

ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE, LOVE IS ALL YOU NEED

In 1967, the Beatles wrote a famous line in one of their biggest hits, “All you need is love, love is all you need.” Mother Theresa would agree. She was a humanitarian for the lepers, the homeless and the poorest of the poor in Calcutta, she said this about love:

“People who love each other fully and truly are the happiest people in the world. They may have little, they may have nothing, but they are happy people. Everything depends on how we love one another”.

Love truly is the great equalizer among us. Regardless of where you come from, regardless of the color of your skin, the orientation of your faith, *all you need is love*.

These truths are not new. Jesus spoke this, thousands of years earlier in John 13 when he said this:

John 13: 34-35 “So I give you now a new commandment: Love each other just as much as I have loved you. For when you demonstrate the same love I have for you by loving one another, everyone will know that you’re my true followers.”

So today as you pray through this idea of love, take a moment and surrender this time to God.

Jesus, today I come quietly before you. I lay all my frustrations and distractions aside so that I can focus on you. In this moment, show me what your words mean and how they can change my life. Help me to love in a way that would draw others to you.

PRAISE HIM

Staying in the book of John, we find Jesus speaking his last words to his disciples’ moments before he is going to be arrested and ultimately crucified for the sins of the world. In this profound moment, he speaks these words:

John 15:9 “I love each of you with the same love that the Father loves me. You must continually let my love nourish your hearts”.

How incredible is it to know that Jesus loves you and desires for your heart to be continually nourished in this love? So, take a moment and enter into a time of praise. Reflect on all the ways that Jesus has loved you and nourished you. It can be from this day, this week, this year, or much longer than that.

Jesus, I can’t begin to express my gratitude for your love. Thank you that you would love me despite my doubts, my struggles, and my fears. In a world where I can find substance in almost anything, help me to find nourishment in your love.

CONFESS AND REPENT

Now that Jesus has expressed his love for us, he takes a moment and builds upon a new commandment he has given us.

John 15: 12-13 “So this is my command: Love each other deeply, as much as I have loved you. For the greatest love of all is a love that sacrifices all. And this great love is demonstrated when a person sacrifices his life for his friends.”

Love and loss are both universal truths that we all must face. Loss is unavoidable, but love is inevitable. And it's on us to decide which one we press into. Take a moment to reflect and repent. We struggle with these words from Jesus because at times our actions and thoughts can be far from the deep love that Jesus speaks about. To be honest, when we do choose to love, it's sometimes not very sacrificial but rather very narrow.

Take a moment and think about your heart and what it has been reflecting lately. If there are places that you have not loved deeply, bring those moments into the light before God.

Jesus, I come before you acknowledging my shortcomings when it comes to love. With your last moments on earth, you called us to love deeply. Help me in this moment to love others sacrificially the way that you loved us when you gave everything to set us free. Let my sacrifices be made with joy and renew my heart to love like you.

YIELD

Jesus goes on to reveal the special nature of our relationship with him when we choose love. He goes on to say:

John 15: 14-17 "You show that you are my intimate friends when you obey all that I command you. I have never called you "servants" because a master doesn't confide in his servants, and servants don't always understand what the master is doing. But I call you my most intimate friends, for I reveal to you everything that I've heard from my Father. You didn't choose me, but I've chosen and commissioned you to go into the world to bear fruit. And your fruit will last, because whatever you ask of my Father, for my sake, he will give it to you. So this is my parting command: Love one another deeply!"

How incredible is it to know that we have been chosen and are not just partners in this new command, but we are chosen as friends? And we are not chosen out of pity, but we are chosen out of love. And that is truly the only way to live the life that Jesus is calling us to. We have to be brought in as intimate friends and we have to choose this path because of love. It can't be anything else, or it will not work.

Enter into a time of yielding. Maybe the reason why love has been such a struggle for you lately is because your heart has not fully bought into it. Take a moment and reflect on what has your heart right now. Is it Jesus, and is your heart driven by love? As you reflect, if there is anything revealed that is outside of this, lay that before Jesus now.

Jesus, in this moment I lay at your feet those things which distract me, frustrate me, and lead me away from you. I want to be fully bought in to this calling which you have laid on me. I acknowledge that this calling is the only way for my heart to be content and complete.

REQUESTS

Finally, focus on the last part of the scripture, something that is easy to quickly read over, but in verse 16, Jesus says this:

John 15: 16-17 "And your fruit will last, because whatever you ask of my Father, for my sake, he will give it to you! So, this is my parting command: Love one another deeply!"

