengthens us in our hardships and trials... So that when others are troubled, needing our sympathy and encouragement, we can pass on to them this same help and comfort God has given us.

2 Corinthians 1:4 (LB)

Read Matthew 5:21-26

- ? What is required to have an intimate relationship with God?
- ? Think about a time when you were unwilling to follow God's leading. How does it make you feel to know you disobeyed God.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:15-17

- ? What is the significance of having "the inward man" renewed daily?
- ? Why does God allow you to go through afflictions and trials?

Discipleship (Maturity) - It's never too late to start growing. Your heavenly Father's goal is for you to mature and develop the characteristics of Jesus Christ. Spiritual growth is not automatic. It takes an intentional commitment.

THURSDAY

Service (Ministry)

Your objective: The development of Christ-like character cannot be rushed. Spiritual growth, like physical growth, takes time and effort. Develop the habits needed to grow spiritually.

SEIZE THE MOMENT TO BE KIND

Kneeling beside him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with medicine and bandaged them.

Luke 10:34a (NLT)

Never walk away from someone who deserves help; your hand is God's hand for that person. Never tell your neighbors to wait until tomorrow if you can help them now.

Proverbs 3:27-28 (GN & Mes)

Always treat others as you would like them to treat you.

Matthew 7:12 (JB)

Read 1 Peter 4:10

- ? What special ability has God give you to pass on to others?
- ? God doesn't waste your abilities; He matches your calling and your capabilities to minister to others. In what ministry should you be involved?

Read James 1:22-25

- ? What does God promise to do to those faithful in their ministry?
- ? In what way can you see yourself passionately serving others and loving it?

FRIDAY

SPEND WHATEVER IT TAKES

Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he handed the innkeeper two pieces of silver and told him to take care of the man. 'If his bill runs higher than that,' he said, 'I'll pay the difference the next time I am here.'

Luke 10:34b-35 (NLT)

If you feed the hungry and take care of the needs of those who are troubled, then your light will shine in the dark. The Lord will always lead you and He'll satisfy your needs in dry lands... You'll be like a spring that never runs dry!

Isaiah 58:10-11 (NCV)

Your own soul is nourished when you are kind.

Proverbs 11:17 (NLT)

Read 2 Timothy 2:4 and Matthew 7:12

- ? How should you treat the needs of your church family?
- ? What causes you to miss occasions for serving? Consider sensitivity and spontaneity.

Service (Ministry) - Your call to salvation included your call to service, they are the same. Regardless of your job or career, you are called to full-time Christian service. A "non-serving Christian" is a contradiction in terms.

SATURDAY

Evangelism (Missions)

BE SENSITIVE TO OTHER'S NEEDS

Your Objective: Identify those people who you come-in-contact with at least every other day and name the number one struggle they're facing.

If you extend your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday: [11] The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; You shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

Isaiah 58:10-11 (NKJV)

The merciful man does good for his own soul, But he who is cruel troubles his own flesh.

Proverbs 11:17

Read Isaiah 58:10-11 and Proverbs 11:17

- ? How are you affected by reaching out to others?
- ? Why do you find it difficult to be sensitive to the needs of others?

SUNDAY

WHAT ARE YOU PLANTING?

For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Galatians 6:8

- ? What are you sowing?
- ? What has God promised if you sow to the Spirit?

Evangelism (Missions) - God is at work in the world. This assignment is called your mission. Your mission is your service to unbelievers. Your mission gives your life meaning.

LOVE DOES NOT ENVY **40 Days of Love** **WEEK 3**

We're in this series on 40 Days of Love. The most common destroyer of friendships is not anger, it's not impatience, it's not apathy, and it's not unkindness. It's envy. And in our series, as we go through this 40 Days of Love, this week we're going to look at the verse in the Bible that says, "Love does not envy." It is impossible to envy someone and love them at the same time. So, what is envy? It's resenting God's goodness to others and ignoring God's goodness to me. That's what envy is.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

...Love does not envy...

1 Corinthians 13:4b

[1] For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. [2] Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. [3] And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, [4] and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. [5] Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. [6] And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' [7] They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.' [8] "So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.' [9] And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. [10] But when the first

came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. [11] And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, [12] saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.' [13] But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? [14] Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. [15] Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' [16] So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."

Matthew 20:1-16 (NKJV)

MONDAY

Fellowship

STOP COMPARING YOURSELF TO OTHERS.

