A 50-day Spiritual Life Journey

The LOVE PROJECT

loving Jesus - serving others

"BELIEVE in the name of His Son, JESUS CHRIST,
& LOVE one another"

1 John 3:23

Trinity Church, Congregational, Bolton, MA

March 12 → April 30, 2017
“The Love Project”
A 50-day Spiritual Life Journey
March 12, 2017 - April 30, 2017

Worship Schedule

March 12  “A Love that Believes and Serves” 1 John 3:11–24
March 19  “A Love that Excels in Giving” 2 Corinthians 8:1–15
March 26  “A Love that the Holy Spirit Brings” Galatians 5:13–26
April 2   “A Love that Is Contagious” 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10
          (Communion served)
April 9   “A Love that Washes Others’ Feet” John 13:1–17 (Palm Sunday)
April 16  “A Love that Brings Life Eternal” John 10:1–18 (Easter Sunday: one service at 10:30 a.m.)
April 23  “A Love that Feeds and Cares for Christ’s Sheep” John 21:1–19
          (preacher, Eric Wilder)
April 30  “A Love that Is Patient and Kind” 1 Corinthians 12:27–13:13
          (Love Project Day: one worship service at 8:00 a.m., followed by brunch and Love Project community service)
May 7    Love Project—Testimony Sunday, Communion served
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Welcome to the Love Project 50-day Spiritual Life Journey at Trinity Church, Congregational, in Bolton, Massachusetts. The outreach committee of Trinity Church and myself are spearheading this 50-day spiritual life journey, designed to grow us upward and outward in our service to others in the community. The 50 days of teaching, preaching, and small group study and application, coupled with small group prayer and individual daily prayers, are meant to grow us up to be Christ-followers who love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and who love our neighbor as ourselves. Our fervent desire is to position ourselves before the Lord, asking Him to create in us a culture of service and a culture of prayer that flow out of a love for the Lord and for people. We welcome you wherever you are in your spiritual journey, whether curious, seeker, devoted follower of Jesus, or mature believer in Christ, to join us in this great adventure of faith. Together, we embark on this journey of reaching out to others, loving and serving them, and sharing the life-giving gospel of the One who so moves us with compassion, mercy, and kindness to others—Jesus Christ.

Pastor David A. Smith
Senior Pastor, Trinity Church, Congregational
Bolton, Massachusetts
Opening Prayer:
Each session begins with an opening prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to break through in the small group session, opening and transforming hearts in your group. We suggest that the small group facilitator open the meeting with prayer, but anyone can be called upon to do this. Time for group prayer will be given at the end of the session.

Read the Scripture:
Each session has two Scriptures to read and discuss. The main Scripture is always the second one. The first Scripture prepares you to dive into the primary Scripture, helping you to better understand it through the analogy of Scripture (other Scripture helping you understand a given text). You may have a variety of Scripture translations, so be sure to let others in your group know which version you are reading from.

The Historical Background:
Each of the eight sessions presents some historical background, sometimes including a map to help you frame what you are reading culturally and historically, to help you better understand Scripture in its proper cultural and historical context.

Discuss:
There are several discussion questions after the first Scripture, but close to 10 discussion questions after the primary passage of Scripture being studied. Try to move through each question with time for at least one person to answer the question, then spend more time on those questions that generate more discussion and that may be more relevant to where your group members are in their spiritual journey of loving God and serving others.
Discovery Questions:

These questions are meant to be much more personal and more directed toward personal application of the truths that are being taught from the Scriptures. They are meant to help you learn more about one another in the group and to give room for personal expression. Some in your group will be ready to talk at great length and may need some time limits; others will enjoy being active listeners.

Pray for One Another:

This is the time for group prayer. Along with praying for requests in your group, use the prayer directives given in this section, designed to help us not only to be hearers of God’s Word but doers also. The application of God’s Word comes home in a person’s life when they pray for themselves and others along the lines of the teaching.

The Preaching Series Augments the Study Guide:

This study guide has been designed to follow each of the eight messages preached from March 12 to April 30, 2017, at Trinity Church, Congregational, in Bolton, Massachusetts, by pastors David A. Smith and Eric Wilder. While the small group participant will get the maximum value out of this 50-day spiritual life journey by attending all services at Trinity Church during the 50 days, the teachings stand on their own with Scriptures and discussion questions. The apex of the 50-day journey is the church-wide Community Outreach Day on April 30 and the follow-up Testimony Sunday on May 7 at Trinity Church. If you are attending another church and are doing this study, we encourage you to join us at Trinity Church on April 30 for the worship service at 8:00 a.m., followed by brunch and the day of service, and for Testimony Sunday on May 7 at either the 8:00 a.m. or 10:45 a.m. worship service. We thank you for participating in this 50-day Love Project journey with us.
Session One | A Love that Believes and Serves

Opening Prayer by Small Group Facilitator

Read the Scripture: Matthew 22:34–40

Discuss:

1) What does it mean to love God with all your heart and soul and mind?
2) Why does Jesus call this the greatest commandment?
3) What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself?
4) Who is your neighbor?
5) What is the single command of God that sums up the entire Law of God, according to Galatians 5:14?

