**More – Week 3 - More Love**

**Message Big Idea**: Jesus offers more love by demonstrating what true love looks like.

**Scripture:** John 15:12-13, 1 John 4:8, Philippians 2:5-8, Romans 5:8

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**Introduction: Selfish**

*(sarcastic tone)* I don’t think it’s too much to ask. I mean, I wouldn’t consider myself that selfish of a person. But there a lot of things I would like see done for me on a regular basis. Maybe you can relate to some of these:

* Anytime there’s a new iPhone, I want to have my old one replaced; in fact, anytime Apple comes out with a new product, I’ll take 2 of each.
* If I miss a train or bus, I should have the ability to be magically transported to my destination.
* How about parking tickets?! If I get a parking ticket, I should be able to rip it up and not pay for it -- who would like to do that from time to time?!
* And while I’m at it, I want 1 box of Pop Tarts delivered to my door, every week. I know it’s a weird request, but that’s what I want!
* Also, I’d like to have neighbors that don’t smoke pot, ever.
* I want enough money to go out to eat at a new restaurant, with my family of 5, every night of the week.
* I need to update my wardrobe every couple months -- it takes a lot to look this Hipster!
* And, honestly, maybe you can relate to this one, I think I deserve 4 weeks paid-for vacation every year, with my family, to any place we want to go to on the planet.
* And is it too much to ask that all 3 of my kids get straight A’s for their entire academic life, be in every sport, join every club and not date until they are 30?!
* And I haven’t even started on getting what I deserve out of my marriage!
* Actually maybe I’ll just stop right there... :)

All of this sounds pretty ridiculous, doesn’t it? Maybe it’s because it’s a long list and when you put them all together they sound crazy and certainly some of them are insanely unrealistic, but ~~it really would be great to have 4 weeks of paid-for vacation every year wouldn’t it?!~~

Let’s be honest, don’t we tend to have this kind of view on life? A desire for more of *my* needs met. You might even call it selfish. I wonder what would happen if we had the ability to fulfill whatever selfish desire was right in front of us:

Do we need this? Important

**Video: The Black Hole** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijEfmJLV5PE

**Series Recap**

*(Series graphic)* All of us know what it is like to feel selfish desires. Many of us have spent the greater part of our lives trying to grab hold of things we think will satisfy us. Now, chances are none of us has ever found ourselves stuck in a safe, but we might know what it feels like to be trapped…never quite finding that sense of satisfaction we long for. Even if we’ve attained many of our dreams, we can still be left feeling: “There’s got to be more!”

Well, there is “more,” but it’s not found in chasing after all our selfish desires. The “more” we long for is found in one place, rather in one person: Jesus. In our current series, we’re learning how Jesus came to show us the way to live a life of abundance…a life of more joy, more hope, and, as we’re talking about today, a life of **More Love**.

Is there anything we desire more than love? Is there anything we all need more than love?

**Word: John 15:12**

The teachings of Jesus reveal his wisdom for living a life of “more.” Often these teachings seem paradoxical, counter-intuitive because Jesus has an understanding of life that goes far beyond our own. And when it comes to living a life with “more love,” Jesus says this…

**“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” –John 15:12**

Do you want to know the way to a life of “more love?” Jesus asks. Then follow this command: Love each other as I have loved you.

But what exactly is Jesus asking of us here? Am I supposed to die on a cross? ~~Certainly the expectation is not that we will physically die on a cross, right?~~ What does it mean to love each other like Jesus has loved us?

This morning I want us to spend some time digging deeper into this command, and let’s start at the end and work our way back to the beginning.

**As I Have Loved You**

Jesus tells us to love *(highlight)* **“as I have loved you.”** How exactly has Jesus loved us? Potentially use Hebrew 12:2 By…

**Joyfully and willingly laying down his life to bring us good.**

Understand, Jesus is God and God’s very nature is communal. All throughout Scripture, God is described as Father, Spirit, and Son. God is a God who exists in community. He is a relational being, One being existing in three expressions - God the Father, God the Spirit, and God the Son – a mystery that came to be known as the Trinity. They have a selfless relationship where they all revolve around each other. Not one of them makes the others revolve around himself; each person in the Trinity is selfless and loves, adores, defers to, and rejoices in the others. Add: Distinct but inextricably connected….intertwined.

That’s why the Apostle John, a guy who knew Jesus better than anyone, describes God this way:

**“God is love.” -1 John 4:8**

Not God is loving or God likes to love, but that God *is* love. God is a relational God who is defined as love.

