

DAILY DEVOTIONS

Day 1: From Sight to Faith

Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:7, 17; John 13:31-33

The disciples faced a profound transition—from walking physically with Jesus to living by faith through the Holy Spirit. Like a lobster shedding its shell, they had to abandon what felt secure to grow into something new. When you became a Christian, you didn't just add Jesus to your life; you became an entirely new person. The old life is gone. This new relationship isn't based on physical proximity but spiritual presence. God wants to wean you off visible props and onto radical trust. What "old shell" is God asking you to release today? Where is He calling you to trust Him without seeing the outcome? Remember, you're not alone in this vulnerable space—the Holy Spirit dwells within you, making Christ's presence more intimate than ever before.

Day 2: The Will to Love

Reading: John 13:34; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Agape love isn't about warm feelings or natural affinity. It's a deliberate choice, a setting of the will toward maturity in relationships. Jesus didn't command us to "like" everyone—He commanded us to love them. This distinction liberates us from emotional manipulation and empowers us for genuine transformation. Agape asks: "Will I choose to approach this person with Christ-like maturity regardless of how I feel?" This love doesn't wait for worthiness; it acts despite unworthiness. Today, identify someone you struggle to "like." You're not called to manufacture feelings, but you are called to choose loving actions. What would agape look like toward that person? Perhaps it's a kind word, withheld criticism, or sincere prayer. Love is a decision you make repeatedly.

Day 3: Sacrificial Love

Reading: John 15:13; Luke 23:34; Romans 5:8

Jesus set the benchmark impossibly high: "Love as I have loved you." His love is sacrificial, unconditional, and relentless. Even as nails pierced His hands, He prayed forgiveness for His executioners. This is the love we're called to imitate—loving people who don't love us back, extending grace to the undeserving, laying down our lives for others. You might be thinking, "That's impossible!" And you're right—in your own strength. But here's the miracle: God never commands what He doesn't empower. Romans 5:5 promises that the Holy Spirit fills our hearts with God's love. You have access to an unlimited reservoir. The question isn't capacity but willingness. Who needs your sacrificial love today? What comfort, time, or resource might God be asking you to lay down for another?

Day 4: Love as Proof

Reading: John 13:35; 1 John 3:16-18; Matthew 5:16

Jesus gave the watching world permission to judge our authenticity by one criterion: how we love each other. Not our theological precision, worship style, or moral superiority—our love. This is both sobering and clarifying. The world doesn't need more Christian bumper stickers; it needs to see God's family caring for one another in tangible, extraordinary ways. When a woman washed a barefoot boy's feet and bought him shoes, he asked, "Are you God's wife?" What a beautiful picture of love making God visible. Your love—or lack of it—preaches louder than any sermon. It validates or invalidates your witness. How would unbelievers describe Christians based on observing your relationships? What would they conclude about Jesus by watching you interact with fellow believers? Let your love be undeniable proof.