Read the Scripture: 1 John 3:11–24

The Historical Background:

The author of the epistle of 1 John is the Apostle John, who also wrote the gospel of John, the book of Revelation, and 2nd and 3rd John. He was a fisherman and one of Jesus’ inner circle of three amongst the disciples. John contrasts in this letter light and darkness, life and death, truth and lies, and love and hate. He writes this circular letter to churches in Asia Minor in the first century to assure believers of the certainty of their faith and to refute and expose false teachers.

Discuss:

1) In this passage we are called to love one another and to not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one. Who is the evil one and what influence did he have on Cain? (See 1 John 3:7–8.)

2) Who is Cain and why is he lifted up as an example we should not emulate? (See Genesis 4:1–12 and Hebrews 11:4.)

3) John says that anyone who hates his brother is a murderer and that murderers will not inherit eternal life. Why is hatred so sinful? (See also Matthew 5:21–22.)
4) How do we know what love is, according to 1 John 3:16?

5) How are we to respond to Christ’s love for us in our treatment of others?

6) The text describes seeing a brother in need and sharing material possessions with that brother as an expression of our love for God. How does giving material possessions to a brother demonstrate the love of God? (See also James 2:14–17.)

7) Should we give money or material possessions to someone we do not know or to those who are not our brother or sister?

8) Can we actually hurt someone by our giving and, if so, how?

9) What does it mean to love not only with words but in action and in truth?

10) According to 1 John 3:23, what is God’s command?

11) How does belief in Jesus Christ move and prepare us to serve others with the love of Christ?

12) Can you love God and not love others? (See also 1 John 4:7–8.)

Discovery Questions:

1) Who is the most loving person you have ever known and how did he or she radiate that love?

2) The Bible says that we love God because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Share an experience you had with the Lord that communicated His love for you.

3) Share an experience in giving to someone in need and how it affected you.

Pray for One Another:

✔ Pray from the Love Project Prayer Guide entry for today.

✔ Pray for one another, that together you may grow in loving God with your entire being—body, soul, mind and spirit—and pray that God will grow in you a love for others.

✔ Pray for one another—that God will lead you to participate in one of the upcoming community outreach projects in our church-wide Love Project, or that God may spur you on to spearhead an outreach service project that others may join on our upcoming Community Outreach Day, April 30.
Opening Prayer by Small Group Facilitator

Read the Scripture: Matthew 5:40–48

Discuss:

1) What does Jesus mean when He says, “Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you”? Should we not show discernment and wisdom in our giving?

2) How are we to show love to our enemies in our giving, according to Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount?

3) What does “going the extra mile” mean when it has to do with our giving to others?

4) Who sets the standard of giving that we are to strive for?

Read the Scripture: 2 Corinthians 8:1–15

The Historical Background:

The author of 2 Corinthians is the Apostle Paul, who wrote this letter to the church of Corinth and to Christians throughout Achaia (in modern-day Greece) about the year AD 55.

The theme of the letter is Paul’s encouragement to believers to be reconciled to him and to reject false apostles who were challenging his spiritual authority and creating dissension in the church. In the passage under study, Paul is teaching the Corinthian believers about the grace of giving, and instructing them to make sure they complete the collection for the poor Christians in Jerusalem (Chs. 8–9).
Discuss:

1) In this passage, who is lifted up as an example of a giving that excels?

2) What was the financial state of the Macedonian churches?

3) Why did the Macedonian churches give so sacrificially?

4) The Macedonian believers gave themselves first to the Lord before they gave financial help to others. Why is this act of consecration to the Lord necessary? What does this act of consecration look like in our lives today?

5) Paul speaks of the Macedonian Christians who urgently pleaded with him for the privilege of giving to the needs of believers in Jerusalem. How and why is giving to the needs of others a privilege?

6) Paul wants the Corinthians to excel in the grace of giving, just as they excel in faith, in speech, in knowledge, and in love. What does excelling in the grace of giving look like and how do we get there?

7) What does Paul say in verses 8 and 9 that demonstrates what “excelling in giving” looks like in the life and works of the Lord Jesus?

8) How has Christ Jesus made us rich (see verse 9)?

9) What does Paul mean when he says that we are to give according to our means?
10) Paul’s desire was not that the Corinthians would be impoverished, but that there might be a measure of equality in the church so that no one would have too much and no one would have too little. He refers to the Scriptures that record how the Israelites who gathered manna and quail in the wilderness did not have too much or too little. Read Exodus 16:1–18 and discuss how this historical event relates to our giving today.

**Discovery Questions:**

1) Why do you think we hold back in our giving to others of our time, service, and resources?

2) Who is a person who models for you the grace of giving? Has this person always been this way? What means did the Lord use to grow in him or her a heart to excel in giving?

3) The Bible says that God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). Share an occasion when you experienced great joy in giving to others in service to them.

**Pray for One Another:**

✔️ Pray from the Love Project Prayer Guide entry for today.

✔️ Pray for us to excel in the grace of giving this week and in the upcoming Community Outreach Day on April 30.
Opening prayer by Small Group Facilitator

Read the Scripture: John 7:37–39

Discuss:

1) What does Jesus mean when He says, “Whoever is thirsty, let him come to me and drink”?

2) What does Jesus mean when He says that streams of living water will flow from within the person who comes to Him?

3) What is it about the nature of the Holy Spirit flowing from within the believer that Jesus likens to streams of living water?

