



ONE  
ANOTHER

2021 FALL  
LIFE GROUPS

## Introduction & Overview

One of the most prominent themes in the New Testament is found in this statement of Jesus: “Love one another as I have loved you.” (John 13:34)

The love Jesus is talking about extends beyond our immediate families and comfortable social circles. The love Jesus asks us to give is costly, inconvenient, and sometimes painful. But it is through this kind of love that we enter into the very presence of Jesus himself and can experience life and community to the fullest. Yes, it is costly, but the reward exceeds the cost.

In the letters (epistles) to the very first Christian communities, Apostles Paul, Peter, and James (key church leaders) reiterate the importance of loving one another, and they explain the many actions we can take to fulfill this command. Those apostles do not urge us to do anything for one another that Jesus’ love has not already done for us.

We must look at Jesus. It is only when we seek to understand the depth of sacrifice and love Jesus has for us, that our minds and hearts are softened and humbled, and we can begin to love like him. It is through this kind of love the world will come to know the fullness of life that is unique to Jesus Christ.

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During each week of this study, we will look at a “one another” phrase from a New Testament letter, and at a time in the Gospels when Jesus showed or taught about loving one another in a similar way.

Week 1:           **Consider One Another as More Important**  
Mark 10:35-45 and Philipians 2:1-11

Week 2:           **Offer Hospitality to One Another**  
Luke 14:7-14 and 1 Peter 4:7-11

Week 3:           **Forgive One Another**  
Matthew 18:21-35 and Colossians 3:12-17

Week 4:           **Encourage and Build One Another Up**  
Matthew 12:9-21 and 1 Thessalonians 5:5-11

Week 5:           **Pray for One Another**  
Luke 11:5-13 and James 5:13-16

Week 6:           **Bear One Another’s Burdens**  
Luke 5:17-26 and Galatians 6:1-10

Week 7:           **Spur One Another On**  
Matthew 25:31-46 and Hebrews 10:19-25

## Week 1: Consider One Another as More Important

### First 15-20 Minutes

To begin, spend some time catching up or getting to know one another and reviewing group expectations (like confidentiality, etc.).

Optional Icebreaker: What was the best thing that happened over the summer?

### Scriptural Context

This Gospel story features the brothers James and John, who Jesus nicknamed “the Sons of Thunder” for their impetuous natures. In this passage, Jesus talks about “the cup” and baptism. The disciples would have understood “the cup” as a metaphor for God’s wrath and judgment against humanity’s sin and rebellion. In this context, Jesus uses the word “baptism” as a parallel to the word “cup,” so it also refers to his suffering and death.

The letter to the Philippians was written by Paul. Here he exhorts the church to be unified. This doesn’t mean that everyone needs to have identical thoughts and actions, but that all believers should have the common disposition to work together and to serve one another. Jesus, of course, had this attitude. Considering us to be of utmost importance, Jesus set aside his glory, entered into human suffering and submitted fully to God. And God rewarded him for his obedience, restoring his glory and restoring us in right relationship with him.

*Read the Gospel passage silently first, then have someone read it aloud.*

### **Mark 10:35-45** (NIV)

<sup>35</sup> Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.” <sup>36</sup> “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked. <sup>37</sup> They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.” <sup>38</sup> “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?” <sup>39</sup> “We can,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, <sup>40</sup> but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”

<sup>41</sup> When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. <sup>42</sup> Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

<sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Read the epistle passage silently first, then have someone read it aloud.

## **Philippians 2:1-11** (NASB)

Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, <sup>2</sup> make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

<sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility **consider one another as more important than yourselves**; <sup>4</sup> do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, as He already existed in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself by taking the form of a bond-servant and being born in the likeness of men.

<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death: death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> For this reason also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Important / [ im-**pawr**-tnt ] *adjective*: of much or great significance or consequence; mattering much; entitled to more than ordinary consideration or notice.