Those hired last came up and were each given a dollar. When those who were hired first saw that, they assumed they would get far more.

Matthew 20:9-10a (Msg)

Read Acts 2:42-45

- ? What did the believers do to combat envy?
- ? What are some of the personal problems envy causes?

Read Ecclesiastes 4:10

- ? Why do many people work so hard?
- ? Have you ever been envious of someone else's things, talents, etc.? How did this make you feel?

Fellowship - God cherishes relationship. His very nature is relational; He wants to share His gifts with us. For He promised, "my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus." As children of God we get to share in the family fortune. Here on earth we are given "the riches...of His grace...kindness...patience...glory...wisdom...power...and money" not envy.

TUESDAY

Discipleship (Maturity)

START ENJOYING GOD'S GRACE TO OTHERS

The workers who had been hired first thought they would be given more than the others. But when they were given the same, they began complaining to the owner of the vineyard... He said, 'Are you envious because I am generous to them?'

Matthew 20:10-11, 15b (CEV/NIV)

Rejoice with those who rejoice!

Romans 12:15 (NIV)

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 and James 4:1

- ? According to these scriptures, what keeps Christians from maturing?
- ? According to James, where do these hindrances come from?
- ? When was the last time you believed Satan's lie and fell into the trap of envy?

Realize your vulnerability. God warns us never to get cocky and overconfident; that is the recipe for disaster. Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure." That means we are good at fooling ourselves. Given the right circumstances, any of us are capable of any sin. We must never let down our guard and think we're beyond temptation. Accountability nurtures maturity. Consider one of our small groups to develop your spiritual maturity.

WEDNESDAY

Worship (Magnification)

BE GRATEFUL FOR WHAT YOU HAVE

Isn't everything you have and everything you are sheer gifts from God? So what's the point of all this comparing and competing? You already have all you need!

1 Corinthians 4:7b-8a (Msg)

It is better to be satisfied with what you have than to be always wanting something else.

Ecclesiastes 6:9 (GN)

Read 1 Corinthians 4:7-8

- ? How does worship help you combat envy?
- ? Have you ever admitted your envies to a friend? What was their reaction?
- ? Have you ever schemed to get your own way? How did envy drive you to manipulate others?

Worship (Magnification) - When Jesus said, "Love God with all your heart and soul" he meant that worship must be genuine and heartfelt. It is not just a matter of saying the right words; you must mean what you say. Heartless praise is not praise at all! It is worthless, an insult to God.

THURSDAY

Evangelism (Mission)

TRUST GOD WHEN LIFE SEEMS UNFAIR

These last workers put in only one easy hour, and yet you have made them equal to us - we who slaved all day under a scorching sun!

Matthew 20:12 (Msg)

The Owner: "Friends, I didn't cheat you. I paid you exactly what we agreed on... What business is it of yours if I want to pay them the same that I paid you? Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money?"

Matthew 20:13-15a (CEV)

God has a mission for your life. He knows exactly what is needed to accomplish His purpose in your life, even when life seems unfair.

(God) comforts and strengthens us in our hardship and trials... So that when others are troubled, needing our sympathy and encouragement, we can pass on to them this same help and comfort God has given us.

2 Corinthians 1:4

- ? According to this verse, how should tribulations effect your ability to help others?

Read Revelation 2:4

- Envy is the fever. Doubting God is the infection. What is the reason of your sickness?

- According to Revelation 2:4, what is the cure?

Evangelism (Mission) - Your mission gives your life meaning. Williams James said, "The best use of life is to spend it for something that outlasts it." The truth is, only the kingdom of God is going to last. Everything else will eventually vanish. That is why we must live purpose-driven lives - lives committed to worship, fellowship, spiritual growth, ministry, and fulfilling our mission on earth. The results of these activities will last - forever!

FRIDAY

Service (Ministry)

KEEP FOCUSED ON GOD'S PLAN FOR YOU

The owner: "Take your money now and go!"

Matthew 20:14a (GW)

Let us run with patience the particular race that God has set before us.

Hebrews 12:1

You saw me before I was born and scheduled every day of my life before I began to breathe.

Psalms 139:15 (LB)

Jesus concluded: "And so it is, that many who are first now will be last then and those who are last now will be first then... If you want to be great, you must become the servant of all the others."

Matthew 20:16, 26 (NLT/CEV)

Read John 13:2-20

- What in your life is God going to evaluate and reward in Heaven?
- What has God promised, in verse 17, if you use your life for service to others?