Read the Scripture: Galatians 5:13–26

The Historical Background:

The author of Galatians is the Apostle Paul. He wrote this letter somewhere between AD 48 and AD 55, sometime after his first missionary journey (AD 46–48). The occasion for writing the letter to the Christians in Galatia was to counter the heretical claims of legalistic Judaizers who were telling the Galatian believers that in order to be saved they needed to be circumcised and keep the laws of Moses. Paul calls this teaching a perversion of the gospel of salvation by God’s grace through faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross. He questions the Galatians who are being led astray by the Judaizers, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit by observing the Law?...After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?...Clearly, no one is justified by keeping the law, for, ‘The righteous will live by faith’” (3:2, 3, 11).
Discuss:

1) In this passage Paul says that as Christ-followers, we were called to be free (Galatians 5:13). True Christian liberty is not freedom or license to sin, but the freedom to do what? (See Galatians 5:13–14 and Romans 6:1–4; 6:15–18.)

2) According to Galatians 5:16, what is the key to living a holy life and a life of loving God and lovingly serving others?

3) What does it mean to live by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16)?

4) In Ephesians 5:18–21, Paul contrasts being filled with the Holy Spirit with being drunk on wine. The imperative present tense of this command literally means, “Be filled and filled and filled again with the Holy Spirit.” How is being filled with the Holy Spirit different from being under the influence of alcohol, and how can a person be filled with the Spirit again and again?

5) In Galatians 5:22–23, Paul lists the fruit (singular) of the Spirit in contrast with the acts (plural) of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19–21). Why do you think this list of nine manifestations of the Holy Spirit is listed here as a singular fruit, like grapes all on the same cluster?

6) How do the nine manifestations of the Holy Spirit’s work in the life of a disciple of Christ reflect the nature and attributes of God Himself?

7) In looking at the attributes of God as a God of love (see Exodus 34:5–7; John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:7–12), discuss what God’s love can look like in your life through the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Discovery Questions:

1) Why do you think that when it comes to really loving God and others sacrificially and unconditionally, we tend to take credit for God’s working in and through us?

2) Share an example of when the Holy Spirit filled you, resulting in unconditional love shown to another.

3) Why don’t we consistently walk in the power of the Holy Spirit? How should we respond when we are made aware that we are not keeping in step with the Holy Spirit?
Pray for One Another:

✔️ Pray from the Love Project Prayer Guide entry for today.

✔️ Pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to walk in the power of the Spirit throughout the week, particularly when communicating with someone by text, email, phone, or in a face-to-face encounter.

✔️ Pray for those in your group—that God would prepare their hearts to share the love of Christ through their service on Community Outreach Day, April 30.
Session Four  🎈 A Love that Is Contagious

Opening Prayer by Small Group Facilitator

Read the Scripture: Matthew 5:13–16

Discuss:

1) What does Jesus mean when He says, “You are the salt of the earth”?

2) What does Jesus mean when He says, “You are the light of the world”?

3) What does it mean to let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven?

4) Jesus is the light of the world and He commands His followers to go out into the world, reflecting that light like a city on a hill. How important is it that we let others know that our deeds are being done in Jesus’ name, not in our own name? (See also Colossians 3:17.)

Read the Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10

The Historical Background:

The author of 1 Thessalonians is the Apostle Paul. He wrote this letter somewhere around AD 51, most likely from Corinth. The audience is largely the Gentile church in Thessalonica, founded by Paul, Silas and Timothy during Paul’s second missionary journey. Thessalonica was a bustling seaport city, the largest city in Macedonia, with close to 200,000 people. The church was made up primarily of Gentile believers, but because Paul began his missionary outreach in the Jewish synagogue in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1–9), it is likely that there were also some Jewish believers in the church. Paul praises the Thessalonian believers for their contagious faith, their labor prompted by love, their welcoming the gospel with joy in spite of severe suffering, and their perseverance in the faith. In this letter he encourages the church believers to remain faithful to the Lord amidst persecution, looking forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ.
Discuss:

1) What does the Apostle Paul thank God for in the lives of the Thessalonian believers (verses 3–6)?

2) In this passage Paul commends the believers in Christ at Thessalonica for their faith in Christ, which was known everywhere. What was it about the Thessalonian believers’ faith that was so contagious to the people in their community?

3) How do you think these qualities measure up in today’s culture in making an eternal difference in the lives of the unchurched?

4) On his second missionary journey the Apostle Paul was accompanied by Silas and Timothy, who helped him found the church at Thessalonica (Acts 17:1–9). What was Paul’s strategy of witnessing to the citizens of this city? What was the thrust of his message, according to Acts 17:1–9?

5) Why were some of the Jews opposed to the message of Paul and how did they voice their discontent?

6) Can we expect some people to disapprove of our sharing the gospel and providing Christian service to the community? Why or why not? How should we respond?

7) In 1 Thessalonians 1:5, Paul says that the gospel came to the Thessalonian people not simply with words but also with the power of the Holy Spirit in deep
conviction. What role does the Holy Spirit play in affecting the community in the sharing of the gospel and in serving others in love? How are we to look to the Holy Spirit in our service to others?

**Discovery Questions:**

1) In 1 Thessalonians 1:8–10, we read that the faith of the Thessalonians rang out in Macedonia and Achaia; their faith was known everywhere as they turned from idols to the living God. What is needed for our faith to ring out everywhere in our own community?

