

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE FOR FEBRUARY 2012

Love is a Verb

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Guide by Carolyn Michael

Beginning thoughts...

Sitting in an emergency room is never fun whether you're the one sick or waiting on someone. My husband and I were there recently with a relative, when a rather unkempt looking man asked Ken if he could use his cell phone. In the chair beside this man was, stacked up haphazardly, perhaps all he owned in the world. Now understand, my husband has never met a stranger, and he doesn't care much for his phone. He started to hand the phone over, but the man asked him to dial a number; so he did. When the man's brother answered, Ken gave the man the phone so he could talk. Afterward, he handed the phone back to Ken and with this huge grin on his face said, "You are a Christian, because not many people will even talk to the likes of me." That was not what I'd expected to hear.

With the love of Jesus in our hearts, we are more likely to readily respond to the needs of those around us. If I had been alone, I probably wouldn't have even spoken to that man much less let him borrow my phone. For safety's sake, a woman should be very careful, but I'm thankful my husband could help him out. That is Christian love in action. When we know the facts about our Lord, we can obey His commands, pass the tests He sets forth and complete the tasks given to us in love. He never said it would be easy, but He did say He would be with us.

The next time you have an opportunity to pass the "Love Test," how will you respond? It's never cut and dried. Circumstances dictate how and when we should help, but the Bible is clear that we should be willing to love one another and serve others if we possibly can. Per chance we could talk to the Samaritan man (Luke 10:30-37), he would probably say that, if need be, he would help and bind up the wounds of the hurting man again. That's what love is all about. God required Israel and He commands us to "fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good" (Deuteronomy 10:12). Complete this study and record your thoughts on love in your journal. I just know your heart will overflow as you realize the extent of God's love for you.



Love

IS A FACT

BODY FITNESS GOAL: Accept the foundational truth that God loves us and respond in love for Him.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: *"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).*

- ♥ Go over all the questions and answers on p. 35, *Treasure*.
- ♥ Whom do you love most in this world? (*mother, father, husband, children, boyfriend, friends*)
- ♥ What, then, defines *love* for you?
- ♥ Is ours a world where love is the norm or the exception?
- ♥ What is the basic foundation of knowing "God is love"? (*To dwell in that love—1 John 4:16.*)
- ♥ How can we "dwell in love"? (1) Confess Jesus—1 John 4:15; (2) Have His Spirit—1 John 4:13; (3) Love one another—1 John 4:12; (4) Keep His commandments—1 John 3:24.
- ♥ Do you truly believe that God is a God of love in the good times as well as the bad?
- ♥ If God is the same "yesterday, today, and forever" and you accept the fact that He is love, then you must believe He is a God of love all the time (*Hebrews 13:8*). *God's love for us has been established as fact, so how do we show that love to others?
- ♥ How can you help someone who doesn't love herself or believe that God loves her?
- ♥ What is the greatest gift ever given us? (*Jesus—John 3:16. God gave His only Son because He loved us that much.*)
- ♥ Write these Scriptures in a journal: Psalm 18:1; 73:25; 116:1; 1 John 4:19; Psalm 119:97. Meditate on them and let the truth that God does love you saturate your heart and mind.

COOL DOWN: Dismiss in prayer and thank God for loving you.



Love

IS A COMMAND

BODY FITNESS GOAL: Love others—even enemies—with Christ as the source of our strength and His love as our example.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: *“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12).*

- ♥ Go over the questions and answers on p. 37, *Treasure*.
- ♥ Do you know anyone who is hard to love? *(Do not name specific individuals.)*
- ♥ What makes them hard to love? *(Actions, attitude, appearance)*
- ♥ So then, does John 15:12 mean everyone?
- ♥ How can we obey this commandment?
- ♥ Could it be as simple as preferring others above ourselves? *(Romans 12:9-10)*
- ♥ Why did God create humans? *(To have someone to love and communicate with Him—Genesis 2:18.)*
- ♥ Does God command our love? *(No, but He gives us examples over and over of how much He loves us.)*
- ♥ What does God promise to those who love Him and keep His commandments? *(Mercy—Exodus 20:6)*
- ♥ When the disciples were stubborn, selfish, quarrelsome or ambitious, do you not think it was difficult for Jesus to love them?
- ♥ Think of some times when this might have been the case.
- ♥ Go back up to verse 9 of John 15 to see how Jesus could love them. *(He reflected on how the Father loved him and how wonderful it was to be approved and loved of God.)*
- ♥ Is there someone who just aggravates “the stew out of you” every time you are around them? *(There is for me, but I still love them.)*
- ♥ What if it’s someone in your family that you can’t get away from?
- ♥ What can you do? *(Strengthen yourself with prayer and renew yourself in God’s love.)*

COOL DOWN: Pray that God will help you love those whom you find hard to love, and ask for wisdom in dealing with them.