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Galatians 6:9-10 (NKJV)

Whenever people are jealous or selfish, they cause trouble.

James 3:16

- How should you use your spiritual gifts?
- What affect does your envy have on your service to Christ?

Service (Ministry) - While knowing your shape is important for serving God, having the heart of a servant is even more important. Remember, God shaped you for service, not for self-centeredness. Without a servant's heart, you will be tempted to misuse your shape for personal gain. You will also be tempted to use it as an excuse to exempt yourself from meeting some needs.

SATURDAY

Personal Application and Commitment

The truth is, although we all struggle with envy, it's hard to admit it. It's hard to admit that we struggle with this.

1. It is such an ugly emotion, such an ugly feeling toward others.

2. Envy, when you're envious of others, you really want them to fail. You want them to fall flat on their face. You don't tell anyone else, but it really makes your day when they have a bad day.
3. Because you feel better because they don't have something. When you think about that, that's pretty crazy, isn't it? It's hard to recognize envy because it's all around us. It's a part of our society. We're inundated with it.

Revelations 2:4 tells us to remember, repent and redo our first works, as when we were first in love with Jesus.

Spend 15 minutes alone with God today and ask Him to point out any envy in your heart. Now ask God's forgiveness and to replace this void with greater commitment to love God.

LOVE IS FORGIVING

40 Days of Love

WEEK 4

Today we're going to look at the ultimate test of love. The ultimate test of love is when somebody hurts you.

- How do you respond?
- Do you have a grudge?
- Do you get resentful?
- Do you get full of bitterness?
- How do you handle when somebody hurts you?

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Love doesn't keep a record of wrongs that others do.

1 Corinthians 13:5

In other words, love doesn't store up hurt.

MONDAY

Love should be the response to Jesus' forgiveness

But anyone who has been forgiven for only a little will show only a little love.

Luke 7:47 (CEV)

Overflowing love is the natural response to forgiveness and the appropriate consequence of faith. But only those who realize the depth of their sin can appreciate the complete forgiveness God offers them. Jesus has rescued all of his followers, whether they were once extremely wicked or conventionally good, from eternal death. Do you appreciate the wideness of God's mercy? Are you grateful for his forgiveness?

- What is the correlation between forgiveness and love?
- How do you normally respond to someone who hurts you?

So if you are standing before the altar in the Temple, offering a sacrifice to God, and suddenly remember that a friend has something against you, [24] leave your sacrifice there beside the altar and go and apologize and be reconciled to him, and then come and offer your sacrifice to God.

Matthew 5:23-24 (Living)

- How important is your forgiveness to worship?
- Do you obey God immediately when he prompts you to reconcile a relationship before you further your intimacy with God?
- What kind of result did you experience when you returned to worship?

Worship (Magnification) - What pleases God more: burnt offerings and sacrifices or obedience to his voice? It is better to obey than to sacrifice. Such simple acts as telling the truth, being kind, encouraging and forgiving other's all bring a smile to God's face.

TUESDAY

Steer away from holding a grudge

If you kept record of our sins, no one could last long. [4] But you forgive us, and so we will worship you.

Psalm 130:3-4 (CEV)

Keeping a record of sins (or holding a grudge) is like building a wall between you and another person, and it is nearly impossible to talk openly while the wall is there. God doesn't keep a record of our sins; when he forgives, he forgives completely, tearing down any wall between us and him. Therefore, we fear (revere) God, yet we can talk to him about anything. When you pray, realize that God is holding nothing against you. His lines of communication are completely open.

Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God has forgiven you because you belong to Christ.

Ephes. 4:32 (Living)

- According to these two verses, what are the primary benefits for not holding a grudge?
- What hurts do you need to surrender to God to gain forgiveness?
- Out of your forgiveness, who do you need to forgive?

I have sinned against you, especially you. I have done what you consider evil. So you hand down justice when you speak, and you are blameless when you judge.

Psalm 51:4 (GW)

The primary significance of fellowship is intimacy and bonding with God. Your own anger, hurt, and bitterness is your own choice.

- When you hurt another person, whose fellowship is affected?
- Do you regularly try to protect the fellowship you have with God and other believers?

