



## Day 11 God Loves You Unconditionally (11th June)

*“But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners” (Rom 5:8)”*

Unconditional love is so vastly different from what we are used to receiving, that most of us don't really know what it is. The truth is, we have been indoctrinated in some form of conditional love – a love that gives as long as we are receiving something of equal or greater value in return. At home, at school, at work, and beyond, most of our life experiences have ingrained in us an understanding that if we perform well, we will be appreciated and cared for. And if we fail, we have to accept shame, disapproval, and in some cases, even hatred, as the norm.

It is no wonder that the Apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesian Church: “And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God” (Eph 3:18-19 NLT). Only the Spirit of God can reveal to our hearts how much He loves us.

Rom 5:8 tells us that God loved us even while we were His enemies. In fact, He loved us enough to die for us. Didn't Jesus say, “there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friend” (Jn 15:13 NLT)? If God loved you with the greatest measure possible when you were still living in rebellion against Him, can you believe that He loves you today?

In embracing this truth for yourself, you must embrace this truth for every person; while they were yet sinners, Christ died for them, and He wants you to love them as He loved you. Can you think of someone that you have a hard time loving? Can you imagine Christ loving that person? Ask God how you can show care to him/her, so that he/she may know what it means to be accepted by a Christ's follower, that one day the person may open his/her heart to accept Christ.

### Prayer

Father, I desire to understand your love for me. I give you my sin, shame, and the feeling of condemnation that I wrestle with. I choose to embrace the truth of your Word and believe that you love me simply for who I am and not based on my performance. I thank you that you love me the same yesterday, today and forever.



## Day 12 We are God's Children (12<sup>th</sup> June)

*"See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are!" (1 Jn 3:1)*

God's children. Have you ever stopped long enough for this truth to really sink in? You are God's child. You are His son or His daughter. God is your Father. For many people, this word picture may be distorted by their own experience with their earthly father, who could, in some instances, be distant, moody, uncaring, controlling, even abusive or violent. Today, no matter what your earthly family or father may be like, you now have a Heavenly Father who loves you dearly and a heavenly family, made up of sisters and brothers from all over the world.

Your Heavenly Daddy loves you. He delights in you. He loves you just as you are—as He has created you to be the unique you. He loves listening to you. He cares for all that you care about. He has nothing but your best interest at heart. His love for you is everlasting. He will never leave you nor forsake you. Not now. Not ever. On into eternity, He will still be there caring for you.

You are the apple of His eye. He will protect you. That does not mean you will escape from every painful circumstance and difficulty that comes your way. But it does mean nothing can happen to you unless it first passed the sovereign hands of your eternal Father who is in control of every detail of human history—past, present and future. He promises all things will work together for your good. You have nothing to fear. There is nothing you will ever need to worry about. Ever. Under any circumstances. The Apostle John also says, "perfect love casts out all fears". Let His love embrace you today and cast away every fear of insecurity, abandonment, unworthiness and take away any orphan spirit from you (For more about the orphan spirit, read our Mature Partners Book, Week 6 Day 3).

At the same time, remember that God's heart is broken for the many lost children, the way an earthly father's heart breaks at the loss of one of his own. Would you care enough about the brokenness of our Heavenly Father to join in the search party for His lost children? Write down some names of the lost children of God that you know and start praying for them. Ask God for opportunities to reach out to them.

### Prayer

Heavenly Father, I need you to father me. Deep in my heart, I want to know that you are my Father and that I am your cherished child. Help me to rest in your love for me. Teach me what it means to live close to you, so that I may fulfil the purpose for which you have adopted me into your family.



## Day 13 True Love Disciplines (13<sup>th</sup> June)

*“My child, don’t reject the LORD’s discipline, and don’t be upset when he corrects you. For the LORD corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights.” (Prov 3:11-12)*

The idea of love and discipline being in the same sentence is a hard concept to swallow. Our modern understanding of love is gushy and warm, while discipline stirs up thoughts of pain and losing something. Here, it says, discipline is an expression of God’s love for us.

If you are a parent and see one of your young kids running out into the street to possible oncoming cars, you would probably scream at the child to stop. You may even take stronger steps of discipline (time out, scolding, etc). You know that the pain the child may experience at that moment would prevent him/her from experiencing life-threatening pain in the future. That form of parental discipline is dispensed from a heart with love.

In the same way, our Heavenly Father who sees the end from the beginning, disciplines us because He wants the best for us. He loves us too much to let us walk down the path of sin and immaturity, that would cause us to destroy our destiny and forfeit our potential. Therefore, if necessary, He disciplines us through trials and pains that come our way (this is not to say every difficulty we face is God disciplining us). His motive is that we will become all that He intended for us. The late Billy Graham said, “God does not discipline us to subdue us but to condition us for a life of usefulness and blessedness. In His wisdom, He knows that an uncontrolled life is an unhappy life, so He puts reins on our wayward souls that they may be directed into the paths of righteousness”.

The author of Hebrews who quoted these words from Proverbs 3:11-12 goes on to say “Endure hardship as discipline...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” (Heb 12: 7, 11). Instead of running from the discipline of the Lord, let us humble ourselves and allow God’s spirit to use it to mould us more and more into His image.