## **Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. What do you notice about the Mark passage? What themes seem important? What ideas, images, or words stand out to you?
2. What do you notice about the passage from Philippians?
3. How do these scriptures relate to each other? What overlapping themes do you see? (Look for repeated words and ideas.) What characteristics of God are revealed? Of people?
4. What are some practical ways we can begin to consider others more important than ourselves? How can we begin to change our negative attitudes or automatic responses to be more in line with what Jesus and Paul ask us to do?
5. Through the spilled blood of Jesus, Christians become a family. God is our Father, and all other Christians are our brothers and sisters. If we really contemplate and remember this familial bond, how might other Christians become more important to us? How might it change how we experience our church family?
6. Does a particular situation or relationship come to mind in which you feel a pull of conscience or the Holy Spirit leading you to consider the other person “more important than yourself”? What impact do you hope it could have on you? On the other person? On the relationship as a whole?

## **Prayer**

Think about what you personally take away from this topic and these passages. What do they reveal about Jesus and what God is like? What do they reveal about yourself? Try to turn this into a prayer and write it down in the space provided.

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Share any burdens or thanksgivings you bring with you and pray together as a group.

## **Practice for the Week**

Think of a simple conflict (like doing the dishes) that regularly occurs between you and someone else. This week, when faced with this particular conflict, think through the other person's day. Consider what has been on their plate, how they might be feeling, what needs they may have – then pray for them (and maybe do the dishes...).

## Week 2: Offer Hospitality to One Another

### First 10 Minutes

Optional Icebreaker: Do you have a place that is like “a home away from home”? Describe that place and why it feels that way.

### Scriptural Context

Throughout the whole Bible, the Kingdom of Heaven is often associated with a banquet or a joyful wedding feast that will take place at the end of time. At God’s table, all who humble themselves in Jesus’ name are welcome and will be exalted. Peter would have heard this parable firsthand, and perhaps he held this in mind when we wrote the following letter to the new and scattered church.

*Read the Gospel passage silently first, then have someone read it aloud.*

### **Luke 14:7-14** (NIV)

<sup>7</sup> When he [Jesus] noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: <sup>8</sup> “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. <sup>9</sup> If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place.

<sup>10</sup> But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. <sup>11</sup> For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

<sup>12</sup> Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. <sup>13</sup> But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, <sup>14</sup> and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

*Read the epistle passage silently first, then have someone read it aloud.*

### **1 Peter 4:7-11** (NIV)

<sup>7</sup> The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. <sup>8</sup> Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup> **Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.** <sup>10</sup> Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.

<sup>11</sup> If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Hospitality / [ hos-pi-tal-i-tee ] *noun*: the friendly reception and treatment of guests or strangers. the quality or disposition of receiving and treating guests/strangers in a warm, friendly, generous way.

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What do you notice about the Luke passage? What themes seem important? What ideas, images, or words stand out to you?
2. What do you notice about the passage from 1 Peter?
3. How do these scriptures relate to each other? What overlapping themes do you see? (Look for repeated words and ideas.) What characteristics of God are revealed? Of people?
4. Who comes to mind when you think of the word “hospitality”? What actions and characteristics does that person display? How do you feel when you are with them? Conversely, can you think of a time when you have felt unwelcome? What actions or characteristics contributed to that feeling?
5. What do you think Peter means when he says “love covers over a multitude of sins”? Can you think of a time when you’ve seen this demonstrated – either personally or in a book, movie, or real-life event?
6. How can we as individuals and as a church grow in hospitality? What kinds of things could we do to cultivate a friendly, welcoming disposition and culture?

## Prayer

Think about what you personally take away from this topic and these passages. What do they reveal about Jesus and what God is like? What do they reveal about yourself? Try to turn this into a prayer and write it down in the space provided.

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Share any burdens or thanksgivings you bring with you and pray together as a group.