2) How should faith enter into our work and labors of love? Where is our faith placed in our service to others?

3) What role does love have in our service and sharing the gospel message with others?

4) Paul went into the community of Thessalonica with his missionary team of Silas, Timothy, and others. In your Christian witness and service, how important to you is being part of a team?

**Pray for One Another:**

 Charme Pray from the Love Project Prayer Guide entry for today.

 Charme Pray for one another—for a contagious faith to grow in our church fellowship and for it to be unleashed in the community.

 Charme Pray for those in your group—that God would prepare their hearts to share the love of Christ through their service on Community Outreach Day, April 30.

 Charme Pray for the Holy Spirit to bless your outreach with power, bringing about transformed lives in Jesus Christ.
Opening Prayer by Small Group Facilitator

Read the Scripture: Philippians 2:1–11

Discuss:

1) According to Philippians 2:3–7, the Christ-follower is to act in the same loving way as Jesus. What is to characterize the way we act toward others? How are we to view ourselves as we act in this way of love?

2) How did Jesus model self-sacrificing humility and sacrificial service in His love for others? How does He demonstrate this love in His obedience to God the Father?

3) How do we model self-sacrificing humility and sacrificial love in our service?

4) Jesus is described prophetically in Isaiah 53 as the suffering servant Messiah. Our service to others will not always be pleasant or easy. What should our motivation be for serving others? What is our attitude to be in that service?

Read the Scripture: John 13:1–17

The Historical Background:

The Apostle John is writing this gospel narrative around AD 85, near the end of the first century. Toward the end of his gospel narrative (John 20:30–31), John writes, “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.” John begins his gospel narrative with Jesus, the very Word of God, becoming flesh and dwelling among us. He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God...born of God.

Nearly 40 percent of John’s gospel narrative focuses on the last week of Jesus’ life—from His entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey’s colt to His betrayal, crucifixion, and resurrection. This passage in John 13 takes place during that
holy week in the upper room, where Jesus before instituting the Lord’s Supper stops to wash His disciples’ feet. John’s gospel has the longest account by far of the upper room narrative (John 13:1–17:26), but, curiously, says nothing about the institution of the Lord’s Supper.

Discuss:

1) When and where does this foot washing take place in the life of Jesus?

2) Washing feet was a menial task reserved for a slave or servant. Jesus washed His disciples’ feet not when they entered the room, but during the meal. It was done deliberately to make a point. What was the lesson Jesus was teaching His disciples?

3) What can you say about the timing of this event? Jesus was very purposeful in it. Why did He choose to wash His disciples’ feet on this day?

4) In verse 1, John says that now Jesus showed his disciples the full extent of His love. What can we learn about the love of Jesus from this event, and what kind of love was Jesus demonstrating?

5) Verse 3 tells us that Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power; so He got up from the meal, took off His outer clothing, wrapped a towel around His waist, and began to wash His disciples’ feet. Why is this significant in the story?

6) What did Jesus know about the Father’s will for Him and about the devil’s plans for Him, according to verses 1–3 of John 13? Was Jesus in control of the situation?

7) Where was Jesus going to show His disciples His greatest, ultimate act of selfless service the following day, after this foot washing?
8) In John 13:13–17, Jesus says that He has set an example for His disciples to follow—to wash one another’s feet as He has done for them. He also says they will be blessed if they do this. How are we blessed by washing one another’s feet and doing similar acts of service to others?

Discovery Questions:

1) Thirty-one times in chapters 13—17, John speaks of the *agape* love of God in Christ Jesus and the call to love others. Why do you think John is so emphatic about this *agape* love of Jesus?

2) Luke 22, verses 24—27, record that during the Last Supper, “a dispute arose among them [the disciples] as to which of them was considered to be the greatest. Jesus said… ‘The greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.’” How is true greatness shown in our service to others?

3) What are some other kinds of humble service we can perform, along the same lines as washing one another’s feet, that can demonstrate our love for the Lord and for others?

4) Share a story of how someone else performed an act of loving service to you and how that blessed you.

Pray for One Another:

❤ Pray from the Love Project Prayer Guide entry for today.

❤ Pray for each other—that God would enable you to serve others in humility, performing acts of service with the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus.

❤ Pray for those in your group—that God would prepare their hearts to share the love of Christ through their service on Community Outreach Day, April 30.

❤ Pray for the Holy Spirit to fill you so that the fruit of the Spirit of love will flow through you to others this week and in your Love Project community service.

You may elect to wash one another’s feet as a small group to end your session. If so, have the men go in one room to wash one another’s feet and have the ladies go in a different room to wash one another’s feet. Let the group know beforehand so that each person brings a towel and wash cloth to the small group. One person should bring two basins and two pitchers (one for the men and one for the women). Let this exercise be done in a serious and thoughtful manner, reflecting on the teaching from today.
Opening Prayer by Small Group Facilitator

Read the Scripture: Psalm 23

Discuss:

1) What does the Lord as the Good Shepherd provide for David, according to this psalm?

2) Why do you think this psalm is read so often at funerals?

3) Verse 6 in the NIV reads, “Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” What do you think the Psalmist meant when he said that the goodness and love of the Lord would follow him all his days?

4) How does this psalm minister to you in your life?

