

Session Three  
Walking with Christ

### *A love like His*

Welcome to session three of “Walking with Christ”. Isn’t it great to be back together enjoying each other’s company again? I really like that God wants us to be a family!

Today we’ll hold our love up to the perfection of God’s, as we seek to develop a love like His!

If you visit Toledo, Spain, you can see the Alcazar, a 16-th century fortress sitting majestically atop the highest hill. In the civil war of the 1930s, the Alcazar became a battleground when the Loyalists tried to oust the Nationalists, who held the fortress. During one dramatic episode of the war, the Nationalist leader received a phone call while in his office at the Alcazar. It was from his son, who had been captured by the Loyalists. The ultimatum: If the father didn’t surrender the Alcazar to them, they would kill his son. The father weighed his options, but after a long pause and with a heavy heart, he said to his son, “Then die like a man.”

God’s love is self-sacrificial, shown when He gave up His only Son for each of us! And unless we are willing to die to ourselves, we will never have a love like His.

But first of all, I must tell you...you will never develop this kind of love if you haven’t accepted Christ’s love for yourself. It’s supernatural, and requires a partnership between you and the Author of this love, or it will not happen. Sure, you can be a non-Christian and love your spouse, your friends and mother...but the strongest kind of love, “Agape” or “God-love”, can only come if you have first accepted His love gift to **you**! If you have not yet done that, please don’t leave this small group without talking to someone in your group who will be thrilled to share how to become a child of God, so that God Himself can build **His** character traits into yours!

Author Patrick Morley tells about a group of fishermen who landed in a secluded bay and had a great day fishing for salmon. But when they returned to their sea plane, it was aground because of the fluctuating tides. They had no option except to wait until the next morning when the tides came in. Yet when they took off, they only got a few feet off the ground before crashing down into the sea. The problem of the day before had caused the pontoon to puncture and fill with water.

The sea plane slowly began to sink. The three men and a 12-year-old son of one of them prayed and then jumped into the icy waters to swim to shore. The water was cold, the riptide was strong, and two of the men reached the shore exhausted. They looked back and saw that their companion, also a strong swimmer, did not swim to shore because his

12-year-old son wasn't strong enough to make it. They saw that father with his arms around his son being swept out to sea. He chose to die with his son rather than to live without him.

What a model, and what a picture of God's love for us! He chose to die for us, rather than to live without us knowing we would never be able to reach heaven on our own!



## **Fellowship**

1. Share with the group when you accepted Christ's love for yourself.
2. Describe one situation this week in which you were challenged to love.



## **Discipleship**

A man went to the doctor after weeks of symptoms. The doctor examined him carefully, then called the patient's wife into his office. "Your husband is suffering from a rare form of anemia. Without treatment, he'll be dead in a few weeks. The good news is, it can be treated with proper nutrition."

"You will need to get up early every morning and fix your husband a hot breakfast—pancakes, bacon and eggs, the works. He'll need a home-cooked lunch every day, and then an old-fashioned meat-and-potato dinner every evening. It would be especially helpful if you could bake frequently. Cakes, pies, homemade bread—these are the things that will allow your husband to live.

"One more thing. His immune system is weak, so it's important that your home be kept spotless at all times. Do you have any questions?" The wife had none.

"Do you want to break the news, or shall I?" asked the doctor.

"I will," the wife replied.

She walked into the exam room. The husband, sensing the seriousness of his illness, asked her, "It's bad, isn't it?"

She nodded, tears welling up in her eyes. "What's going to happen to me?" he asked. With a sob, the wife blurted out, "The doctor says you're gonna die!"

That story makes me laugh every time I hear it, but it also brings conviction...as it brings to the light my weakness...and yes, unwillingness oftentimes, in putting others' needs before my own. Turn with me now to Philippians 2:3-5, and let's read it together.

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”

An attitude the same as Christ Jesus'! Considering other's needs as more important than my own!? That means that no sacrifice is too great! Let's jump down to verse 13, because if you're like me, you are feeling a little bit discouraged now.

“For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

OK...so it's God that makes us 1) willing and 2) able. Do you see why it's impossible to have a God-sized love without God? When we accept Christ and His love for ourselves, it's like a blood transfusion. His life and blood works in us, and a supernatural change begins. We take on His characteristics. The Bible says that the life is in the blood! His life, given through His blood. Now let's read what is called by most “The Love Chapter”: I Corinthians 13.

“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

I've always been fascinated and in awe of those who have been willing to not only die for Christ, but to be burned at the stake for him. Imagine...alive, and burning until there is no flesh left! Yet as I read verse 3, and see that God counts surrendering our body to the flames as *nothing* if there is no love...I realize how much He wants this for us!

Now, I may never be called to physically die for another, but daily I'm presented with opportunities to sacrificially love others and die to myself! Sometimes I think it would actually be *easier* to die physically than to die to self...giving up MY preferences, MY wishes, MY agenda, and MY comfort...to consider them better than myself, preferring

them and their wishes. To welcome the opportunity to invite a hurting neighbor in when I am tired after a long day at work. To help someone move when I would rather relax with a good book. To write that note of encouragement when I want to complain, “But no one has encouraged ME today!”

Jesus says that the world will *know* we are Christians by our love! So I ask you: is there any doubt as people watch *your* life that you’ve had a spiritual blood transfusion and God’s love is permeating your life?

3. Read I Corinthians 13:4-7. Which of these characteristics of love do you struggle with most?
4. To what extent does Christ’s love for you—His sacrifice, forgiveness, and care instead of condemnation—motivate you to love others? Does it motivate you a lot, or not much? Why do you think that is?



## *Ministry*

5. How would you like this study and this group experience to affect the way you handle relationships from now on?
6. Spend some time in prayer for each other...that as God does His part, we would cooperate and be willing to change.



## *Evangelism*

7. Think about what you believe will be your biggest challenge to love this coming week. Share it with the group and brainstorm on how you can demonstrate Christ’s love to that difficult-to-love person...so that they will *know* you are a Christian by your love.



## *Worship*

8. The Bible says, “The prayers of a righteous man are powerful and effective.” How has God answered your prayers during this study? Review your list of prayer requests and praises and update the group.

