**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**

*(Note: See the BETTER edit for an alternate intro idea using a long bullet-point list of desires. We don’t recommend using both the list and The Black Hole video. Choose the one you like best.)*

It would be nice to get everything we want in life, wouldn’t it? ? I mean, I understand that we’re taught from a young age not to be selfish, but let’s get real… Being able to fulfill every selfish desire that was right in front of us sounds pretty appealing.

Just imagine what it would be like to find yourself in a situation like this guy…

**Video: The Black Hole**

*(Series graphic)* Oops. ☺

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!”*

**Series Recap**

Well, there is “more,” but it’s not found in chasing after all our selfish desires. The “more” we long for is only 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 going to talk about today, a life of **More Love**.

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

The truth is… even if we have lots of relationships with lots of different people, many of us still feel this longing to be loved. I was thinking about that this week as I was preparing for this talk. I’ve been blessed relationally in so many ways – a family who loves me, friends who care about me, co-workers I genuinely enjoy. Yet at times I still feel this longing for “more love” so deeply that I feel a sort of emptiness inside. It’s that feeling of… *“There’s got to be more!”* Do you ever feel that way?

**Word: John 15:12**

Well, 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? 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.”** To understand what this means, we need to understand Jesus’ heart, his character, his very person. 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. Each person in the Trinity is distinct, yet they are all inextricably connected….intertwined. They have a selfless relationship where they all revolve around each other. Not one of them is selfish. Not one of them makes the others revolve around himself; each person in the Trinity loves, adores, defers to, and rejoices in the others.

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 being whose very nature is 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 and with each other.

Yet, though we are made in his image, we did not choose his way of selfless devotion. Instead, 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 and each other.

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.

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.

**Jesus joyfully and willingly laid down his life to bring us good.**

And 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 then 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. **Jesus joyfully and willingly laid down his life to bring us good.** 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.”** Know today that…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 have **peace**.

You see, in Jesus, we can be freed from needing our lives to be all about ourselves!

I love the way 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**

Let’s face it. Most of us consciously or unconsciously believe that the way to a life of “more love” is to receive more love. But Jesus teaches the opposite. Jesus says we’ll find “more love” when we *(John 15:12 with highlight)* **“love each other”** as we have been loved.

It really is true…

* We receive more when we give more.
* We find more when we release more.
* We experience more when we surrender more.

This is why Jesus’ teaching is so counter-intuitive. The way to a life of “more love” isn’t in finding people to love us. No, the way to a life of “more love” is in **Joyfully and willingly laying down our lives to bring others good.**

**Story: Mister Rogers**

When our Teaching Team tried to think of an example of what it looks like to selflessly love this way, we thought of a man many of us grew up watching on TV. Perhaps it was because a movie about his life had recently been released. Did any of you see the story of Mister Rogers in the recent documentary, *(Movie)* **“Won’t You Be My Neighbor?”** Mister Roger’s story is a story of joyfully and willingly laying down his life to bring children good. He was an ordained minister, a man defined by his Christian faith, and the message that he taught every day on his beloved children’s show was shaped by it. It has been said that before entering the studio each day, Rogers would pray, “Dear God. Let some word that is heard be yours.” And here’s a little glimpse of what would happen…

**Video: Mister Rogers**

**“The greatest thing that we can do is to help somebody know that they’re loved and capable of loving.” –Fred Rogers**

*(Slow)* Jesus came and laid down his life so that you and I would know we are loved and capable of loving. **“Love each other ask I have loved you.”** When we know we are loved, we are free to live that way…to **Joyfully and willingly lay down our lives to bring others good.**

What might it look like for you and I to do that? A life of “more love” lies in the answer to that question.

**My Command is This**

As I look at my own life, I realize I am a work in progress. I can’t just flip a switch and love like this. Following Jesus is the best way of life, but it’s not an easy way of life. By default, it’s so much easier to be selfish.

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 a decision every day to follow the way of life Jesus lived.

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 Jesus 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 in community with other Christ-followers is something we call *(3C Graphic)* CONNECT. CONNECT is all about the relationships we have with one another in the church. It’s about forming a real link with one another. Most of us would be willing to admit that what we’re looking for in life is something real. Something of significance. Something that will stand the test of time.

At COMMUNITY, we believe a:

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

Biblical community is that “real link.” It’s an eternal community where we can experience “more love” as we joyfully and willingly lay down our lives to bring each other good.

And we believe one of the mostly likely ways you can experience this at COMMUNITY is by being *(Connect graphic)* connected in a small group. Small groups are gatherings of people who are trying to learn Jesus’ way of life, who are committed to taking steps from selfishness to love, and doing so together. Do we always get it right? No, of course not. But this move from selfishness to love requires a place to work it out. 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 experience this in my small group in practical ways. For example, one of the things I love about my small group is we have a texting group where at anytime, in any situation, a group member can send a text asking for prayer. And inevitably, a few seconds after that text is received, my phone starts blowing up with people responding that they are praying. We’re becoming a little army of prayer warriors that have each other’s backs no matter what we might be facing.

I love it! 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 have groups for Men, Women, Young Professionals, Couples, Support and Recovery…and more! *(list the types of groups you offer at your location)*. Whether you are just starting to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus or you’ve been a Christ-follower for decades, a small group is a place where all of us can experience “more love” as we joyfully and willingly lay down our lives to bring each other good.

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. *(SGINFO slide)* Then simply text SGINFO to 313131. 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” and hit send. *(Wait a few seconds)* Bam! There’s the small group form.

Now, if you’re not currently in a small group, I’m totally cool if you don’t listen to me for this second challenge. Feel free to take this time to fill out that form.

But for those of us who are already in a group, here is **Challenge #2: “Bring Good!”** A life of “more love” comes when we follow Jesus’ command and joyfully and willingly lay down our lives to bring others good. Think of the people in your small group. How could you bring them good this week?

* Maybe **send a text** to share a Scripture or let a group member know you’re praying for them?
* Maybe there is some way you could **meet a need** one of your group members is facing?
* Maybe taking the time to **meet with someone** over coffee might be a blessing?

Let’s ask God: “How can I joyfully and willingly lay down my life this week to bring the other people in my group good?” And then let’s bring that good!

**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.