Read the Scripture: John 10:1–21

The Historical Background:

The author of the gospel of John refers to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23). John is one of Jesus’ inner circle of three, which included his brother James and Peter—all fishermen from Galilee. The gospel of John is unique in its literary style among the four gospels. It alone records Jesus’ turning the water into wine (Ch. 2), the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda (Ch. 5), the healing of the man born blind (Ch. 9), and the raising of Lazarus from the dead (Ch. 11).

John’s gospel is usually considered to be the last of the four gospels written, and contains theologically rich discourses. It begins with the affirmation that Jesus is God who existed with God from the beginning and through whom the world was created. He is the very Son of God who was sent from the Father to finish the Father’s work in the world He created. The very glory of God is manifested in His Son Jesus (John 14:9). That narrative climaxes with the detailed account of holy week, beginning with Jesus’ triumphal entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey’s colt (John 12:12) and leading up to His upper room discourse (Chs. 13:1–17:26), His
betrayal and arrest (Ch. 18), His crucifixion, death and burial (Ch. 19), and His bodily resurrection and appearance to Mary Magdalene and His disciples (Ch. 20). The narrative concludes with His miracle of the catch of fish and the reinstatement of Peter, where He asks Peter whether he truly loves Him and, if so, to feed His sheep (Ch. 21). The passage in John 10:1–18 takes place during Jesus’ final year of ministry in a series of teachings at the feast of dedication in Jerusalem after He healed a man born blind (Ch. 9) and several months before He raised Lazarus from the dead (Ch. 11).

Discuss:

1) Jesus teaches by way of the allegory of “the Good Shepherd and the thief” in this passage. In the ancient Near East culture of Israel, the leader and caretaker of the nation of Israel was called “the shepherd.” In Psalm 23, God Himself is called “the Psalmist’s Shepherd” who protects and cares for him. Describe the work of the Good Shepherd in this allegory. What does he do for his sheep?

2) Jesus introduces the thief in this allegory. Who is the thief and what is his intent?

3) In verses 12 and 13, Jesus introduces the hired hand and the wolf. What does each represent?

4) In verse 7, Jesus identifies Himself as “the gate” to the sheep pen. What does He mean by this and why does He claim that salvation is found exclusively through Himself?

5) Does His language of exclusivity come across to you as intolerant or narrow minded? Why or why not?

6) What does Jesus come to bring in contrast to what the thief brings (see 10:10)?

7) How does Jesus describe the life He came to bring? Does that mean health, wealth, and long life on this earth? Why or why not? What can we expect to characterize the life that He brings?

8) In verse 16, Jesus says that He has other sheep that are not part of this sheep pen. Who are these other sheep and what does He mean by this?
9) In verse 17, Jesus says the reason His father loves Him is that He lays down His life—only to take it up again. What does He mean by this? What does He mean when He says that no one takes His life from Him, for He has the authority to lay it down and to take it up again?

10) What was the Jews’ reaction to what Jesus said in this allegory (see verses 10:19–21)?

**Discovery Questions:**

1) What is your reaction to what Jesus said in this allegory?

2) Where do you see yourself in the story?

3) In this allegory Jesus mentions that His sheep know His voice and listen to Him. Discuss the relationship between being a Christ-follower and listening to His voice. What does that look like in your life and how can you better hear His voice and obey His call on your life?

4) How easy or difficult is it for you to accept Jesus’ claim that whoever enters through Him will be saved? What is the nature of this salvation that Jesus is offering? What are His sheep being saved from?

5) On Sunday we celebrated the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. What impact does this story, told by Jesus to teach us truth, have on you in light of His resurrection from the dead?

**Ask the Question:**

✔️ Is there anyone in our small group who would like to pray, inviting Jesus Christ to be the Lord and Savior of their life and so becoming one of his sheep, receiving life more abundantly through faith in Him?

**Pray for One Another:**

✔️ After asking the question above, invite anyone in your group to pray the following prayer, or pray a similar prayer in your own words:

*Lord Jesus, I believe that you died upon the cross for my sins and that you rose bodily from the dead on the third day after your crucifixion. I repent of my sins and put my faith and trust in you, asking you to be my Lord and Savior. Forgive me, Lord, for all my sins and come into my heart to be my Savior and the Good Shepherd of my life. I pray this prayer in Jesus’ name. Amen!* (Read Romans 10:9–10 together after praying.)
Pray together for one another—that you will hear the Lord’s voice as your good shepherd and obey His voice in all areas of your life, including loving your neighbor as yourself through serving them and sharing Jesus with them.

Pray for those in your group—that God would prepare their hearts to share the love of Christ through their service on Community Outreach Day, April 30.

Pray from the Love Project Prayer Guide entry for today.
Session Seven 🧡 A Love that Feeds and Cares for Christ’s Sheep

Opening Prayer by Small Group Facilitator

Read the Scripture: John 13:31–38 and Matthew 26:69–75

Discuss:

1) In John 13:34, Jesus gives His disciples a new command—that they love one another even as He has loved them. He also says that all men will know they are His disciples if they love one another (verse 35). Why was this love the mark of a disciple of Christ, and how is it the mark of a Christ-follower today?

2) In John 13:38, after Peter told Jesus that he would lay down his life for Christ, Jesus asks him the question: “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly I say to you, a cock shall not crow until you deny me three times.” In Matthew 26:69–75, we read the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy when Peter denies Jesus three times, followed immediately by the rooster’s crowing. Why did Peter deny Christ? What does Jesus’ prophecy, given and fulfilled exactly as He had said, say about who He is?

