



Love as Loved

FIRST LOVED SUMMARY

Jesus loved his disciples. John wrote: “Having loved his own . . . he loved them to the end” (John 13:1). From the day he called them to follow him until he ascended, Jesus loved “his own”. He loved through various words and actions over those three years. During his final meal with them, he revealed two astonishing things about his love for them – he loved them as the Father had loved him (John 15:9) and the Father himself loved them through him. “If you have seen (experienced) me, you have seen (experienced) the Father . . . because it is the Father living in me doing his work” (John 14:9-11). This was all possible by the Holy Spirit in him (Luke 3:22; Luke 4:1- 14; Acts 10:38).

Finally, he gave them a new command:
 “Love one another as I have loved you!”
 (John 13:34; 15:12).

He concluded by stating that loving one another (and ultimately all people) this way would be the singular characteristic by which the world would identify them as his own
 (John 13:35).

But how do we, his present-day disciples, experience Jesus love us in “embodied” ways so that we can love others “AS” he has loved us? The truth is, he and the Father are “embodied” in and among us by the Spirit (John 14:16, 23; Romans 8:9-10). What follows, are two practices that can help us experience their embodied love today so that we can love others as he has loved us, and “because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

The Love–Verse Practice

WORDS

Invite God to speak to you personally from scripture texts that provide timeless revelations of his love for you (similar to the early church practice of *Lectio Divina*).

Personalize and Memorize

(Zephaniah 3:17, NIV): “The LORD your God is with you. He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.” Personalized: *I am the LORD your God and I am with you. I am mighty to save you, [Your name]. I take great delight in you. I quiet you with My love and I rejoice over you, [Your name] with singing.*”

Vocalize and Meditate

Speak this personalized scripture text to yourself, out loud with passion. Speak it again and again, until the words— like water—begin to soften your heart soil. Invite a friend to speak these personalized words over you. Don’t stop meditating (i.e., marinating your soul) until you feel God’s heart toward you through the very words of scripture. When time permits, write out the verse using synonyms and antonyms to help his truth penetrate deeper into your heart. Listen to the Spirit to give further words of encouragement.

Synonym/Antonym Sample

“[Your name], I am the LORD, Yahweh, your God. I am always with you. I am never detached or distant. I am here as a warrior to fight for you and to deliver you through the pressures you’re enduring. Do not for a moment allow yourself to think that I don’t care about you. The truth is I adore you; I delight in the relationship we share. I am eager to console you with my love, my kindness, and my affection. In fact, as I listen to you, I celebrate your life and your faith in me rejoicing over you with songs of celebration and exuberant shouts!”

Imitate

Share the verse with someone else to pour God’s love into their hearts. Be led by the Spirit to share any additional words of comfort and encouragement.

The God-Sighting Practice

ACTIONS

By the Spirit, Jesus was the “visible” image of the invisible God (John 1:18; John 14:9; Col. 1:15). Likewise, by the Spirit, our Triune God expresses his love in “visible/embodied” ways today through our loving interactions (1 John 4:12; John 14:16, 23; Rom 8:9-10). This practice helps us to stop, remember, and revel in God’s expressions of love for us by us.

Remember & Give Thanks

(Phil 1:3) for the way someone loved you, you loved someone, or a loving-interaction you witnessed. We encourage you to write it down with all the details – emotions, actions, facial expressions, etc.

Personalize and Vocalize Your Gratitude

(Matt. 7:11) by hearing God say to you, “If you [or If they] can give, express, demonstrate that kind of love on a human level, imagine how much more I, your Heavenly Father, love you that way! I really do love you that much and more!” Example:

Father, thank you so much for the way Joe greeted me today – his huge smile, laughter, long and strong hug, and precious words of affection! I felt so loved by him. Thank you for loving me through him. *(Your name), if Joe feels that way about you, how much more do I? He beautifully embodied and expressed my love for you! I truly respond that way and so much more every time I see you coming!*
(Luke 15:20)

Meditate on God-Sightings

By reliving them in your memory over and over to experience the Father or Jesus love you through the one who loved.

Imitate

whatever you’ve seen or heard, put it into practice. (Phil. 4:9)

Touchpoint Groups

TOGETHER

We gather as his church (1 Cor. 11:18) in varieties of settings and sizes to experience and express God’s love in embodied ways.

We Share

Gathering together allows us to share our Love verses and God-sightings with one another. Paul wrote: “When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation . . .” (1 Cor. 14:26). We also “share and do good” as sacrifices of worship that please God (Heb. 13:16; Rom. 12:1; Phil. 4:18). Simultaneously, God also distributes other gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4-6, 11). Perhaps, it was because of these abundant and varied expressions of love at gatherings that they were also called “love feasts” (Jude 12).

We Identify and Help Remove Barriers

We need to cultivate safe, committed relationships in order to process the barriers that may surface in us, preventing us from receiving and sharing God’s love. We have all had many experiences of being “unloved” by life and people or being “unloving” to God, others, or ourselves. Sharing and praying with others can help to heal and remove these barriers.

Loving the Jesus Way

FOCUS

Being Loved and Loving as Loved by the Spirit

This is the rhythm and balance of life and how we remain in his love and experience full and complete joy (John 15:10-11)! It is “easy, light, and rest for our souls” (Matt. 11:30). By it, we fulfill the law (Rom. 13:9-10) and bring God glory (John 15:8). May this be your way of life for all your life, because it is life!

For more information, visit us at

www.FirstLovedMinistries.org

or call us at

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