We have been created to not only do good but to do good that will last. Our lives are meant to bear fruit that makes a difference. Where are you in this season of life? At times it can feel like all the things we put our hands to are dying and we may walk out of this season with nothing to show but pain and regret. But Jesus' words speak against those lies and remind us that our lives are meant to produce. Regardless of what your story is right now, it can be the kind of story that changes lives if you would just allow it to be written by Jesus. That's why we are given the freedom to ask, and the promise that what we will ask will be given to us in Jesus' name.

Take a moment right now and reflect, think about the kind of fruit you want your life to produce. Think about the kind of story you want written. Think about the kind of love you want to be known for.

Jesus, I am so thankful that you have granted me the kind of relationship to freely ask. I thank you that I can approach you with confidence, knowing that you will listen and that you care for me. Today, I ask that my life and my love would make much of your name. Use me to tell your story and change the world.

Hopefully this time has stirred your affections and your love for Jesus and that as the love of Jesus consumes you, you can pass that love on to others. We are all in this together and the God of the universe is in this with us.

GOD IS COMPASSIONATE

As you seek to start your day out right by giving the first fifteen minutes of your day to God, look at Luke 7 today to guide your time in prayer.

PRAISE HIM

Luke 7: 11-13 (ESV) Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep".

Jesus has *compassion* on this woman. Jesus feels her loss. He feels her hurt and her pain and it moves him. Jesus cares about what is going on in this woman's life.

There are times in our lives where we ask the question, does anybody really care? Does anybody really know and care about what is going on in my life right now? And the answer is *absolutely yes!* Jesus is the very embodiment of the character of God as the son of God and as God come in the flesh, so when we look at Jesus, we see the true nature of God. And God's nature is *compassionate*. God is a *compassionate* God. He always knows, he always sees, and he feels your hurt and your pain and he cares about it.

This morning, as you think about a God that is big enough to create the universe, be reminded that he cares about the smallest detail in your life. Take a moment and praise your God that he is *compassionate*.

*God, I praise you that you are **compassionate**.*

Tell God what that means for you this morning, that God is compassionate towards you.

CONFESS AND REPENT

The passage continues in Luke 7 and it says this:

Luke 7: 14-16 (ESV) Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!"

These people were seized with fear and wonder and amazement at the power of God. And they acknowledged that it was God that was at work here. And they glorified God. That's the right response for when God moves in our lives. When we see God do things in our lives, the right response is to glorify him in amazement.

Sometimes we have to admit that we are probably not amazed enough by God. We may miss much of what God does around us and in our lives because we just take it for granted and then we don't end up glorifying God as we ought because of that. Maybe you can relate to this in some degree, and if you can, take a moment and repent of that and admit that to God and ask for his help to turn towards him today and to be amazed and to bring him glory.

God, I know that you are amazing and worthy of all glory. I have not been amazed as I ought to be. Forgive me for taking so much for granted. I have not glorified you as I ought. Forgive me for

acting like there are things more amazing than you. Help me to see all the amazing things you are doing in my life today with fresh eyes. Help me to glorify you as my response. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

This man that had died, was raised from the dead. And our God, his specialty is breathing new life into things that are no longer living. Ask yourself this question today: What in your life needs a resurrection? Maybe it is a relationship with someone. Maybe it is a relationship with your spouse or with a child of yours or maybe another family member. Maybe that relationship has suffered some loss and it has begun to die and it needs a resurrection. Maybe it is not a relationship, maybe it is just your heart. Maybe your heart has suffered so much brokenness and pain and sorrow that it has begun to die a little bit and it needs a resurrection today. Maybe it is your passion for God today. Maybe you love God, you like God, but there is not a burning passion inside of you for him today. Maybe that needs to be resurrected today.

So, here is the question: What needs to be resurrected in you today? Ask God to do that right now.

God, I need you to breathe new life into _____.

Maybe there are multiple things you want to ask God to breathe new life into today. Take some time and lay those before him now.

GIVE THANKS

Luke 7:16 (ESV) Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and **“God has visited his people!”**

Don’t you love that they say that God has visited his people? In other words, God showed up and God brought good into this situation. Here is the truth; that God has shown up in our lives. He has brought good things into our lives; we just simply need to recognize it. Take a moment and stop right here and recognize some of the good that God has brought into your life.

List three good things that God has brought into your life:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Tell him thank you for each one of those things right now.

YIELD

The final verse of this account says this:

Luke 7:17 (ESV) And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.

This report about Jesus spread everywhere; people were hearing about the goodness of God that had taken place. We are witnesses to the good works of God in our lives and around our lives. And we are called to report those things, to spread the good news, about who our God is and what our God has done and what our God is doing. Ask him to use you today for that purpose; yield yourself to him right now.