Fellowship - If you want God's blessing on your life and you want to be known as a child of God, you must learn to be a peacemaker. Jesus said, "God blesses those who

work for peace, for they will be called the children of God." Notice Jesus didn't say, "blessed are the peace lovers," because everyone loves peace. Neither did he say "blessed are the peaceable," who are never disturbed by anything. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who work for peace" – those who actively seek to resolve conflict. Peacemakers are rare because peacemaking is hard work.

WEDNESDAY

Surrender any feelings of resentment to God

Never desire to take your neighbor's household away from him. "Never desire to take your neighbor's wife, his male or female slave, his ox, his donkey, or anything else that belongs to him.

Exodus 20:17 (GW)

To covet is to wish to have the possessions of others. It goes beyond simply admiring someone else's possessions or thinking, "I'd like to have one of those." Coveting includes envy—resenting the fact that others have what you don't. God knows, however, that possessions never make anyone happy for long. Since only God can supply all our needs, true contentment is found only in him. When you begin to covet, try to determine if a more basic need is leading you to envy. For example, you may covet someone's success, not because you want to take it away from him, but because you would like to feel as appreciated by others as he is. If this is the case, pray that God will help you deal with your resentment and meet your basic needs.

- Do you covet anything from anyone?
- What effect does your resentment have on your spiritual growth?
- In what area of your life do you most often find resentment?

But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT)

Fruit always matures and ripens slowly. God develops the fruit of the Spirit in your life by allowing you to experience circumstances in which you're tempted to express the exact opposite quality! Character development always involves a choice, and temptation provides that opportunity.

- In what areas of your life do you have difficulty resisting temptation?
- What habit in your life threatens your spiritual maturity?

Discipleship (Maturity) - Problems force us to look to God and depend on him instead of ourselves. You'll never know that God is all you need until God is all you've got. Regardless of the cause, none of your problems could happen without God's permission. Everything that happens to a child of God is Father-filtered, and he intends to use it for good even when Satan and others mean it for bad.

THURSDAY

Make lemonade from your lemons

Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. [13] As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. [14] Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

Philip. 1:12-14 (NIV)

Being imprisoned would cause many people to become bitter or to give up, but Paul saw it as one more opportunity to spread the Good News of Christ. Paul realized that his current circumstances weren't as important as what he did with them. Turning a bad situation into a good one, he reached out to the Roman soldiers who made up the palace guard and encouraged those Christians who were afraid of persecution. We may not be in prison, but we still have plenty of opportunities to be discouraged—times of indecision, financial burdens, family conflict, church conflict, or the loss of our jobs. How we act in such situations will reflect what we believe. Like Paul, look for ways to demonstrate your faith even in bad situations. Whether or not the situation improves, your faith will grow stronger.

- How often does your family see the love of Christ in your disappointments?
- Do co-workers see your attitude in anger or patience as good or bad?

Make sure that everyone has kindness from God so that bitterness doesn't take root and grow up to cause trouble that corrupts many of you.

Hebrews 12:15 (GW)

- What can you do to ensure bitterness does not take root in your heart?
- Why should unbelievers witness the kindness of God in your life?
- How does bitterness corrupt the intimacy of family unity?
- What has God taught you from failure?

Evangelism (Mission) - Your mission is a continuation of Jesus' mission on earth. Your mission is so significant that Jesus repeated it five times, in five different ways, in five different books of the Bible. Your mission is a wonderful privilege. Your mission involves two great privileges: working with God and representing him.

FRIDAY

Be swift to hear and slow to speak

- Love does not keep a record of wrongs. Do you?
- Do you hold other believers mistakes against them?
- Can you serve in a ministry with someone who has hurt you in the past?

Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself.

Philip. 2:5 (Msg)

But because my servant Caleb has a different attitude and has wholeheartedly followed me, I'll bring him to the land he already explored. His descendants will possess it.

Numbers 14:24 (GW)

- What does the heart of a servant look like?
- What is the advantage to wholeheartedly following Christ?

If someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life.

Matthew 5:41 (Msg)

- How do you respond when someone treats you like a servant?
- How do you treat a family member who takes advantage of your servant's heart?

Ministry (Service) - The one thing required of such servants is that they be faithful to their master. Thinking like a servant is difficult because it challenges the basic problem of my life: I am by nature selfish. Self-denial is the core of Servanthood. Servants think life stewards not owners.

LOVE IS HUMBLE

40 Days of Love

WEEK 5

We're continuing in our series we're calling "40 Days of Love." We're looking at eight different traits of love. This week, we're looking at "Love is Humble." It tells us in 1 Corinthians 13:4 *"Love is not conceited or proud."* If you want to build authentic relationships, you've got to learn the characteristic of humility. HUMILITY: It is Not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of others instead and acting in their best interest, instead of your own.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Pride only leads to arguments.