And love longs for an object of affection, so God created people. He made us in his image so that we would have the capacity to join in his communal nature. He designed us to love and be loved in intimate relationship with himself.

Yet, though we are made in his image, we did not choose his way of selfless devotion. Instead of “joyfully and willingly laying down our lives to bring him good,” we turned our back on him to seek our own good, our own satisfaction. Our selfish desires betrayed love and broke our relationship with him.

So what did God do? He came after us. He came after us himself, in the person of Jesus, to show us what true love looks like.

*(Philippians 2:5-8)* You see even though Jesus was God, even though all the glory and worship of heaven was his, he willingly chose to empty himself of his position to be born as a human being. He humbled himself, even allowing himself to be subject to torture, dying a cruel death on a cross. He joyfully and willingly laid down his life to bring us good.

*(Romans 5:8)* And the Apostle Paul reminds us that he did this while we were still sinners, while we were still pursuing our selfish desires. Through his death on the cross, Jesus demonstrated that nothing, not even our rebellion against him, could keep him from loving us.

Jesus himself says:

**“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” –John 15:13**

Have you ever considered how remarkable it is that he calls us “friends?” In the ancient world, friendships were very important and operated on a number of levels.

* There were political friendships formed for strategic advantages. For example, certain people were known as “friends of Caesar.”
* There were patronage friendships in which a wealthy person would become the benefactor of someone less well off.
* And there were mutual friendships among equals where there was the sharing of confidences, possessions, and life itself.

What is remarkable is that when Jesus calls us “friends,” he intends for it to mean the latter!

The bottom line is that a life of “more love” begins with understanding that we are unconditionally, lavishly, completely, eternally loved. As has been said by others before, **“We are more sinful than we can ever have imagined, but we are more loved than we can ever have hoped.”** YOU ARE LOVED!!!

**Love Each Other**

And because we are loved, we can be free.

* Free from trying to impress others because in Jesus we find acceptance.
* Free from trying to gain from others because in Jesus we are fulfilled.
* Free from trying to dominate others because in Jesus we find belonging.

In Jesus we find freedom to **Joyfully and willingly lay down our lives to bring others good.**

As author John Stott put it:

**“No one who has been to the cross and seen God’s immeasurable and unmerited love displayed there can go back to a life of selfishness.” –John Stott**

Jesus says the way to a life of “more love” is to *(John 15:12 with highlight)* **“love each other”** as we have been loved. To joyfully and willingly lay down our lives to bring others good.

This is why Jesus’ teaching is so counter-intuitive. If we get honest with ourselves, most of us recognize that in our subconscious, we believe the way to a life with “more love” is to receive more love. But Jesus teaches the opposite. The way to a life of “more love” is by joyfully and willingly giving our own lives to bring others good. “Love each other as I have loved you.”

I have to tell you, when I tried to think of an example of what it looks like to live this way, I thought of a man many of us grew up watching on TV. Did any of you see the story of his life in the recent documentary, *(Movie)* **“Won’t You Be My Neighbor?”** Maybe it’s because I knew it was Child Dedication Sunday, but Mr. Roger’s story, a story of joyfully and willingly laying down his life to bring children good, felt like the perfect illustration for this morning. If you haven’t seen the film, here is a glimpse to remind you of the remarkable way of life of Mr. Rogers.

**Video: Mr. Rogers**

*Likely use one of his quotes from the movie to transition back to the TP.*

What might it look like for you and I to **Joyfully and willingly lay down our lives to bring others good.** A life of “more love” lies in the answer to that question.

**My Command is This**

Might replace this section with a personal story of how we can’t just flip a switch instead of saying. “As I look at my own life, I can’t just flip a switch and live like this. Following Jesus is the best way of life, but it hasn’t been the easiest way of life for me. I’ve needed people.” But the truth is we can’t just “flip a switch” and do this. Learning to live a life of “more love” is a product of a heart committed to following Jesus. In fact, we have one part left in our verse, the first part: *(John 15:12 with highlight)* **“My command is this.”** Learning to live a life of “more love” requires following Jesus’ teachings, being obedient to the way of life he demonstrated for us.

Following Jesus is the best way of life, but it’s not an easy way of life. That’s why no one should try to go it alone. Of course, we’re not alone, Jesus, through his Spirit, is with us; but while he walked this earth, he also demonstrated that the life he calls us to is something meant to be lived out in a community of his followers, an eternal community he calls the church.