### Prayer

Father, I choose to thank you for your discipline. I believe that you love me at all times, and therefore I believe the discipline you give comes through your heart for my good. Help me to humble myself and allow your discipline to work in me to produce the Christlike life that you desire.



## Day 14 God's Holiness Compels us to Love (14<sup>th</sup> June)

*"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty—the one who always was, who is, and who is still to come." (Rev 4:8 NLT)*

The four living creatures around the throne of God sang repeatedly day after day, night after night, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty". God is love; God is also holy. God is holy—He hates sin, rebellion, iniquities and all that is evil and false. Yet God is love—He is gracious, forgiving, forbearing and abounding in compassion and mercy for sinners.

We see the glorious fulfilment of these two attributes of God at the cross. Jesus took the full wrath of God for all our sins through His death on the cross. In doing so, He satisfied the righteous requirements of the Holy God. Simultaneously, we see God's perfect love for us, as He was willing to suffer on our behalf, so that we could be forgiven.

The Scriptures exhorts us to have a reverend fear for the Holy God. Prov 9:10 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom". And in Luke 12:5, Jesus told us, "But I'll tell you whom to fear. Fear God, who has the power to kill you and then throw you into hell. Yes, he's the one to fear".

You might be wondering, "Doesn't the Bible say, perfect love casts out all fears? How is fear compatible with love?" The reverential fear (not the cowering sort of fear) that we are called to walk in does not invalidate the love of God. When we realise the biblical love for God is more than having a happy feeling, but choosing to prefer Him above ourselves, we can see the great value of having a revelation of God's holiness.

When we see God in His Holiness, it will compel us to choose His will above our own selfish inclination. We will realise that choosing our own selfish desires is actually rebelling against the Holy God. A proper fear of God will cause us to love God not just with our lips but with the whole of our lives.

### Prayer

Lord, I ask for your forgiveness for the times that I have neglected a proper reverential fear of you. Today, I ask that you would reveal to me what it means to live with a deep awareness of your holiness, and at the same time a deep revelation of your love. Help me to model your holiness and love.



## Day 15 The Power of Love through Prayer (15<sup>th</sup> June)

*“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years! Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops.” (Jas 5:16-18)*

Why is it that evil is prevailing in many areas of the city? Could it be in part because of the prayerlessness of God’s people? God has appointed us as His ambassadors on the earth and in this city, we are to be the salt and light of the world. If darkness is prevailing, then the light is not shining as God intended.

Here it says, the earnest prayer of a righteous person has “great power and produces wonderful results”. The pages of history are filled with men, women and children who prayed much, believed for much, and brought about great victories in the physical and spiritual realms. There are Christ’s followers who through their faithfulness in prayer caused war to cease, famine to abate, disease to flee and whole people to come to faith in Jesus Christ. Indeed, history is written by the intercessors.

Do you want to be a part of changing the course of history for your city and your community? Ask God to shape you into a person of prayer. Elijah is said to be a human just like us, yet he accomplished so much through his prayers.

### Prayer

Lord, forgive me for my prayerlessness. Lord, expand my heart to love others in my church, community and city through prayers.



## Day 16 Love Breaks Down Dividing Walls (16<sup>th</sup> June)

*“For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us” (Eph 2:14)*

Some scholars believe that the wall of hostility mentioned in Ephesians 2 refers to the literal wall in the Herodian temple that excluded the Gentiles from entering the inner courts reserved only for the Jewish believers. Others believe it was the law with all its ceremonial requirements e.g. circumcision, kosher food and drink, etc which put up a huge wall between the Jews and the Gentiles. Jesus’ death on the cross fulfilled the law and removed the barriers that had caused hostility between the Jews and Gentiles. He was the peacemaker and wall breaker.

In ICC, one of our key values is to break down dividing walls as a multicultural church. We need to intentionally break down all dividing walls i.e. cultures, nationalities, languages, social economic status, genders, and generational barriers. Are you a peacemaker and wall breaker? What can you do intentionally today to break down some of the dividing walls between diverse groups of people?

Tomorrow, we will be praying for the city at the BattleCry. It is an opportunity for us to come together across denominations, regions, languages and culture groups, to pray for our city. Let us demonstrate the same love that Jesus exhibited on the cross, which broke down the barriers and made us one people of God.

### Prayer

Father, I ask for your grace and love to fill my heart so that I can be a wall breaker and peacemaker in my church, my community, and my city.



## Day 17 Love Your City through Prayer (17<sup>th</sup> June)

*“Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:14)*

In Jeremiah 29:7, God says, “Work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you...Pray to the Lord for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare”. We are exhorted to pray for our city. Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem. His heart broke over a city that would soon experience destruction because it rejected the Saviour. His heart is still moved by compassion over the millions of people in our city—from the road sweeper to the mayor—who desperately need the living hope He offers. If we truly love God, what breaks His heart should break our hearts.

In 2 Chronicles 7:14, it says God will heal and restore our land if we do a few things:

First, the people who are called by His Name must take action. The future of our city is not in the hands of a few politicians. It is not in the hands of our justice system. The future of our city is in the hands of the people of God. God has given us the key to bring restoration and hope to our city.