Proverbs 13:10

MONDAY

Practice giving preference to others

The Lord sneers at those who sneer at him, but he is kind to everyone who is humble.

Proverbs 3:34 (CEV)

- What is the advantage to practicing humility?
- Have you ever experienced God's displeasure by acting in a self-centered manner?
- What can you start practicing to think of others more?

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Romans 12:10 (NIV)

- How should we view the members of our church family?
- What can you do to practice humility in our church family?

Fellowship – Your heavenly Father's goal is for you to mature and develop the characteristics of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, many Christians never mature. They only grow older. Spiritual growth is not automatic. It takes commitment and intentional work.

Is there an area in your life where you need to stop thinking your way and start thinking God's way?

TUESDAY

Practice learning from others

Conceited people do not like to be corrected and they never ask for advice.

Proverbs 15:12 (GN)

- How do you normally behave when someone close to you corrects you?
- How would someone close to you answer the first question "You are normally conceited, you are sometimes conceited, you are never conceited?"

If you reject criticism, you only harm yourself, but if you listen to correction, you grow in understanding.

Proverbs 15:32 (NLT)

- What is the effect of rejecting constructive criticism?
- What is the benefit of accepting the lessons learned from others?

Discipleship (Maturity) – Benjamin Franklin said "experience keeps a dear school, but a fool will learn no other." Loners have no choice, they must learn by experience. Consider joining one of our small groups to bond with other believers and learn from their lessons of life.

WEDNESDAY

Practice admitting you're wrong.

Make this your common practice: Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you can live together whole and healed.

James 5:16, (Msg)

- What has God promised?
- What can you do to develop this as a common practice?

If you don't confess your sins, you will be a failure. But God will be merciful if you confess your sins and give them up.

Proverbs 28:13 (CEV)

- What's the advantage to confess your sins to someone else?
- What's the difference between confessing your sins and giving them up?
- How does refusing to give up your sin affect your worship?

Worship (Magnification) – Offering yourself to God is what worship is all about. Focusing on God is loving your relationship with Him. It's impossible to love God and harbor sin. The Bible says:

Focusing on yourself is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God, and ends up thinking more about self than God.

Rom. 8:7 (Msg)

THURSDAY

Practice surrendering your plans to God.

This is what the Lord requires from you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to live humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8 (GW)

- What is more important to you, completing your tasks or being available to be used by God for His purpose?
- Why is humility an important ingredient in planning your day?
- What three things do you need to do today satisfy what God requires of you?

All who humble themselves before the Lord shall be given every blessing and shall have wonderful peace.

Psalms 37:11 (LB)

- What are the benefits of including God in your daily planning?
- Is there an area in your life where you are missing God's wonderful peace?

Service (Ministry) – Pray:

Turn me away from wanting any other plan than Yours.

Psalms 119:37 (LB)

Today, if you have already planned-out your day, stop and ask God how His will for your life fits with your schedule? Someone may need your help and God's plan may include you ministering to the hurts and pains of a friend. **You must be willing to be interrupted.** Kindness doesn't happen on *your* schedule. It happens on *their* schedule. That's why they need kindness. At that moment, you've got to drop everything you've got.

FRIDAY

Practice real love

My dear children, let's not just talk about love; let's practice real love.

1 John 3:18 (Msg)

- What does it mean to practice anything i.e. piano, football, sports, humility?
- What's the difference between talking about love and practicing real love?
- What are some possible ways that you can express humility to others?

Evangelism (Mission) – Since you are one of God's children, you need to practice real love. God loves people and relationships. Shift from self-centered to other-centered thinking. The only way you can make this paradigm switch is by a moment-by-moment dependence on God. Every journey begins with a single step. What steps can you take to deepen your humility?

SATURDAY

Personal Application and Commitment

Anytime you get disconnected from Jesus Christ, you're going to get under stress. And every time you get reconnected to Jesus Christ under His yoke, the stress level is going to go down in your life. He says, "My yoke is easy." Most of you are thinking, "My yoke isn't easy. I've got a heavy schedule. I can't even tell you all the stuff I have to get done this next week. It's a heavy load." Is your life a heavy load? It's your yoke, and not God's. You're following your plans for your life, which God never intended for you to do, instead of His plans.