**Challenge: Connect**

Here at COMMUNITY Christian Church, this idea that life is meant to be lived out in community is something we call *(3C Graphic)* CONNECT. CONNECT is all about the relationships we have with one another in the church.

Merriam Webster defines *(dictionary format)* “connect” as: “to bring together or into contact so that a real link is established.” A real link. Most of us would be willing to admit that what we’re looking for in life is something real. Something of significance. Something that would stand the test of time.

At COMMUNITY, we believe a: this is the “good” that Jesus joyfully and willingly laid down his life for … came to bring that we get to bring each other

* Jesus-centered
* Grace-filled
* Spirit-led
* Kingdom-focused

Biblical community is exactly that “link” that will really last. It’s this eternal community that offers exactly what we need to experience “move love” and love to the full.

And we believe one of the mostly likely ways you can experience this at COMMUNITY is by joining a small group. A small group can help every one of us grow in our understand of God, his love for us, what it means to follow him. And a small group is intended to be a place where a group of people learn to joyfully and willingly lay down their lives for one another as we pray for one another, serve one another, spend time with one another, sacrifice for one another, and just do life with one another.

I’ve recently been able to see what this looks like in my own small group and I gotta say, a small group that prays together, stays together. Give specific suggestion of what this looks like (i.e. texting group)That doesn’t mean our small group is perfect and it may not literally mean that we’ll always be physically in the presence of one another. But by being intentional about joyfully and willingly laying down our lives for one another, we’ve been able to see this little, Jesus-centered community, grow deeper together.

And I want the same for each of you. So I have two challenges for you:

**Challenge #1:** If you’re not in a small group, **Get Connected!** Our small groups are designed to meet you where you’re at spiritually. We offer groups for Men, Women, Young Professionals, Newly Married, financial planning, support / recovery, and even for a social, fun-filled game night *(list all the types of groups you offer at your location)*. Why? Because we are trying to do whatever we can to provide whatever groups we can, to meet you wherever you might be at on your spiritual journey.

How do you join a small group? It’s simple: take a look at the brochure that’s in a seat near you to get an idea of what types of groups we offer and what day and times they meet during the week. Then simply text SGINFO to 313131 and you will get a response back. In fact, pull out your smartphone right now and let’s all try it together. Enter “313131” in the “To:” section of your text app and then write in the message portion “SGINFO”. Everyone do that? Now hit send. *(wait a few seconds)* Bam! There’s the small group form. Now, I’m totally cool if you’re not currently in a small group then don’t listen to me for this next part and you fill out this form. So go ahead and do that now. Summary statement/better transition.

And, now for **Challenge #2:** If you’re already in a small group, here’s my challenge to you in the words of Dr. Phil: **“Get Real!”** How do we do that? For those of us already in small groups, how do we experience this life of “more love” that Jesus came to bring? Let me give you a few practical ideas:

* Get real by being open. Be open to what God might do in a community that prays together. Leave the cynicism at the door and lean into your little community God’s provided.
* Get real by being honest. Be honest about where you might be struggling in life. It could be your relationship with God, with your spouse, with a neighbor or with a co-worker.
* Focus Challenge #2 on this – joyfully and willingly laying…. Get real by being sacrificial. Do you see someone in your group who is struggling? Reach out to them. Let them know you’re praying for them. Ask if they need anything. Prayer? A cup of coffee? Bible verse? Joyfully and willingly lay down some time or emotion to see how God might work through it.

**Conclusion**

Jesus came to bring us a life of “more”: more joy, more hope, more love. All we long for can be found in him. Just imagine what might happen if we fully take hold of the way of life he taught us to live.

**“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” –John 15:12**

May we wholeheartedly follow the one who loves us more than we could have ever hoped, and discover in him a life of “more love.”

**Communion Idea**

Jesus invites us into his eternal community. In fact, he desires for all to experience this with him. So much in fact, that he gave his life willingly for you and for me. It would be one thing if he did that while we were a cleaned up with not a blemish on us (as if there were such a thing). But instead he did that while were sinners. Paul reminds us that:

**“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” –Romans 5:8**

It’s this radical, sacrificial love that invites into his eternal community. Today we celebrate what he has done and is doing for us by taking the bread that represents his body being broken for us. And drinking the cup that represents his blood being poured out for us. We invite anyone who wants to receive Jesus to join him in this eternal community.