

USING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS TO LOVE EACH OTHER AS SISTERS IN CHRIST

John 13:34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”

John 13:35 “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Timeline:

This is happening during the last supper with His disciples as He washes their feet. Giving them an example how to show love. Jesus knew what was ahead of Him; the betrayal of Judas, Peter’s denial, and especially His pain and suffering and crucifixion. He knew His disciples will need a strong commitment to each other once He is gone. We need this same strong commitment with one another.

Breakdown:

We are going to think about love as a verb. This makes love an active choice with intentional actions, not just a passive feeling. Love involves showing care, support, and commitment through nurturing, protecting, forgiving, listening, and sacrificing for another person’s well-being. It’s about showing up, doing the work, and making choices that shows patience, kindness, and support that will build a connection and a Christian community.

It is not easy to love when it hurts or when you don’t feel appreciated. But with Christian love, it is not about us but rather the other person. It is not about setting boundaries or conditions or even reciprocal love but rather kindness, forgiveness, humility and thoughtfulness. In Philippians 2:4 it says: “Not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

Our passage from John 13 tells us to love as He loved us: unconditional, selfless, sacrificial, rooted in the cross of Jesus, sustained by the Holy Spirit, for the glory of God, action-oriented, and to include all people. To love like Christ who died on the cross for us. This level of love is expected by God. This is how others will know you believe in Jesus and how we give Him His glory. They will know us by our kindness, patience, contentment, modesty, humility, not angered easily, holding no grudges, protecting, hopeful and forgiving.

When Jesus said “A NEW COMMAND” I give to you, it wasn’t the first time He told His followers to love one another. This “NEW” is not new in time. What is new here is the phrase “As I have loved you.”

How did Jesus love them?

- He served them
- He kept them with Him throughout His ministry
- He patiently taught them
- He trained them
- He empowered them
- He choose them
- And the ultimate act of sacrificial, perfect love of dying on the cross

This sacrificial love is not only from Jesus. It is from God the Father showing love to all of the world by sacrificing His only Son. This love is rooted in Christ’s death on the cross. Jesus wanted His disciples to share this with the whole world.

This is what “NEW” refers to: “as I have loved you”.
John 15:12 “Love each other as I have loved you.”

In 1 John 4:19 “We love Him because He first loved us”, God’s love is the source and foundation by sending Jesus. Loving God is a response to this sacrificial love for us through Jesus. It is a choice and response to His command and empowers us to love others. God’s

love gives us the ability but we need to use our own will to extend our love to others.

Romans 13:8-10

“Do not owe anyone anything except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not covet (and if there is any other commandment) Love does no harm to a neighbor, so love is the fulfillment of the law.”

1 John 3:16 “Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.”

This reminder of the selfless and sacrificial act of love of Jesus dying on the cross commands us to show this love by making sacrifices and providing practical help -not just words- for others in need especially believers. Jesus knew His disciples would need each other after His crucifixion and so do we.

How can we even get close to that level of love? Let's talk about how we can share this selfless love among our fellow Christian women.

1. ANSWER WITHOUT ARGUING—RESPOND WITH GENTLENESS

Proverbs 17:1 “Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.”

Proverbs 15:1 “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

1 Corinthians 13:5 “Love is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not angered, it keeps no record of wrong.”

It's easy to snap back? Is that pride or a defensive act? When there is conflict, respond with love instead of defending your pride. Gentleness shows strength under control and allows God to work in the situation. A gentle response reflects God's wisdom and opens the door for peace.

EXAMPLES FROM JESUS:

Jesus offered rest shortly after He rebuked the towns where He performed miracles for their sinful behaviors in Matthew 11. “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls.”

1 Peter 3 Jesus says “Be of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.

When Martha was upset with Mary for sitting and listening instead of helping, Jesus responded gently to her. “Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken from her.”

2. SPEAK WITHOUT ACCUSATION—SPEAK WITH GRACE

James 1:19 advises us to be “quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry”.

Proverbs 3:30 “Do not accuse anyone for no reason, when they have done you no harm.”

It is easy to let frustration color our words but this can ruin relationships. Speaking with grace means choosing words that encourage, uplift, and bring peace. When tempted to speak harshly, pause and ask God to guide your words and fill your heart with love. Words have power. Speak with kindness. A kind word spoken in love and a gentle response can mend relationships and reflect God.

EXAMPLES FROM JESUS:

When the scribes and Pharisees brought the lady caught in adultery to Jesus, they wanted her stoned. Jesus calmly responded “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” Instead of throwing stones, they all left. Then Jesus spoke with grace to the women “Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more.”

In the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus teaches how to be a good neighbor using compassion even when cultural and political reasons could cause a hindrance.

During Jesus’ suffering and questioning by the Chief Priests and Pilate, Jesus remained calm and quiet. Instead of fighting back, Jesus trusted His Father.

Jesus used questions, mercy, inclusive actions, and silence to communicate grace instead of accusation.

3. PROMISE WITHOUT FORGETTING

Proverbs 13:12 “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.”

Proverbs 13:17 “A wicked messenger falls into adversity. But a faithful messenger brings healing.”