Humility is giving up control of your life to God your creator who made you. That's the ultimate act of humility. "God, You call the shots. You're in charge. I'm yoking up with You. I'm connecting to You."

Which of these four habits do you need to work on this week? How quickly do you adjust to the needs of others around you? Do you give deference to their preference? How eager are you to listen and to learn from correction? Do you get defensive? How quickly do you admit it when you are wrong? Have you ever done that? It takes courage to be humble. How willing are you to surrender your plans to God? God says, "The people that I treasure the most are the humble."

LOVE IS RESPECTFUL

40 Days of Love

WEEK 6

In this series "40 Days of Love," we're looking at different aspects of love. This week we're going to study how love is about being respectful, showing respect to others. In 1 Corinthians 13:5, "Love is not rude. It is not self seeking."

Definition of Respect: Showing value and honor to others by your actions.

MEMORY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Love...is not rude, it is not self seeking...

1 Corinthians 13:5

MONDAY

Practice accepting unpopular people

ACCORDING TO THE VERSES BELOW ANSWER THE APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

- Is it ok to be popular at school or work?
- Do I have to be friends with everyone?
- Is it ok to make fun of people who are different?
- Why should I be friends with the people that no one else likes?

John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw a man using your name to cast out demons, but we told him to stop because he isn't one of our group."

Mark 9:38 (NLT)

Jesus said to his disciples: Don't stop him! No one who works miracles in my name will soon turn and say something bad about me.

Mark 9:39 (CEV)

Later, as Jesus and his disciples were eating dinner [at Matthew's house], there were many notorious swindlers there as guests!

Matthew 9:10 (Living)

Evangelism (Mission) - Your mission is a continuation of Jesus' mission on earth. As his followers, we are to continue what Jesus started. Jesus calls us not only to come to him, but to go for him. Your mission is so significant that Jesus repeated it five times, in five different ways, in five different books of the bible.

TUESDAY

Practice guarding your tongue

Have you ever wished you could eat your words? Family conflicts can lead to ugly quarrels. You can say things you later wish you had not. When you have a problem with someone in your family, be careful what you say. Try to work things out without fighting.

She (Sara) turned upon Abraham and demanded, "Get rid of that slave girl and her son. He is not going to share your property with my son. I won't have it."

Genesis 21:10 (Living)

- How could Sara have expressed her feelings more respectfully?
- How could you communicate more respect in family conflict?

It is harder to win back the friendship of an offended brother than to capture a fortified city. His anger shuts you out like iron bars.

Proverbs 18:19 (Living)

- Whose friendship has been harder to win back due to you not guarding your tongue?
- How do you respond when someone shuts you out?
- How do you respect someone who has shut you out?

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

James 4:1 (NIV)

- Do you normally defend yourself or do you accept the constructive criticism of others?
- How does your response to criticism enhance or diminish your respect of others?

Discipleship (Maturity) - Conflicts and disputes among believers are always harmful. James explains that these quarrels result from evil desires battling within us - we want more possessions, more money, higher status, more recognition. When we want badly enough to fulfill these desires, we fight in order to do so. Instead of aggressively grabbing what we want, we should submit ourselves to God, ask God to help us get rid of our selfish desires, and trust him to give us what we really need.

WEDNESDAY

Practice yielding your rights and serve

But you must do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak evil against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ.

1 Peter 3:16 (NLT)

- How do you respect those who speak evil against you?

Show respect for everyone. Love Christians everywhere. Fear God and honor the government.

1 Peter 2:17 (Living)

- How do you respect everyone and maintain your Christian principles?

So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well. If I love you more, will you love me less?

2 Corinthians 12:15 (NIV)

How have you actively engaged in ministry with your church family?

Ministry (Service) - Real servants pay attention to needs. They are always on the lookout for how they can help others. When they see a need, they seize the moment and do what is needed. Real servants do every task with equal dedication. For their service is to the Lord and not unto man. Jesus said "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

THURSDAY

Practice respecting God

The Lord has said: "These people praise me with their words, but they never really think about me. They worship me by repeating rules made up by humans.

Isaiah 29:13 (CEV)

- According to this verse, what is the people's attitude toward worship?
- How can you keep from making worship a chore?

If my own people will humbly pray and turn back to me and stop sinning, then I will answer them from heaven. I will forgive them and make their land fertile once again.