## Practice for the Week

Think of someone who is new to your neighborhood, workplace, or some other social circle in your life. Implement a small gesture of hospitality to them this week.

## Week 3: Forgive One Another

### First 10 Minutes

Optional Icebreaker: How did your parents encourage (or force!) forgiveness between you and any siblings you grew up with? If you were an only child, how did you apologize to and forgive friends?

### Scriptural Context

Jesus taught that the forgiveness we receive from God is directly tied to the forgiveness we offer to others. We profess this truth every week when we say the Lord's Prayer together during our worship services: "And forgive us our trespasses *as we forgive* those who trespass against us." When we do wrong or are wronged, a debt is incurred (monetary, physical, emotional, etc.), and someone must pay for that debt. Sometimes *we* absorb its cost and sometimes the *other person* does. Make no mistake, however, forgiveness always costs someone something. True forgiveness is not the same as forgetfulness; rather, true forgiveness enables us to no longer hold the debt or cost over the offender's head and to want the best for the offender. When we remember how many of our own debts Jesus himself has forgiven and absorbed, we are more likely to be able to forgive someone who has hurt us.

*Read the Gospel passage silently first, then have someone read it aloud.*

### Matthew 18:21-35 (NIV)

<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" <sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

<sup>23</sup> "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. <sup>25</sup> Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. <sup>26</sup> "At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' <sup>27</sup> The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

<sup>28</sup> "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. <sup>29</sup> "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.' <sup>30</sup> "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

<sup>32</sup> "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. <sup>33</sup> Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' <sup>34</sup> In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. <sup>35</sup> "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

*Read the epistle passage silently first, then have someone read it aloud.*

### **Colossians 3:12-17\*** (NIV)

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and **forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.**

<sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. <sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

<sup>16</sup> Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

\*Colossians was written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Colossae.

Forgive / [ fer-giv ] *verb*: to grant pardon for or remission of (an offense, debt, etc.); absolve. to give up all claim on account of; remit (a debt, obligation, etc.). to grant pardon to (a person). to cease to feel resentment against. to cancel an indebtedness or liability of.

### **Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. What do you notice about the Matthew passage? What themes seem important? What ideas, images, or words stand out to you?
2. What do you notice about the passage from Colossians?
3. How do these scriptures relate to each other? What overlapping themes do you see? (Look for repeated words and ideas.) What characteristics of God are revealed? Of people?
4. What kind of emotions do you experience when you read the parable? How do you imagine the first servant feels at the beginning and then at the end of the story? What about the king? The other servants?
5. If the king hadn't forgiven the first servant's debt, would it have seemed just for him to demand the first servant forgive the other servant's debt? What are some ways we can cultivate an awareness of God's forgiveness of us that could perpetuate our forgiveness of others?
6. Can you think of a time when you've seen true forgiveness demonstrated – either personally or in a book, movie, or real-life event?

## Prayer

Think about what you personally take away from this topic and these passages. What do they reveal about Jesus and what God is like? What do they reveal about yourself? Try to turn this into a prayer and write it down in the space provided.

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Share any burdens or thanksgivings you bring with you and pray together as a group.

## Practice for the Week

Most of the offenses against us on a day-to-day basis are minor. Sometime this week, when you feel offended – even by a stranger – try to remember the last time you did something similar. What were the contributing factors that caused you to do wrong? What were you feeling or experiencing? Ask God to help you stay humble, to remember your own need for forgiveness and to help you let go of any negative feelings toward the person who wronged you.

## Week 4: Encourage and Build One Another Up

### First 10 Minutes

Optional Icebreaker: What have you watched, read, listened to, or seen that has lifted your spirits and encouraged you lately?

### Scriptural Context

Jesus was always encouraging the downtrodden. Oftentimes he did this through physical healing – restoring those whose injuries or ailments had made them outcasts. The Pharisees hated this disruption because it threatened their hierarchies and ultimately their power. In his first letter to the church in Thessalonica, the Apostle Paul exhorts Christians to bring similar physical and emotional encouragement to one another. By doing so, we obey and follow Jesus – the light who gives life.