Secondly, it says we need to humble ourselves and pray. The important thing we can do for our city is to pray. We need to humble ourselves so that we can unite with Christians from different churches and denominations. It is not about us. Only then we can focus on what we have in common—our faith in Jesus Christ, rather than our differences. We need to stand in the gap and ask for forgiveness for the sins in our city.

He promises to hear our prayer. Today, let us unite together in the Battlecry prayer, and pray for revival and restoration for our city.

### Prayer

Lord, I ask that you will fill me with compassion for my city. Even as we stand in unity with other Christians across the city, Lord, we know you will hear our prayers and bring revival and restoration to Brisbane.



## Day 18 God Desires All People to be Saved (18<sup>th</sup> June)

*“This is good and pleases God our Saviour, who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.” (1 Tim 2:3-4)*

God’s desire is that all will be saved and come to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

In recent years, there was a worship song, *Reckless Love*, which stirred some discussion around the use of the word ‘reckless’ to describe God’s love. The lyrics of the song describe the overwhelming, never ending love of God that would climb every mountain, kick down every wall, cross any sea, leave the ninety nine for the one that is lost, do hold true.

The parable of the prodigal son tells the story of a young man who left his home, squandered his inheritance, lived a life of debauchery and eventually resorted to living among pigs. Yet when he comes to his senses and decides to return home, the Father runs to him, puts the best robe on him, puts a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. Then he put on a big celebration proclaiming: “this son of mine was dead, and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found”. That’s the heart of the Heavenly Father to those who are lost—the agnostics, the atheists, the sorcerers, the drug dealers, the prostitutes, the intellectuals. Indeed, those on the highways and byways. Even God-haters are loved by the one they hate. It is this radical, “reckless” love by which the Creator of all universe, left His throne to live among men, so that men might be reconciled to Him.

Do we have His zealous heart of love beating inside us for the lost and the broken? Do we long for opportunities to share our faith with those who do not know Jesus? What part can you play today in planting a seed of love, watering faith, or nurturing knowledge so that Jesus’ love is known and grown in another soul that God desires to be saved?

### Prayer

Father, I acknowledge that I have not fully understood your heart for the lost. Fill me afresh with your passion for those who do not know you, and grant me divine opportunities to share the good news with them.



## Day 19 Love Your Workplace (19<sup>th</sup> June)

“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love.” (1 Cor 16:14)

Here Paul exhorts us to be on guard or be alert. The original word means to “keep on staying awake” or keep on watching, being discerning, listening, and paying attention. When we relate this to doing everything in love, it would mean being on the alert to the needs of others—both friend and foe. Love has eyes to see. It says of the Good Samaritan, “when he **saw** [the man’s condition], his heart was filled with pity”. Notice that “he saw”. That’s the starting point.

Love also stands firm. It is not wishy washy or a fair weather feeling. Love is mature, not based on our mood, and love is a choice that we make in our every attitude, affection and action.

The final challenge is to do everything in love. What if we choose to prefer others above ourselves in everything—every thought, every spoken word, every action and interaction?

We often think of Sunday as “the Lord’s day” and Monday to Friday as workdays. The truth is they are all God’s day. Your life at the workplace serves Jesus as your time at church does. God gifted you to do what you do, whether you are an accountant, an engineer, a doctor or an office assistant. Whether you realise or accept it or not, your workplace is also an assigned place of ministry. Let every meeting, every decision, every conversation at your workplace today be walked out and worked out in love. If every Christian working in this city would go to work with this posture and attitude, our city will be transformed.

God will not ask us to do anything that is not possible. Let us take this verse not merely as a challenge but a promise from God. Make a choice to share love throughout the day. Check your posture, your expressions, as well as the cheerfulness and gratefulness you express to others all day.

### Prayer

Father, I thank you that you love me completely at all times. I thank you that you model for me what it means to love in everything you do. I take this word as a promise that it is always possible to live in love. Give me the grace to walk in love each day.



## Day 20 Love is the Greatest Thing (20<sup>th</sup> June)

*“Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?” Jesus replied, “You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” (Matt 22:36-40)*

Mount Everest is known as the earth’s highest mountain. With an elevation of over 29,000 feet, it has no other competition. The thought of climbing to the summit has captivated the imagination of mountaineers for decades. It was not until 1953 that Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay made the first official ascent. Previously many had died trying.

This passage in Matthew is the spiritual Mount Everest. This summit stands head and shoulders above any other spiritual pursuit we may have had. When the Pharisees asked Jesus what was the greatest commandment, Jesus stated that it is to love God and love others with all that we have. Everything else hangs on these two things.

Jesus was effectively saying, if we miss this, we’ve missed it all. As followers of Christ, love for God and love for others is the summit we should have our eyes fixed on. The key is to realise that we don’t have to climb the spiritual mountain in our own strength. If that was the case, none of us would be able to reach the summit.

### Prayer

Lord, I thank you for making it clear to me that love for you and love for others is the most important thing. Lord, I know I can’t do it in my own strength. Today I ask you to live your life of love in and through me for your glory.