2 Chronicles 7:14 (CEV)

- What must you do to restore delight in worship, when worship becomes a chore?

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord."

Psalms 122:1 (NLT)

- What attitude should you have about going to church?

Worship (Magnification) - Going to God's house can be a chore or a delight. For the psalmist, it was a delight. As a pilgrim attending one of the three great religious festivals, he rejoiced to worship with God's people in God's house. We may find worship a chore if we have unconfessed sin or if our love for God has cooled. But if we are close to God and enjoy his presence, we will be eager to worship and praise him. Our attitude toward God will determine our view of worship.

FRIDAY

Practice respecting his family

His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by sending Jesus Christ to die for us. And he did this because he wanted to!

Ephesians 1:5 (Living)

- Do you respect other believers as if they were members of your own family?
- List the top three believers you disrespect and why?
- What steps do you need to take to heal this division?

and you are my friends if you obey me. [15] I no longer call you slaves, for a master doesn't confide in his slaves; now you are my friends, proved by the fact that I have told you everything the Father told me.

John 15:14-15 (Living)

- What is the significance of being a friend of Jesus?
- Do your actions show that Jesus matters to you?
- Do your actions show that your church family matters to you?

Fellowship - Learning to love unselfishly is not an easy task. It runs counter to our self-centered nature. That's why God has given us a life time to learn it. Of course God wants us to love everyone, but He is particularly concerned that we learn to love others in the family of God.

SATURDAY

Personal Application and Commitment

Everybody wants to know they are loved and their lives count. Prayerfully consider three people to whom you can reach out and show that you respect them and they have real value to you. Paul said in Colossians 4:3 (NLT) "Don't forget to pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to preach about his secret plan." Now pray that God will give you the opportunity to reach these three people this week.

LOVE IS PATIENT

40 Days of Love

WEEK 7

We're going to talk this week about how you and I can experience what it means for love to be patient.

- patient with circumstances.
- patience in our relationships,
- patience with people.

Memory Verse:

A gentle response diffuses anger, but a sharp tongue kindles the fire.

Proverbs 15:1

MONDAY

Assess your anger

The Lord said to Moses,

Because of what Phinehas has done, I am no longer angry with the people of Israel. He refused to tolerate the worship of any god but me, and that is why I did not destroy them in my anger.

Numbers 25:10-11 (TEV)

It is clear from Phinehas's story that some anger is proper and justified. Phinehas was angry because of his zeal for the Lord. But how can we know when our anger is appropriate and when it should be restrained? Ask these questions when you become angry: (1) Why am I angry? (2) Whose rights are being violated (mine or another's)? (3) Is the truth (a principle of God) being violated? If only your rights are at stake, it may be wiser to keep angry feelings under control. But if the truth is at stake, anger is often justified, although violence and retaliation are usually the wrong way to express it (Phinehas's case was unique). If we are becoming more and more like God, we should be angered by sin.

So he made a whip from cords and drove all the animals out of the Temple, both the sheep and the cattle; he overturned the tables of the moneychangers and scattered their coins; [16] and he ordered those who sold the pigeons, "Take them out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

John 2:15-16 (TEV)

Remember this, my dear friends! Everyone must be quick to listen, but slow to speak and slow to become angry. [20] Human anger does not achieve God's righteous purpose.

James 1:19-20 (TEV)

- Who are the top three people who receive your anger?
- When was the last time you got angry in church?
- How did you resolve angry issues with other believers?

Worship (Magnification) - The church exists to worship God. You were created to worship God and find meaning throughout your whole life. Your anger may keep you from

worshipping God. Look back over that last month and see if you were able to worship God while remaining angry? What did you do to correct the problem?

TUESDAY

Assimilate your Christian Character

Don't hang out with angry people. Don't keep company with hotheads. Bad temper is contagious. Don't get infected.

Proverbs 22:24-25

- According to this verse, how do your friends influence your spiritual maturity?
- What relationships are you involved in that keep you from denying yourself and carrying your cross?

Human anger does not achieve God's righteous purpose.

James 1:20 (TEV)

Your anger can never make things right in God's sight.

James 1:20 (NLT)

A person with good sense is patient, and it is to his credit that he overlooks an offense.

Proverbs 19:11 (GW)

- According to these verses, how does your anger affect God's purpose in your life?
- How does spiritual maturity change your reaction to offenses?

