**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: *(Personalize these to yourself)*

* 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 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 it all together it sounds insanely unrealistic. But let’s be honest… it would be nice to get everything we want in life, wouldn’t it? I wonder what it would be like to be able to fulfill whatever selfish desire was right in front of us…

 **Video: The Black Hole**

“Improved” video option. Edited down version of: 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 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?

**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? 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 is selfless and 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 God 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.

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.

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.

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**

You see, in Jesus, we can be freed from needing our lives to be all about ourselves! Let’s face it. If we get honest with ourselves, most of us would 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. 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.

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 lay down our lives to bring others good.**

I have to tell you, when I tried to think of an example of what it looks like to selflessly love this way, I thought of a man many of us grew up watching on TV. Perhaps it was because I had recently seen a movie about him. 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 underlying message of the Neighborhood,” Rogers once said, “is that if somebody cares about you, it’s possible that you’ll care about others. ‘You are special, and so is your neighbor’—that part is essential: that you’re not the only special person in the world. The person you happen to be with at the moment is loved, too.”[[1]](#endnote-1)

When we know we are loved, we are free to love others…to **Joyfully and willingly lay down our lives to bring others good.**

What might it look like for you and I to do that? 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**

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 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 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.

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:

* Jesus-centered
* Grace-filled
* Spirit-led
* Kingdom-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. A small group can help every one of us grow in our understand of God, his love for us, and 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 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 to love one another as he has loved us…as we joyfully and willingly lay down our lives for each other. 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.

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

1. https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/11/mister-rogers-saint/416838/ [↑](#endnote-ref-1)