*Read the Gospel passage silently first, then have someone read it aloud.*

### **Matthew 12:9-21** (NIV)

<sup>9</sup>Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, <sup>10</sup>and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to bring charges against Jesus, they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” <sup>11</sup>He said to them, “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? <sup>12</sup>How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

<sup>13</sup>Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. <sup>14</sup>But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus. <sup>15</sup>Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill. <sup>16</sup>He warned them not to tell others about him.

<sup>17</sup>This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: <sup>18</sup>“Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. <sup>19</sup>He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. <sup>20</sup>A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory. <sup>21</sup>In his name the nations will put their hope.”\*

*Read the epistle passage silently first, then have someone read it aloud.*

### **1 Thessalonians 5:5-11** (NIV)

<sup>5</sup>You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. <sup>6</sup>So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. <sup>7</sup>For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. <sup>8</sup>But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. <sup>9</sup>For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>10</sup>He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep<sup>†</sup>, we may live together with him. <sup>11</sup>**Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.**

\*Isaiah was a prophet in the Old Testament who foretold of the Messiah and how the Jews would recognize the savior when he came.

†by “awake or asleep” Paul means “live or die.”

Encourage / [ en-**kur**-ij ] *verb*: to inspire with courage, spirit, or confidence. to stimulate by assistance, approval, etc. to promote, advance, or foster.

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What do you notice about the Matthew passage? What themes seem important? What ideas, images, or words stand out to you?
2. What do you notice about the passage from 1 Thessalonians?
3. How do these scriptures relate to each other? What overlapping themes do you see? (Look for repeated words and ideas.) What characteristics of God are revealed? Of people?
4. When was the last time you received some much-needed encouragement? Why were you discouraged? Who helped and what did they do to encourage you?
5. Light is used as a metaphor to describe Jesus and also the church. Why do you think that is? What properties or benefits of light can enhance our understanding of these passages? Share a time in your own life (maybe even when you were a child) when light, or the lack there of, altered a situation or experience.
6. Look at Jesus’ words in Matthew 12:12: “How much more valuable is a person than a sheep!” Why do you think he needed to make this point? What do our actions reveal about what we value above people in our culture, workplaces, and even in our own lives? What small steps or practices can we use to let this truth reorient our thoughts and actions?

## Prayer

Think about what you personally take away from this topic and these passages. What do they reveal about Jesus and what God is like? What do they reveal about yourself? Try to turn this into a prayer and write it down in the space provided.

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Share any burdens or thanksgivings you bring with you and pray together as a group.

## Practice for the Week

Consider those you are closest to. Who among them needs a word of encouragement? Ask God to help you see what steps you can take to encourage them this week. Maybe it is an act of service, a note, or a prayer (written or spoken) that you give them.

## Week 5: Pray for One Another

### First 10 Minutes

Optional Icebreaker: What was your experience with prayer like as a child? Did you pray as a family? If so, was it at meals, bedtime, or throughout the day?

### Scriptural Context

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, he gave them the model of what we now call “The Lord’s Prayer” (it begins with “Our Father in heaven...”). Then he told them these stories below. Both stories remind us of God’s persistent, unrelenting goodness. Unlike us, who so often help others begrudgingly or with mixed motives, God is always openhanded and openhearted, and he is especially pleased when we seek him in prayer.

*Read the Gospel passage silently first, then have someone read it aloud.*

#### **Luke 11:5-13** (NIV)

<sup>5</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; <sup>6</sup>a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’ <sup>7</sup>And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ <sup>8</sup>I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

<sup>9</sup>“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup>For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

<sup>11</sup>“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? <sup>12</sup>Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup>If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

*Read the epistle passage silently first, then have someone read it aloud.*

#### **James 5:13-16\*** (NIV)

<sup>13</sup>Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. <sup>14</sup>Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup>And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven.