God, I want the world to know about you. Start by using me. In all I do today use me to represent you, to point to you, to honor you, and to make your goodness known. Thank you, Lord. In your name, Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Thank you for taking part in the First Fifteen. Just know that God is loving spending time with you. So that when you leave this moment, *don't leave him in this moment*. As you go through your day, continue in conversation with him. Thank him for the good things that you are noticing around you. Praise him for his character today. Ask him for your needs and even quickly repent when you find yourself departing from the ways of God and ask for his help to get back on his ways and to follow him. He wants to walk with you today. May you walk with him. Have an amazing day! God Bless You!

LOVE EACH OTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU

John 15:12-14 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.

In John 15, Jesus has been talking to the disciples about being with him and abiding with him and following him and he has been using the illustration of the vines and branches. If you are not familiar with the passage, you are encouraged to look it up later (John 15: 1-8). There are a lot of great and encouraging things in this chapter that Jesus is talking about in abiding with him. And because that is the point of the whole chapter, the point is to really spend time in his presence in abiding in him and doing life the way he wants life to be done, obeying him, living with him, seeking him. When we come to the passage "greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" we know that Jesus is tipping his hand a little bit and he's letting his disciples in on the fact that he is going to lay down his life for them specifically. And then the truth is that he laid down his life for all of us, that this is what God has done; this was God's plan for creating friendship between us. There was a time when friendship was not possible between us and God but through Jesus' death and resurrection friendship was made possible with God.

PRAISE HIM

Begin this morning by praising God and thanking him for making friendship with him possible. Praise him for sending Jesus to lay down his life for us and making closeness to God possible and thank him for making friends with us. There was once sin between us and friendship with God was impossible but because of Jesus' expression of love, his death and resurrection, we are now made friends with God. And now because we are friends we can pray and talk to God about anything.

Before you pray, remember the hymn "What A Friend We Have In Jesus". In 1855 a preacher named Joseph Scriven wrote a poem that became a hymn: "What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear, And what a privilege to carry, Everything to God in prayer." The writer was trying to capture some of the thoughts we see here in John 15: 12, that because we have friendship with God, we are able to go to him in prayer. So, this morning, start your time in praise and thanksgiving that we have friendship with God.

God, thank you for sending Jesus to lay down his life for me, thank you for raising him from the dead. I praise you for your goodness. Thank you for making friends with me. Thank you for hearing my prayer today.

CONFESS & REPENT

In verse 14, Jesus says all those who follow his commands are his friends. That includes us, but we don't always follow Jesus commands. For those of us who have already given our life to Christ, we have been trying to follow his commands and live our life according to his will and according to his word and be sensitive to his leading. But we're not perfect at that; we don't always get that right and do what God commands. In reflecting on this verse specifically, his command is this: that we love others as he has loved us. Today, take a few minutes and repent and remind yourself that we do mess up and like a good friend, if we don't honor a friendship we want to apologize and we want to be made right in that relationship. We want to repent and turn from that behavior, from that sin.

If God is dealing with you on some specific things, here is a good place to talk to him about them. If not, maybe he is dealing with how you love and how you treat others. In reflecting on the passage, Jesus says his command is to “Love each other as I have loved you.” Ask yourself honestly, “Have I fallen short in loving others this week?” “Have I treated people the way Jesus wants me to treat them this week?” “Have I been unloving to those around me?” If so, talk to him about it and repent of that at this time.

*Lord, forgive me when I broke your command and was unloving toward _____.
Please forgive me. Show me how to love them like you love me.*

If God is dealing with you on some other specific things, or if he is dealing with you with some people or with some relationships that you have, because the command is that we love them in the way that he loves us. So, we want to make sure we are following his command. And when we don’t, we want to make sure we repent and apologize and acknowledge that his way is better than our way of doing things.

REQUESTS

When we think about what God has done for us, it’s hard to imagine that we could ask him for anything else. If life was only just really hard, and there was little or no reprieve from that and little or no earthly blessings that he brought to us, his salvation and his friendship would be enough. Friendship with God is enough. Reflect on that. Think about how that is such a great gift and such a wonderful thing, but as our friend, God wants us to depend on him and he wants us to come to him with anything. He wants us to come to him with all of our needs, all of our concerns, all of our burdens, all of our celebrations, anything that we are thinking about or worrying about or working on.

The hymn from earlier, “What A Friend We Have In Jesus”, reminds us: Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry, Everything to God in prayer.