Lamentations 3: 22-23 “His compassion never fail.”

Follow through and be reliable when you promise someone something. It shows others that you value them and that they can count on you. This kind of love makes others feel safe, respected, and cared about. Be realistic with your promises so it is easier to follow through. We are not perfect like Jesus, so apologize when you fail. Write things down, use a calendar to remind yourself, and pray.

EXAMPLES FROM JESUS:

He promised the thief on the cross “today I will see you in paradise”.

Matthew 28:20 the ending of the Great Commission, Jesus promises “And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

At His ascension in John 14 Jesus promises:

“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself.”

“Because I live, you also will live.”

“The Holy Spirit will teach all things and remind you of everything I have said to you.”

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Praise be to God that God does not forget His promises!

4. LISTEN WITHOUT INTERRUPTING

Proverbs 18:13 “Anyone who answers without listening is foolish and confused.”

James 1:19 “Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.”

Luke 8:18 “Consider carefully how you listen.”

It is easy to want to speak your opinion or have your voice heard during a conversation. But if you interrupt, you give the impression you don't care about the other person's opinion or what they have to say.

Listening like Jesus is not rushed even when busy. Jesus remained focused. He listened without prejudice. He asked perceptive questions and waited for answers and listened with His heart. Jesus demonstrated a life of listening to God the Father and used that wisdom to care for and encourage His disciples in their spiritual growth. Good listening is a way of God using us as a means of grace in the lives of others.

EXAMPLES FROM JESUS:

He engaged with the woman at the well despite cultural differences.

On the way to Emmaus, He listened to them to hear about their sorrow and pain before He revealed Himself to them.

Jesus asked the blind man in a crowd what he wanted. This showed him he was important and heard.

Jesus would often go off by Himself to pray to His Father so He could listen without interruptions.

Mary was praised for choosing listening to Him rather than working.

5. CHOOSE GRATITUDE INSTEAD OF COMPLAINING

Philippians 2:14 “Do all things without grumbling or disputing.”

1 Thessalonians 5:18 “Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

James 5:9 “Do not grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door.”

Ephesians 4:29 “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

Gratitude is a powerful way to show love. Show appreciation to those around you. Not everything that comes to us brings joy. Instead of complaining, choose to thank God for His blessings. Maybe you asked to help someone in need but you are so busy, or they move so slow, or indecisive. Don’t complain about the situation, rather thank God for the opportunity and for your capabilities to help. Ask what you can do to help them.

EXAMPLES FROM JESUS:

God sent His only Son to this sinful world for us.

He healed the sick even if it seemed like it disrupted His time.

He served the poor and vulnerable.

In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to God for another way to fulfill His job knowing of His upcoming pain and suffering and death. But as a perfect example Jesus prayed “not My will but Yours be done”. He accepted His mission and fulfilled God’s will without complaining.

Instead of complaining, ask God for peace and kind words to say.

6. TRUST WITHOUT DOUBT

Proverbs 3:5-6 “Trust in the Lord with all of your heart.”

John 14:1 “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me.”

James 1:6 “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.”

Isaiah 41:10 “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”

Matthew 17:20 “have a faith of a mustard seed”

When others need encouraging, showing your trust in God will give them reassurance that God is in control. Knowing that God doesn’t change and is always with us shows others our confidence in God. Sharing this confidence and trust will give others strength through difficult times. Trust is critical in relationships of all kinds. Trust to let go of control and give it all to God. As we trust God, we can share faith, hope, and love to others.

EXAMPLES FROM JESUS:

When Jairus' daughter died before Jesus went to his home Jesus told him "Do not be afraid. Just believe." This showed Jesus' trust in God's power even over death.

When the Canaanite woman begged Jesus to heal her daughter, Jesus praised her unwavering faith in His power.

Jesus showed complete surrender to God's plan even knowing the upcoming agony. Jesus' final words on the cross showed His ultimate trust in God even in death "Father into your hands I commit My spirit".

7. FORGIVE WITHOUT PUNISHING

Colossians 3:13 "If one has a complaint against another, forgive each other as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."

I won't spend a lot of time on this one since Leslie is presenting on this.

When someone wrongs you, choose to forgive, even if they do not apologize. Forgiveness doesn't excuse the hurt but reflects God's mercy towards us. When we forgive, we free ourselves to love fully.

My husband and myself each went through a divorce caused by our spouses' infidelity. Forgiveness took awhile but only with God's help were we able to do that. I can speak for myself that I will not forget what happened but by God's grace the hurt is gone.

EXAMPLES FROM CHRIST:

Jesus told the woman caught in adultery "I do not condemn you, go and sin no more."

Jesus forgave Peter when he denied knowing Him and then continued to commission Peter to feed His lambs.

Jesus showed such grace and mercy to His tormentors while on the cross. He prayed “Father forgive them for they do not know what they do”.

He promised eternal life to the thief on the cross.

Forgive them. And give it to God.

8. PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

“Rejoice always.”

“Pray without ceasing.”

“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God.”

Colossians 1:9 “We have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”

Prayer is a powerful act of love that shows compassion and confidence in our Savior. By praying for others, we trust God to move in their lives especially since we alone cannot fix their situation. Ask for guidance, wisdom, trust, forgiveness and His mercy not only for us but for others.