3) Who were the people to whom Peter denied Christ, as recorded in Matthew 26:69–75?

4) Peter was in the courtyard of Caiaphas the high priest in Jerusalem when he denied Christ on three occasions. What was happening to Jesus at the time?

5) What spiritual applications can you draw from this story for your own life as a Christ-follower?

Read the Scripture: John 21:1–25

The Historical Background:

The author of the gospel of John, John the apostle, was an eyewitness to the events recorded in this passage—and in all of his gospel narrative. The events take place in Galilee along the shores of the Sea of Tiberias, also called the Sea of Galilee, seven to 10 days after the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Those in
attendance, John tells us, are Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James, John himself, and two other unnamed disciples, for a total of seven disciples, plus Jesus. The seven disciples had been fishing all night but had caught nothing. Jesus calls out from along the shoreline, “Friends, haven’t you any fish”? They do not recognize the resurrected Lord Jesus when He speaks to them. He tells
them to throw their net on the right side of the boat and they will find some fish. When they do so, they cannot haul up the net because of the large number of fish.

Discuss:

1) Why do you think this particular miracle is recorded for us in Scripture by John, and what does it teach us about ourselves and about the Lord Jesus?

2) When the disciples hauled in the net, John tells us that there were 153 large fish. The specific level of detail given in this account lends itself to that of an eyewitness. How much more credible is the story, given that it came from the pen of the Apostle John—an eyewitness of the miracle?

3) Jesus served the seven disciples a breakfast of bread and cooked fish. It was the third time Jesus had appeared to His disciples after He was raised from the dead. When were the other two times?

4) After serving His disciples, He asked Peter a question (verse 15): “Simon Peter, son of John, do you truly love me more than these?” What was Peter’s answer? What did Jesus instruct Peter to do as a result of his professed love for Jesus?

5) What was Jesus’ second question to Peter and what was his reply to this question?

6) What was Jesus’ third question to Peter and what was his reply?

7) Earlier, we read the account of Peter’s three denials of Jesus before the cock crowed on the day of His trial and crucifixion. What do you think is the connection between those three denials and the three questions addressed to Peter?

8) What does the prophecy mean (verse 18), in which Jesus tells Peter that when he is old he will stretch out his hands and someone will dress him and lead him to a place he does not want to go?

9) Jesus says to Peter simply, “Follow me.” In Peter’s mission as a disciple of Christ, how is he commanded by Jesus to live his life as a Christ-follower and showing his love for Christ?

10) How does feeding and caring for Christ’s sheep demonstrate an obedient love for Jesus?
Discovery Questions:

1) As a disciple of His, do you also feel called by the Lord to feed Christ’s sheep and care for his lambs?

2) If so, how do you seek to carry out this calling?

3) How else do you seek to show forth your love for Jesus as one of His disciples?

4) The Bible says that we are not saved by our works and there is nothing we can do to increase or diminish God’s love for us. What, then, is the reason we serve others, caring for them and sharing God’s Word with them with the love of Jesus?

Pray for One Another:

❤️ Pray for those in your small group who feel called to feed, care for, and tend the Lord’s sheep and lambs.

❤️ Pray for one another—that the love of the Lord Jesus would translate into actions of service, witness, and holy living.

❤️ Pray for those in the community who will be recipients of our Love Project on April 30—that they would have eyes to see and hearts to respond with faith to the love of Jesus flowing in and through our words, actions, and attitudes as we serve.

❤️ Pray from the Love Project Prayer Guide entry for today.
Opening Prayer by Small Group Facilitator

Read the Scripture: 1 John 3:11–24

Discuss:

1) How has your understanding of this passage deepened since you first studied it at the beginning of the Love Project in Session One?

2) The call for the Christ-follower is to believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ; to obey Christ’s commands, doing what pleases the Lord; and to love one another. How has your faith in Christ grown over the last 50 days? What do you attribute that growth to? What have you learned about the ongoing call to love one another?

3) John says that this is how we know that He lives in us: by the Holy Spirit He gave us. Share how you have become more aware of the person and work of the Holy Spirit through this 50-day spiritual life journey.

Read the Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:27–13:13

The Historical Background:

The author of the letter to the church at Corinth is the Apostle Paul. He planted the church in Corinth during his second missionary journey with Silas (Acts 18). Corinth was a bustling city in Greece and a crossroads for commerce. The church was filled with young believers who were spiritually immature, carnal, and divided by factions. In Corinth was a Greek temple erected to Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Temple prostitution and sexual immorality were widespread in the city, and the Christian church was plagued with sexual immorality, divisions, jealousies, and carnalities of all sorts. Paul addresses the believers’ conduct in this letter, seeking to instruct them in the call to holy living, unity, and proper use of spiritual gifts. It is in this historical context that we read Paul’s love chapter of 1 Corinthians 13.

Discuss:

1) In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul emphasizes that there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. To each the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. The
church is like a body composed of many parts, all working together as one as each person does his or her God-given part under the headship of Jesus Christ. What happens when those spiritual gifts are exercised by a church body not under the loving headship of Christ?

2) 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 describes what the love of Christ flowing through His people submitted to His lordship looks like. Share a few examples of this love in action that you witnessed in others in the Love Project on April 30.