Day 5: Little Children, Love One Another

Reading: John 13:31-35; 1 John 4:7-12, 19-21

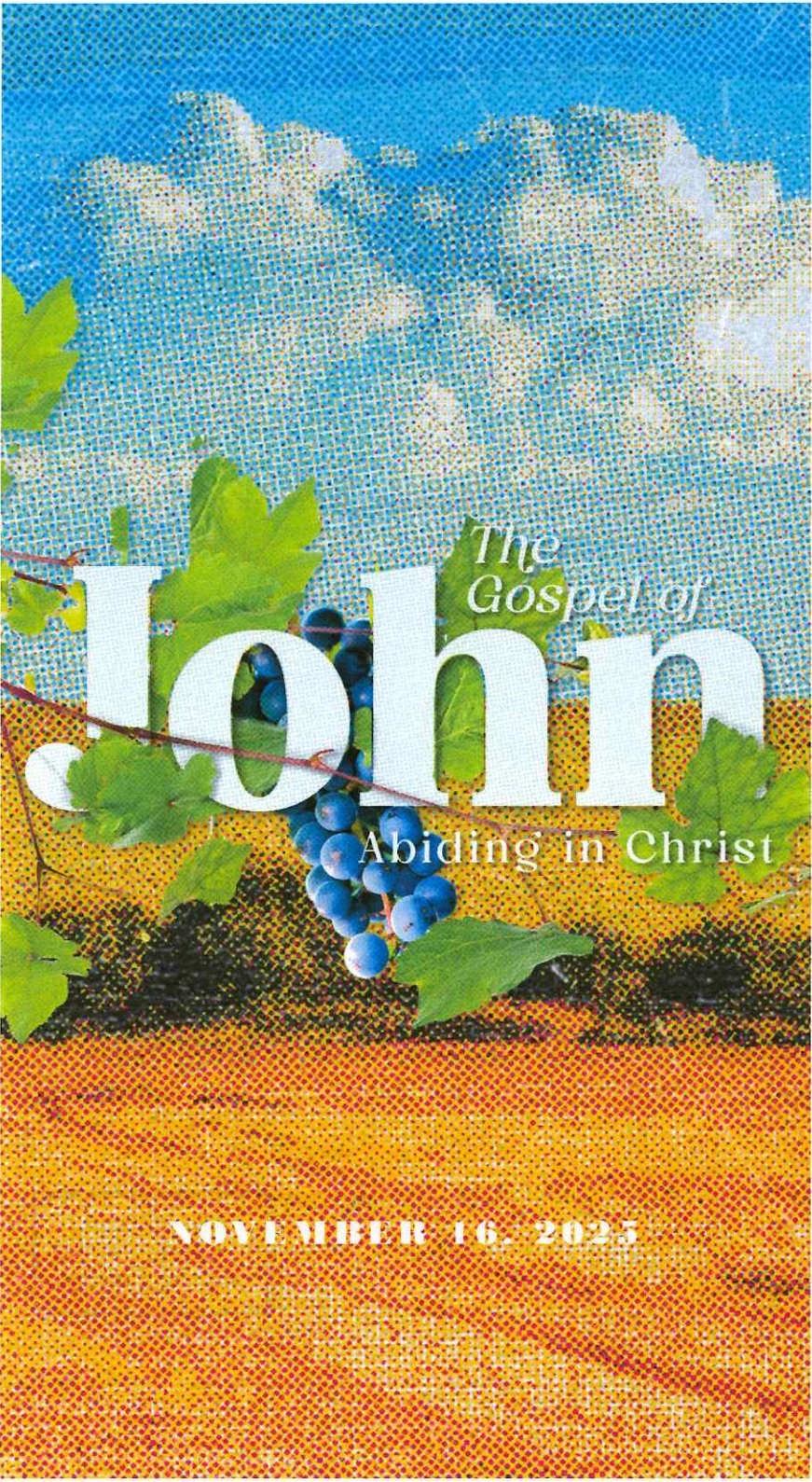
Devotional: Church tradition tells us that the aged Apostle John, carried into gatherings in his final years, repeated one message: "Little children, love one another." When asked why he said only this, he replied, "Because it is the Lord's command. And if this alone be done, it is enough." Profound simplicity. After decades of ministry, theological battles, and church leadership, John distilled everything to this: love each other. Not love perfectly, but love intentionally. Not love only those you naturally like, but love your fellow believers as an act of obedience and worship. The world desperately needs to see a community where love transcends preference, where grace flows freely, where forgiveness is constant. If we loved each other just a little better tomorrow than today, imagine the transformation. What one act of love will you commit to today?

DEACONS ON CALL

Josh Bell and David Downs

WEEKLY EVENTS

- **WORSHIP:** Sundays at 9:45 AM
- **SMALL GROUPS:** Sundays at 11 AM
- **DEEP DIVE:** Wednesdays at Noon & 6:45 PM
- **FIRST KIDS:** Wednesdays at 5:30 PM
- **FIRST YOUTH:** Wednesdays: M.S. 5:30 PM, H.S. 7:00 PM



A NEW WAY / John 13:31-35

To follow Jesus is to have a brand new way of life. When these twelve men sitting around the dinner table started hanging around Jesus, they had no idea just how new and different their lives would become. At this final meal on that last night, they were still learning just how new their lives should be. As present-day followers of Jesus, let's consider some aspects of life that become new once we become His disciples.

1. The relationship of a disciple is one not of sight, but of _____.

2. Agape is not the love of feeling, it's the love of the _____.

Christ's love is unconditional and long-suffering.

3. Agape is _____ love.

4. Agape is _____ of relationship with Jesus.

5. Jesus is simply telling us to agape _____.

Scripture References (In order of use): 2 Corinthians 5:17; John 16:7; Matthew 18:20; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Luke 23:34; Romans 5:5
Referenced Works: Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott (The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge); Addresses on the Gospel of John (H. A. Ironside); The Beloved Disciple's Memoirs and Letters (Bob Utley); John: That You May Believe (R. Kent Hughes); The Gospel of John (Jack Wilton Stallings)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share about a relationship in your life that changed significantly. How did you adapt to that change?
2. Read **John 13:31-35**. Is there anything from the sermon you would like to discuss?
3. Jesus called His disciples "little children" for the only time in John's gospel. What does this reveal about His heart toward them in this moment?
4. Read **John 16:7**. Why would it be "better" for Jesus to leave and send the Holy Spirit? How does this challenge our natural desires?
5. Be honest: Is there someone in your life (especially a fellow believer) you don't particularly "like"? How does understanding agape as a "setting of the will" rather than a feeling change how you might approach that relationship?
6. When have you experienced sacrificial love from another believer? How did it impact your faith?
7. Patrick said, "No one in our circle of relationships should ever be starved for love" because the Holy Spirit fills our hearts with God's love (**Romans 5:5**). Do you believe you have unlimited capacity to love? What limits your love in practice?
8. Jesus gives the world permission to judge whether we're His disciples based on how we love each other. What does the world see when they observe how Christians treat one another—in your church, on social media, in the news? What do they see in you?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

- Identify one person in your church community you don't naturally connect with. Pray for them daily this week and perform one intentional act of kindness toward them.
- As a small group, identify one practical way you can demonstrate sacrificial love to someone in need this month. Plan it together and execute it.