How often do we say “you are in our prayers”? How often do we actually remember to pray for them? Remember to follow through with prayer; even take the time to pray together.

EXAMPLES FROM JESUS:

Jesus was constantly in prayer with His Father asking for guidance, comfort, and strength.

He taught His disciples to always pray and not lose heart. To continually rely and submit to God's will in everything even dying on the cross.

Jesus even prayed for His enemies and those that were shut out by others.

By using Jesus' perfect examples, we all need to pray more.

9. GIVE GENEROUSLY WITHOUT EXPECTING IN RETURN OR WITHOUT REGRET

Proverbs 21:26 "All day long he craves for more, but the righteous give without sparing."

Acts 20:35 "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

1 John 3:17 "If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?"

Matthew 6:2 "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets...to be honored by others."

Luke 6:38 "Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full."

True love gives freely. Offer your time, help, or your resources without expecting anything in return. This will reflect God's generosity toward us and blesses others. Ask yourself "How can I give today? Who can I help today? Maybe helping a friend or neighbor with their yard,

driving to an appointment, or just sitting down and listening to them. By acting generously, the world sees God's heart through you.

EXAMPLES FROM JESUS:

There are many examples of Jesus showing His love by giving generously. He felt compassion for the 5000 that came to listen and fed them with a boy's lunch.

He healed the sick, He raised the dead, He gave His time, and forgiveness. His ultimate act of generosity was giving His life selflessly by dying on the cross so that we can have eternal life even though we don't deserve it.

10. CHRISTIAN LOVE INCLUDES CORRECTION

Galatians 6:1 "Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted."

Hebrews 12:11 "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

2 Timothy 3:16 "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness."

In the Christian faith, love is not just a feeling but an active choice that guides our interactions. Correction, when approached with love, is a way to help others grow and reflect God's love. The Bible teaches that correction should be done with compassion and care, aiming to mend rather than hurt. It is through love that correction becomes a journey of understanding and growth, bringing unity and strengthening relationships. Correction in love is often about embracing feedback that helps us grow as individuals and as followers of Christ. We

understand that feedback is not always easy to receive, but it's valuable. When we offer constructive criticism, we must do it with the intention of building and strengthening our bonds. It's crucial to build an environment where we can voice our thoughts gently. This approach helps us reflect our commitment to loving one another.

EXAMPLES FROM JESUS:

The woman caught in adultery, the Pharisee and the tax collector, the rich young ruler, and the woman at the well are a few examples where Jesus pointed out sin not to condemn, but to lead to repentance and ultimately grace.

1 John 4:7 "Let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God."

CONCLUSION

Jesus gave us many perfect examples of unconditional love. He healed the sick. We can not heal them but we can pray for them, comfort them, make a meal for them, or just be there for them.

Jesus forgave sins. We can forgive the ones that wrong us. We can lead them to Jesus through the Word and pray that the Holy Spirit works in their heart.

Galatians 6:2 "Carry each others burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Jesus served selflessly. Find your way to use your time and talents to help each other.

Jesus loved His enemies even the ones that crucified Him. Forgive and love the ones that hurt you.

Romans 12:10 “Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”

Build a community so you don't have to walk this journey alone. Then you will have a supportive environment where love will flourish. You can share struggles and joy. You can be there for each other through thick and thin. This can be a bond that reflects Christ's love.

Hebrews 3:13 “But encourage one another daily.”

Express our love for Jesus through sharing our faith with others. We are called to share the good news of His love and grace. We can open the doors for others so they can see God's love and hope through the Holy Spirit. Our actions, words, and attitudes will show God's grace and compassion. With the Holy Spirit's help may we continue to love like Jesus.

Hymn 349 Lutheran Hymnal

Jesus, Thy boundless love to me
No thought can reach, no tongue declare;
Unite my thankful heart with Thee
And reign without a rival there.
To Thee alone, dear Lord, I live;
Myself to Thee, dear Lord, I give.

Oh, grant that nothing in my soul
May dwell but Thy pure love alone!
Oh, may Thy love possess me whole,
My Joy, my Treasure, and my Crown!
All coldness from my heart remove:
My ev'ry act, word, thought, be love.

Still let Thy love point out my way;
What wondrous things Thy love hath wrought!

Still lead me lest I go astray;
Direct my work, inspire my thought;
And if I fall, soon may I hear
Thy voice and know that love is near. Amen.

LOVE LIKE JESUS
Song by Lloyd Nicks

Call this a prayer
Call this a confession
Truth is I need to
Learn a lesson
What it means to really
Lay my life down.

Quick to judge
Quick to be defensive
Walls up, I'm easily offended
But I know I really need
A heart change.

I just wanna love like Jesus

The kinda love that
Don't need a reason
No strings attached
No questions asked
You give it all
And you're never gonna take it back
It's not for me to who's worthy
Everyone needs His grace and mercy
'Cause I just wanna love like Jesus
Love like
Love like Jesus.

Here's my pride
I'm tired of being selfish
No more starting wars
With someone different.