**Discovery Questions:**

1) What was it like to serve together with others in your group?

2) Was your experience in service a spiritually fulfilling one and, if so, how did the Lord work in you?

3) What kind of response did you get from people who received or witnessed your service?

4) In any service project experience, there are always surprises—both unexpectedly trying and surprisingly good. How did the Lord surprise you in your service experience?

5) Share how the teachings you heard preached on Sunday morning and the teachings you explored together in your small group affected your service experience.

6) 1 Corinthians 13:7 says that love perseveres. Share an example of when you persevered in your service project experience, even when you felt stretched or tempted to give up.

**Ask the Question:**

1) Who in our group is willing to share a brief testimony in the upcoming worship service on May 7 at either the 8:00 a.m. or 10:45 a.m. service? (The testimony should be between one and three minutes and be centered on giving God the glory for His working and moving in people’s lives to the glory of His great name.)

2) Who would like to continue meeting as a small group? Which day and time would work for you?

3) Who would like to be a host? (More than one host can be selected as you may move the location of the group to give more opportunities to host.)

4) Who would like to facilitate the teaching and discussion time?
Pray for One Another:

ונית Pray, thanking the Lord for those who have grown in their faith and for those who have become Christ-followers through these past 50 days.

ונית Pray for those people who were served—that they will take steps of faith of their own in believing in Jesus and in reaching out to others with the love of Christ, bringing that love forward to others.

ונית Pray for Trinity Church—that we would grow in prayer, in service, in sharing our faith, and grow into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ as His followers.

Small Group Facilitators:
Please email Pastor David at david.smith@trinitybolton.org and copy Sherri at secretary@trinitybolton.org a list of those from your group who will be willing to share a brief testimony from their Love Project experience on Sunday, May 7. Please indicate at which worship service (8:00 or 10:45) each person will give their testimony. Each person giving a testimony on May 7 is asked to email a copy of their testimony to Pastor David and to Sherri.

Everyone:
We invite everyone to attend one of the worship services (8:00 and 10:45) on Testimony Sunday, May 7. Praises and testimonies will make up 25 to 30 minutes of each service. (A separate sermon will not be given: the testimonies will be the message.) A short slideshow of the various service projects will be shown during each service. We will conclude by receiving Communion and singing hymns and choruses of praise to the Lord.

Note: Everyone is invited to share a written testimony. While there will not be time for everyone to give their testimony during the worship services on May 7, those who would like to share their testimony are encouraged to do so in writing. All written testimonies we receive will be compiled into a booklet so that others may be blessed by the Lord through reading them.

Plan a Celebration Event:
Schedule a social event to celebrate what the Lord has done in and through your small group during the 50 days and to discuss next steps for those in the group who would like to continue. You may elect to meet every week or every other week. Please let Trinity’s small group coordinating team know your group’s plans. Part of our goal at Trinity is to create a culture of service to others. If this has been an enriching time for you, please start discussing future love projects that your small group may be ready to tackle.

If you would like help choosing another study for your small group, our small group coordinating team will be providing suggestions for ways to help us continue growing and serving together.
Day 1—March 12

Writing God’s Love and Faithfulness on the Tablets of Our Hearts—Proverbs 3:1–6

My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and He will make your paths straight.

Prayer: Heavenly and holy Father, as we begin this 50-day spiritual life journey, may your love and faithfulness never leave us. Write them on the tablets of our hearts. Lord, help me to trust in you with all my heart and not lean on my own understanding. Help me to acknowledge you in each step of this journey together with my brothers and sisters in Christ. Amen!

Day 2—March 13

Rejoice—1 Thessalonians 5:16–19

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit.

Prayer: Lord, let nothing keep us from the throne of grace and communion with you.

Day 3—March 14

Light Afflictions—2 Corinthians 4:13

It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to Himself. All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. Therefore we do not lose heart.
Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, help us to fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, because what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal [verse 18].

**Day 4—March 15**

**Love in Action—Romans 12:9–13**

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

**Prayer:** Dear Father, I pray that by your grace I will not be overcome by evil, but will overcome evil with good [verse 21].

**Day 5—March 16**

**Jesus Prays—John 17:20–23**

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, I pray for unity among your people to reach the world with your love.

**Day 6—March 17**

**Anything—John 14:12–14**

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

**Prayer:** Dear Father God, thank you that we can ask you for anything in prayer.
Day 7—March 18

Worry—Philippians 4:6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Prayer: Dear Lord, I rejoice in you. I will rejoice in you always. I’ll say it again, I REJOICE in you! May your gentleness be evident to all.

Day 8—March 19

Faith and Truth—Titus 1:1–4

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, and which now at His appointed season He has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior, to Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I praise and thank you for all your promises and for the grace and power you give through the Holy Spirit.

Day 9—March 20

Heart-filled Blessing—Romans 8:22–27

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to this present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans, and He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.

Prayer: Dear God, keep our hearts full of the Holy Spirit so we can be in the center of your will for our lives.
Day 10—March 21

Closeness to God—1 Timothy 2:2

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all people. This has been witnessed to at the proper time. And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles. Therefore I want men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.

Prayer: Dear Lord, keep our thoughts and minds close to you; do not allow doubts and fears to creep into our prayer life.

Day 11—March 22

Holiness—Hebrews 12:14–15

Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

Prayer: Dear Father, keep us so close to you that we can feel your holiness in our prayer life.