<sup>16</sup>Therefore confess your sins to each other and **pray for each other** so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

\* This letter was written by Jesus' brother James to Jewish Christians.

Pray / [ prey ] *verb*: to offer devout petition, praise, thanks. to bring. to make earnest petition to. to make petition or supplication or entreaty for; crave.

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What do you notice about the Luke passage? What themes seem important? What ideas, images, or words stand out to you?
2. What do you notice about the passage from James?
3. How do these scriptures relate to each other? What overlapping themes do you see? (Look for repeated words and ideas.) What characteristics of God are revealed? Of people?
4. Share about a time when you experienced someone praying for you. How did that impact your situation internally and externally? Lately, how have you been experiencing prayer on your own or with others?
5. When your discussion is winding down, be encouraged to spend an elongated amount of time in prayer for one another. See below.

### Prayer

Pass out notecards or scrap paper and take a few moments for everyone to write down something they would like prayer for. Share your requests with the group and then pray together. Before you leave, distribute the written prayer requests among the group. Pray for the person and their request throughout the week.

### Practice for the Week

Take some time to think about your own prayer life. Be honest with God about how you feel, what you would like to be different, or where you would like to grow. Try to turn this into a prayer and write it down in the space provided.

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## Week 6: Bear One Another's Burdens

### First 10 Minutes

Optional Icebreaker: Describe a time when you moved or helped someone else move. Who was enlisted to help? How did it go?

### Scriptural Context

In this Gospel passage, tension between Jesus and the Pharisees was growing. He was gaining followers and was doing or saying things that threatened the Pharisees' influence over their community. When Jesus forgives the paralytic man's sins, he asserts his deity – making a claim that he is one with God. The Pharisees and other Jewish leaders believe this to be blasphemy and are outraged. Jesus then goes on to heal the man, showing that forgiveness and healing, though impossible for men alone, are easy for God.

*Read the Gospel passage silently first, then have someone read it aloud.*

### Luke 5:17-26 (NIV)

<sup>17</sup> One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. <sup>18</sup> Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. <sup>19</sup> When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

<sup>20</sup> When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." <sup>21</sup> The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

<sup>22</sup> Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? <sup>23</sup> Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? <sup>24</sup> But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." <sup>25</sup> Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. <sup>26</sup> Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

*Read the epistle passage silently first, then have someone read it aloud.*

### Galatians 6:1-10\* (NASB)

<sup>1</sup> Brothers and sisters, even if a person is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual are to restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you are not tempted as well. <sup>2</sup> **Bear one another's burdens**, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup> For if anyone thinks that he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. <sup>4</sup> But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting, but to himself alone, and not to another.

<sup>5</sup>For each one will bear his own load. <sup>6</sup>The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him. <sup>7</sup>Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a person sows, this he will also reap. <sup>8</sup>For the one who sows to his own flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit. <sup>9</sup>Let's not become discouraged in doing good, for in due time we will reap, if we do not become weary. <sup>10</sup>So then, while we have opportunity, let's do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

\*This letter was written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Galatia.

Bear / [bair] *verb* : to hold up; support. to hold or remain firm under (a load).

Burden / [bur-dn] *noun* : that which is carried; load. that which is borne with difficulty; obligation.

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What do you notice about the Luke passage? What themes seem important? What ideas, images, or words stand out to you?
2. What do you notice about the passage from Galatians?
3. How do these scriptures relate to each other? What overlapping themes do you see? (Look for repeated words and ideas.) What characteristics of God are revealed? Of people?
4. Imagine that you are one of the friends carrying the paralytic man. What emotions do you have before, during, and after this event? What do you imagine the paralytic man feels before, during, and after?
5. Describe a time when you felt your loved ones bearing a burden with or for you, or when you have witnessed people bearing someone else's burden.
6. What kinds of burdens do you think Paul means in verse 2? Why do you think he included verses 6-10? How can they help us carry out his instructions?

