

August: Compelling Community

Week One:

In *John 13:31-35* Jesus is teaching his disciples that the world will know that they are His disciples by their love for one another. This is quite the statement of the unity and love that we are called to live out as God's people. Jesus continues this teaching on unity in *John 17:9-10* and *17:20-26*, where He is praying that His people would have the same unity that He and the Father share.

This is a powerful prayer and our desire as a church is that we would be growing in this type of sacrificial, actional and intentional love for one another. Spend time in confession of ways that you have failed to have this type of love for others, especially those of the faith, and pray that God would help you grow in this type of love. Pick one relationship this week where you can be intentional in laying aside your own interests and seek to love sacrificially.

Week Two:

One of the main ways that we seek to be a compelling community as a church is through our small groups. This month as we meet together as small groups we would encourage your group to spend time praying together and discussing how your group can be growing in loving and serving one another and our community. Spend time praising God for the ways that your group has seen God at work over the last few months and pray that God would help you continue growing in sacrificial love for one another. Pray that God would provide opportunities for your group to love and serve your neighbors and that you would be bold in taking these opportunities to be a witness to our community.

One of the ways that we serve one another in small groups is by pointing one another to the truth and exhorting one another to stand firm and lay aside every weight and sin that clings so closely. Throughout our series in Hebrews there were many places where we were reminded of the importance of actively walking with the body as we seek to grow in holiness together. A few of these passages include *Hebrews 3:12-19* and *10:19-25*. Read through these passages and pray that we would grow in walking with Christ in the fellowship, community and accountability of small groups.

Week Three:

God has given each of us gifts and abilities that He calls us to use to serve His people, both in our homes and in the church. One passage that beautifully shows the importance of each member of the body is 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. Read and pray through this passage on your own and ask God to reveal areas where you need to grow in using the gifts and resources He has blessed you with to serve others.

This week we also encourage you to spend time praying with people that you have the opportunity to serve with at church; this can be in many different contexts, but the main goal is that we would be growing in love for one another and in dependence on God in our families and ministries. As you gather with a few people that you regularly serve with you could spend time praising God for the gifts/passions he has given your team. Pray that God would be helping your ministry or team live on mission as you seek to serve one another and our church.

Week Four:

As we seek to grow in sacrificial, actional and intentional love as a church we must set our eyes on Christ, remembering the hope that we have in Him and seeking to lay aside our preferences for the good of others. Philippians 2 gives us a glimpse of what this call to humility and love looks like as we are called to be a testimony of God's work in us, by counting others as more significant than ourselves, holding fast to the truth and being steadfast through trials and temptations. Read and pray through *Philippians 2*, rejoicing in Jesus' example of humility for us and praying that you would be growing in this type of humility. Pray that God would be helping us grow in steadfast love for others that would be a testimony to our community. Pray that we would hold fast to the truth as we rejoice in the work that God is doing in our church.

"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only, as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not labor in vain." –Philippians 2:12-16