1 John 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have before Him: If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
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That’s amazing! *He hears us!* This is what he wants to spend his time doing. He wants to hear us; he wants to hear whatever is on our heart. We can and should come to God with whatever we need. So today, we want to offer requests to God for whatever we need. It’s what he wants us to do.

God, thank you for hearing me. Today I have some needs. I have some things I need you to take care of. They are big, too big for me. But they are not too big for you.

Then list out what those things are. Ask God for whatever you need.

YIELD

If we are to be a good friend back to God, we need to obey his commandments. That’s what he has asked us to do. And this is more than just checking things off of a list; we didn’t do this or we did do that. It’s more than that. It is an abandonment to doing things any other way than His. It is a complete dependence on him and a commitment to doing it his way. In response to him initiating friendship with us, we want to be a good friend back to him.

In the locker room of the Ohio State Football Team there is a sign that reads: "When I needed you the most, you gave me your very best." This is a team rallying cry and a commitment to brotherhood. When we hear that, we should remember the truth of what Jesus did for us. This is what God did for us. When we needed him most, lost in our sin, separated from his love, going our own way, when we were apart from his friendship and his love and headed toward eternity apart from Him...God gave his very best for us and sent Jesus to die on the cross so that we could be friends. God has never needed anything from us, but in response to all he has done, we should want to give him our very best today and make our lives an offering to him. And that is what it means to yield and surrender. Close your time this morning in a prayer of surrender.

Father, you have always been good to me. Thank you for your friendship. Help me today to live as your friend. I commit to following your commands today. – Amen

Feel free to go back to any specific area and spend more time in conversation with God this morning.

SEEK HIS STRENGTH AND PRESENCE CONTINUALLY!

Today, consider a passage from God's word and then let it lead you in a time of praying through the scripture.

1 Chronicles 16: 10-12 Glory in his holy name, let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice! Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually! Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles and the judgements he uttered.

Glory in his holy name! Glory is to hold with high renown or to honor. Another definition for glory is magnificence or great beauty. God is worthy of glory; so much so that we are to hold him in such high renown that we are even to honor his name. God is so worthy of glory that he causes us to hold our attention to him in a unique and powerful way.

God, you are magnificent, you are worthy of all honor. You alone are worthy of high renown and this morning I give you glory for who you are, what you have done, and what you will do.

SEEK THE LORD

When we want to be in God's presence, we strive to live a life that represents what God is like. When we depend on him in faith to meet all of our needs, we are seeking the Lord. It says in our scripture that we can seek his strength and his presence. Strength is the ability to stand strong, hang in there, keep going, and hold fast. Presence is like comfort. Like when a child has a bad dream, they can feel safe going back to sleep in bed with you because your presence gives them rest. We can always use more of God's strength and his presence. And we can seek these from Him. And how do we do that? Like this: we pray, we ask, and we read scripture.

Father, today like a child scared in the dark, your presence comforts me. I pray that I am seeking your attention and your presence today. Today will be full of challenges, please give me your strength to move forward. Thank you, God, that when I seek you, you can be found. Thank you for making a way for me to get to you by Jesus.

REQUESTS

When we stop for a minute and think back on all the wonderful things our God has done, we can easily see that our God can do anything. He stopped the sun from shining, he parted the Red Sea, he put the stars in the sky, he established kings and kingdoms, he gave us life and he brought us salvation by raising Jesus from the dead. Is there anything that God can't do? Of course not. So, ask it of him.

What is it that you need God to do? Who do you know that needs saved? Who do you know that needs encouragement? Who do you know that could use God's strength and presence today? Pray for them.

Lord, there is nothing you cannot do. So today I ask _____

(fill in the blank)

YIELD

Before leaving this time of prayer, reflect on your willingness to seek God. We often seek advice, and look for earthly wisdom for good interests through other people, but today we are reminded to seek God's will for our lives; to seek God and his purpose and his plan for today. Do that as you go to Him in prayer.

Father, Lord, King, today is yours. You made it; you planned it; you have a purpose for me in it. Right now, I seek you, your presence, your strength, and your will for my life. I make available to you today all the things you have blessed me with. Thank you for hearing my prayer today. Amen.

As you continue your prayer time, consider these areas of your life, and talk to God about these:

- Family
- Friends
- Church
- Work
- Yourself

YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN

Thank you for choosing to start your day right by spending time in prayer and coming to the Father. Start with a time of prayer, asking God to prepare your heart and your mind for what he is going to speak to you about this morning.