## Prayer

Think about what you personally take away from this topic and these passages. What do they reveal about Jesus and what God is like? What do they reveal about yourself? Try to turn this into a prayer and write it down in the space provided.

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Share any burdens or thanksgivings you bring with you and pray together as a group.

## Practice for the Week

Think of someone you know who has a heavy burden to bear. Maybe it is chronic pain or illness or caring for a loved one who is not well. Maybe they are in the thick of parenting or are in a difficult job. Help bear that burden by reminding them that you see them and look for a way to bring them encouragement this week.

## Week 7: Spur One Another On

### First 10 Minutes

Optional Icebreaker: Share about a friend, teacher, or mentor who inspires / inspired you.

### Scriptural Context

The story Jesus tells here reminds us that there will be a “Last Day.” This is the day Jesus will return and when God will judge the world – a day when all deeds and hearts will be made known and the light of God’s justice and grace will shine bright. Jesus reminds us that our actions matter and that the basis for judgment will be whether love is shown to God’s people (v. 40).

In the passage from Hebrews, “the Most Holy Place” refers to the room in the temple where God’s presence dwelt. No one was able to enter that space and live, except for the high priest, who entered only one time a year when he offered an animal sacrifice to atone for the people’s sins (on Yom Kippur). A curtain separated this area from the rest of the temple. When Jesus died, that curtain was literally torn in two from top to bottom (Mark 15:38). His shed blood, like the animal sacrifice on Yom Kippur, paves the way for us, who put our hope in this great priest Jesus, to enter into the presence of God himself.

*Read the Gospel passage silently first, then have someone read it aloud.*

### Matthew 25:31-46 (NIV)

<sup>31</sup> “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

<sup>34</sup> “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup> I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

<sup>37</sup> “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

<sup>40</sup> “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ <sup>41</sup> “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ <sup>44</sup> “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ <sup>45</sup> “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ <sup>46</sup> “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Read the epistle passage silently first, then have someone read it aloud.

### Hebrews\* 10:19-25 (NIV)

<sup>19</sup>Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup>by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, <sup>21</sup>and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup>let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup>Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup>**And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,** <sup>25</sup>not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day<sup>†</sup> approaching.

\*The author of Hebrews is unknown, but scholars agree whoever wrote it had authority in the apostolic church. Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians.

<sup>†</sup>Day means the day of Jesus' return and the day of judgment.

Spur / [ spur ] *verb* : to prick with or as if with a spur or spurs; incite or urge on. to strike or wound with the spur. to goad or urge. to proceed hurriedly; press forward.

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What do you notice about the Matthew passage? What themes seem important? What ideas, images, or words stand out to you?
2. What do you notice about the passage from Hebrews?
3. How do these scriptures relate to each other? What overlapping themes do you see? (Look for repeated words and ideas.) What characteristics of God are revealed? Of people?
4. How do you feel when you hear the story Jesus told in Matthew 25? Why do you think you have those reactions?
5. Why do you think the author of Hebrews uses the word “spur”? How does the idea of the Last Day “spur” us on?
6. What generally compels you to care for someone else? Your feelings? Duty? Other people? What situations or people are you naturally drawn to help? How can we develop a propensity for good deeds in our own lives and in our church?

## **Prayer**

Think about what you personally take away from this topic and these passages. What do they reveal about Jesus and what God is like? What do they reveal about yourself? Try to turn this into a prayer and write it down in the space provided.

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Share any burdens or thanksgivings you bring with you and pray together as a group.

## **Practice for the Week**

Each day this week, ask God to show you how you can serve him by serving someone else. Maybe it is offering water or a meal to someone in need, or maybe a smile and moment of connection with a stranger. Ask him to help you see his image in the people in your house, neighborhood, and/or workplace.



# Christ Church

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