Discipleship (Maturity) - Discipleship is the process of helping people become more and more like Christ in their thoughts, feelings and actions. Who do you need to thank this week for helping you become godly? Who are you presently helping to become godly? What habits do you need to develop to establish Christ-like character?

WEDNESDAY

Address the behavior you reveal to others

If you cannot control your anger, you are as helpless as a city without walls, open to attack.

Proverbs 25:28 (TEV)

- When plans change because of others how do you normally react?
- When family members upset you, do they confront your anger or let it pass?
- How would your friends rate you on your anger management?
- How would your family rate you on anger management?

When God saw that they had put a stop to their evil ways, he had mercy on them and didn't carry out the destruction he had threatened.

Jonah 3:10 (NLT)

Jonah was very upset about this, and he became angry.

Jonah 4:1 (GW)

- Are you surprised when some unlikely person turns to God? Is it possible that your view is as narrow as Jonah's?
- Does your behavior reveal to others you care?

Evangelism (Mission) - The church exists to communicate God's word. You are His ambassador. It is your responsibility wherever you go. Are you more like Jonah or Paul? Do you gladly follow God's plan for your life or resent interruptions to your plans?

THURSDAY

Accept differing opinions

Accept Christians who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong.

Romans 14:1 (NLT)

Who is weak in faith and who is strong? We are all weak in some areas and strong in others. Our faith is strong in an area if we can survive contact with sinners without falling into their patterns. It is weak in an area if we must avoid certain activities, people, or places in order to protect our spiritual life. It is important to take a self-inventory in order to find out our strengths and weaknesses. Whenever in doubt, we should ask, "Can I do that without sinning? Can I influence others for good, rather than being influenced by them?"

In areas of strength, we should not fear being defiled by the world; rather we should go and serve God. In areas of weakness, we need to be cautious. If we have a strong faith but shelter it, we are not doing Christ's work in the world. If we have a weak faith but expose it, we are being extremely foolish.

This verse assumes there will be differences of opinion in the church (disputable matters). Paul says we are not to quarrel about issues that are matters of opinion. Differences should not be feared or avoided, but accepted and handled with love. Don't expect everyone, even in the best possible church, to agree on every subject. Through sharing ideas we can come to a fuller understanding of what the Bible teaches. Accept, listen to, and respect others. Differences of opinion need not cause division. They can be a source of learning and richness in our relationships.

What is weak faith? Paul is speaking about immature faith that has not yet developed the muscle it needs to stand against external pressures. For example, if a person who once worshiped idols were to become a Christian, he might understand perfectly well that Christ saved him through faith and that idols have no real power. Still, because of his past associations, he might be badly shaken if he knowingly ate meat that had been used in idol worship as part of a pagan ritual. If a person who once worshiped God on the required Jewish holy days were to become a Christian, he might well know that Christ saved him through faith, not through his keeping of the law. Still, when the feast days came, he might feel empty and unfaithful if he didn't dedicate those days to God.

Paul responds to both weak brothers in love. Both are acting according to their consciences, but their honest scruples do not need to be made into rules for the church. Certainly some issues are central to the faith and worth fighting for—but many are based on individual differences and should not be legislated. Our principle should be: In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in everything, love.

- Is it hard for you to accept the opinion of a weaker believer?
- When you differ from other believer's opinions does unity remain intact?

- What do you need to do differently before church services begin to fellowship with more believers?

Fellowship - As Christians we are called to belong not just believe. We are to belong to God's family and be members of God's body. This is fellowship. This week you need to join a small group because fellowship is practiced in small groups not corporate worship services.

FRIDAY

Apply Patience

It is better to be patient than powerful. It is better to win control over yourself than over whole cities.

Proverbs 16:32 (TEV)

If you are sensible, you will control your temper. When someone wrongs you, it is a great virtue to ignore it.

Proverbs 19:11 (TEV)

- When are you most likely to not apply patience with others?
- According to these verses, why should you apply patience to your ministry?
- What is God's purpose of placing you in a ministry where you must practice patience?

Service (Ministry) - The church exists to minister to people. Ministry is demonstrating God's love to others by meeting their needs and healing their hurts in the name of Jesus. The church is to minister to all kinds of needs: emotional, relational, and physical. Ministry frequently requires group action. Effective group action requires patience, love, and self-control. You're needed in ministry to successfully meet the needs of all believers. Your service to Christ will one day be rewarded for fulfilling all the Christ's planned you to do. Until 'The Rapture' remain faithful in all things.