Father, I come before you today eager. I desperately need a touch from heaven in this moment and I lay myself before you. I ask that you would open my heart and my mind to receive your truth and be captivated by your love.

PRAISE HIM

Don't you love a good comeback story, regardless of the character or the team? When all seems hopeless and lost, in the end there is redemption. One of the most interesting persons in the scriptures is Peter. His life is a reflection of hope. What more compelling drama could you ask for than Peter denying Christ by the campfire at night and then Jesus restoring him by the campfire in the morning. In his letter to the scattered church, Peter writes these words of living hope:

1 Peter 1:2 You are not forgotten, for you have been chosen and destined by Father God. The Holy Spirit has set you apart to be God's holy ones, obedient followers of Jesus Christ who have been gloriously sprinkled with his blood. May God's delightful grace and peace cascade over you many times over!

How encouraging is it to know that we have not been forgotten? We have been chosen and our lives are meant to matter. Therefore, each moment that we experience in this life is meant to matter. This gives us hope that no matter what is in front of us, God is working for good. This truth should help us accept God's grace and peace today.

Take a moment and think about this truth: *God has not forgotten you.*

Reflect on what that means to you today.

Father, thank you for remembering me. In my highs and lows, you are there. Today I want to be overwhelmed in your grace and peace. Please let it cascade over me. Thank you that I am chosen and destined for your glory.

CONFESS AND REPENT

The celebration of hope continues as Peter goes on to write:

1 Peter 1: 3-4 Celebrate with praises the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has shown us his extravagant mercy. For his fountain of mercy has given us a new life – we are reborn to experience a living, energetic hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We are reborn into a perfect inheritance that can never perish, never be defiled, and never diminish. It is promised and preserved forever in the heavenly realm for you!

There is no one who understands the power of rebirth and starting over like Peter. In this very incredible season of his life, Peter experienced the lowest of the lows and the highest of the highs; and through it all he discovered that no matter what he did, where he'd been, he could start over.

Think about some things in your life that you would like to hit the reset button on.

Think about this, do you believe that rebirth is possible through Jesus?

Father, I praise you for your extravagant mercy today. Your mercy has given me new life and today I can hit the reset button because of you. I hold on to the promise that you work all things for good. Help me to see what you are doing in my life and step into the reality of what it means to be reborn.

GIVE THANKS

Peter goes on to say:

1 Peter 1:5-7 Through our faith, the mighty power of God constantly guards us until our *full* salvation is ready to be revealed in the last time. May the thought of this cause you to jump for joy, even though lately you've had to put up with the grief of many trials. But these only reveal the sterling core of your faith, which is far more valuable than gold that perishes, for even gold is refined by fire. *Your authentic faith* will result in even more praise, glory, and honor when Jesus the Anointed One is revealed.

"Even though lately..." What a powerful and relevant statement for this season of life. As frustrating as some things are that we encounter in life, they fail in comparison to the revelation of what these things have shown in our faith. We are assured that what we learn during those times are worth it, not only worth it, but they will result in even more.

Take a moment and reflect on what you have learned about yourself and God during this season of your life.

Father, I thank you that during times of difficulty I can find hope. Thank you for using these things to reveal the condition of my heart and my faith. I know that because of these things you have more in store for me. Today I hold on to the safety of your mighty power and the assurance that you are guarding me.

YIELD

Finally, Peter closes out this part of his letter by saying this:

1 Peter 1: 8-9 You love him passionately although you did not see him, but through believing in him you are saturated with the ecstatically, indescribably sublime and immersed in glory. For you are reaping the harvest of your faith-the full salvation promised you-your souls' victory!

What an incredible hope we have in knowing that the harvest is coming! The victory has been promised and will be fulfilled; an indescribable, ecstatic victory. Consider the lyrics from a song by Elevation Worship, "See a Victory".

The weapon may be formed, but it won't prosper

When the darkness falls, it won't prevail

'Cause the God I serve knows only how to triumph

My God will never fail.

I'm going to see a victory

For the battle belongs to You, Lord.

We have that victory today. We get to walk in that victory right now. Take a moment and think about some things you want to see God's victory for in your life. Ask God to give you victory over those things in his name and for his glory.

Father, today I declare your victory over my life. Today, I give you glory for the harvest that is coming. I will not fear when the weapons of this life form against me because I know that they will not prosper against you. Today, give me strength to walk in the hope that I have in you, and let that hope enable others to see you as well.

Hopefully these moments spent in reflection will stir your heart and your affection for Jesus and that it will help you to stir others to come to Jesus and to find their peace in Him. We believe a harvest is coming. We are in this together and the God of the universe is in it with us.