Love

IS A TEST

BODY FITNESS GOAL: Love other believers in a way that causes people to identify us as followers of Christ.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).*

- ♥ Go over the questions and answers on p. 39, *Treasure*.
- ♥ Does love manifest itself in deeds?
- ♥ Briefly relate the story of John 4:7-13. Do you believe this woman would have ever known true love had Jesus not stopped by?
- ♥ Are there people you should be helping in some way?
- ♥ Did the disciples understand what Christ was explaining to them in John 13:35? *(He further explained it in 1 John 3:11-14. They should love each other as true brothers of righteousness, not as Cain who was wicked.)*
- ♥ What are the tests of love?
 - (1) True discipleship
 - (2) Genuine service—*John 21:15-17*
 - (3) Speech—*1 Corinthians 13:1*
 - (4) Demonstrate the reality of the new life—*1 John 3:14*
 - (5) Brotherly love—*1 John 4:20*
- ♥ Read John 15:8-10. What does Jesus expect from each of us? *(To bear fruit and continue in His love)*
- ♥ Where else do we see this? *(Galatians 5:22—Love is a fruit of the Spirit.)*
- ♥ Listed below are individual examples of love. Write each name, how this person demonstrated love and the Scripture reference in your journal.
 - (1) Thomas—*willing to die—John 11:16*
 - (2) Mary of Bethany—*gave the very best—John 12:3*
 - (3) Mary Magdalene—*at tomb of Jesus early before anyone else—John 20:12-13*
 - (4) Peter—*proof of love in service—John 21:16*
 - (5) Paul—*ready to die for name of Jesus—Acts 21:13.*

COOL DOWN: Dismiss using the suggestions mentioned.

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Love

IS A VERB

BODY FITNESS GOAL: Prove our love for Christ and others through our actions.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: *"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18).*

- ♥ Go over some of the examples in the chart together on p. 41, *Treasure*.
- ♥ Read together 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 aloud.
- ♥ What is your favorite verse of the Love Chapter, 1 Corinthians 13? Why? *(Mine is verse 7. When problems arise, love will help bear them; with love I can believe; love gives me hope; and love helps to endure.)*
- ♥ Now look at 1 Corinthians 13:8. What does it begin with? *("Love never faileth". This means it doesn't end, it doesn't quit, is never used up; and it keeps on appearing. Paul makes the point that the more you use it, the more there is.)*
- ♥ Do you know an example of that kind of love? *(You may have experienced it with a family member or a friend. You never give up on them. Share if there is time.)*
- ♥ Why did Paul go on to say in 1 Corinthians 13:11, that when he was a child he acted like one? *(Because children are supposed to act like children. We don't love them any less because they act like that.)*
- ♥ Then what does he say in the last part of the verse? *(When he became a man—as he matured—he put away childish things.)*
- ♥ Why was this important for him to say to the Corinthians (and us)? *(The mark of maturity is the ability to love the selfish, the ungrateful, the rude, the unlovely, the childish. It's to keep on working for their best interests.)*
- ♥ Do you possess the ability to gain this maturity on your own? *(No, but 1 Corinthians 13:13 is the key—possess Faith, Hope, and Charity—in order to carry out the actions needed to "owe no man anything except to love one another"—Romans 13:8.)*
- ♥ What does this same verse end with? *("The greatest of these is charity" (love)).*

COOL DOWN: Dismiss by singing a love hymn or chorus. Some suggestions from *REJOICE! The Free Will Baptist Hymn Book* include: "I Love You, Lord" p. 408; "Jesus Loves Me", p. 96; "Love Lifted Me", p. 335; or "My Savior's Love", p. 294.



In Closing...

Our goal or aim should be to make love our top priority. God intends for us to be loving, compassionate, patient, kind and truthful. That is what life is all about. Yet, we are not capable of doing this on our own. We must have the Lord's help in our daily lives to be able to exhibit these qualities. Never fear. He will supply that help, because love abides when we abide in Him. God is ready, willing and able to do much more than we can even imagine in our life if we let Him. He wants you to love, to be loved, and to show others this attribute in your life. Are you willing to release the reins into God's strong hands and let Him lead you into an abundant life filled with more love than you've ever had before? Try it. God is *love*.

—Carolyn