Day 12—March 23


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; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.’ And suppose the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed.’”

This man didn’t give up—as the story goes, he got his bread. This story comes right after the disciples asked the Lord to teach them to pray. He’s telling them to never give up asking God.

Prayer: God, let us be like this brother and always keep asking.
Day 13—March 24

God’s Work—1 John 3:7–8

Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as He is righteous. The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.

God’s work is to make the hearts and lives of His children holy.

Prayer: Let us pray that we will walk in holiness: “May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer” [Psalm 19:14].

Day 14—March 25

Be Obedient—1 Peter 1:13–16

Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at His coming. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

Prayer: Let this mind be in me which is also in Christ Jesus. Help me to walk with you today and every day.

Day 15—March 26

The Lord’s Treasures—Matthew 6:19–21

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Prayer: Father, let me never lose sight of you.

Day 16—March 27

Growing in the Lord—Isaiah 59:1

Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear.
The work of God is to help us grow in holiness and closeness with Jesus Christ. As His new creation.

**Prayer:** Thank you, Lord, that I have become a new creation in Christ Jesus; old things have passed away, all things are new. Help me to not turn back to the old ways.

### Day 17—March 28

**Quality of Life—Galatians 6:7–10**

*Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please the flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have the opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of God.*

**Prayer:** Dear God, help us to not give up. Allow us to always seek divine guidance in our walk with you.

### Day 18—March 29

**Quality Time—James 5:13**


**Prayer:** Thank you, Father, that prayer and praise are part of the armor of God, and that prayer changes things. Help me to always make time for you. Starting right now, let our time together increase.

### Day 19—March 30

**Prayer Request—2 Thessalonians 3:1–3**

*As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it is with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.*

**Prayer:** Dear God, help me to realize that you must be the most important thing in my life.
Day 20—March 31

Good Ground—Luke 8:5–9

A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown. When He said this, He called out, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”

Prayer: God, help us to hear your Word and cultivate it in our hearts and minds so we, too, can yield a good crop.

Day 21—April 1

Prayer Alert—1 Peter 5:8–9

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Prayer: Help me, Father, to be under the Spirit’s control, always being aware of the enemy and walking in faith with my brothers and sisters in Christ.

Day 22—April 2

Something Worth Fighting For—1 Timothy 6:12–14

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Jesus Christ, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made a good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Dear Father, let us find rest and strength for our souls in the battle against Satan and all our enemies.

Day 23—April 3

Battle Ready—Ephesians 6:10–13

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against
flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this
dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on
the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your
ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, that we can be ready to fight against the attacks of Satan. Help us always to put on the complete armor of God each day.

Day 24—April 4

Praying When?—Ephesians 6:18–20

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in
mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. Pray also for me, that
whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery
of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it
fearlessly, as I should.

Prayer: Dear God, help us today and every day to always have a heart of love
like Jesus, and to always be in prayer for all those in Christ Jesus.

Day 25—April 5

Asleep on Duty—Luke 22:40, 46

On reaching the place [the Mount of Olives], He said to them, “Pray that you will not fall
into temptation.”…“Why are you sleeping?” He asked them. “Get up and pray so that you
will not fall into temptation.”

Prayer: Dear Father, forgive us when we fail. Make us aware of our need to
walk according to your Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Day 26—April 6

A Praying People—1 Peter 1:20–23

He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for
your sake. Through Him you believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and glorified
Him, and so your faith and hope are in God. Now that you have purified yourselves by
obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply,
from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable,
through the living and enduring Word of God.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord God, for speaking to us in the Bible and allowing us to
speak to you through prayer, so that we can continue to please you.
Day 27—April 7

A Serving People—Colossians 3:15–17

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace, and be thankful. 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. 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.

Prayer: God, help us to realize the importance of being committed to prayer, around the world, and to see what you have done and are still doing today.

Day 28—April 8

Meeting Together—Hebrews 10: 22–25

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. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 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 approaching.

Prayer: Dear God, let prayer continue in the House of God, and as we as God’s children continue to worship there.

Day 29—April 9

An All-Nighter—Luke 6:12–13

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, He called his disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also designated apostles.

Prayer: Father, help us to see the importance of our prayer time. Keep us from making excuses for not spending more time in tune with you.
Day 30—April 10

Leaders Who Pray—Philippians 1:3–6

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for all our praying leaders. Because of them we have many prayerful followers. Let us be strengthened in the business of praying.

Day 31—April 11

Great Men and Women—Matthew 9:35–38

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.”

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for past great men and women who have completed great things for you. Continue through your Spirit today to raise up great leaders.

Day 32—April 12

Holy Comfort—2 Timothy 1:6–7

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

Prayer: Dear Lord, reignite in us a fire of power, love and self-discipline to be completely in your will to make more disciples.

Day 33—April 13

Trust and Obey—Psalm: 40:4–8

Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, who does not look to the proud, to those who
turn aside to false gods. Many, Lord my God, are the wonders you have done, the things you have planned for us. None can compare with you; were I to speak and tell of your deeds, they would be too many to declare. Sacrifice and offering you did not desire—but my ears you have opened—burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. Then I said, “Here I am, I have come—it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart.”

**Prayer:** Dear God, let our desire be to do your will. Give us power and strength through faith and prayer to obey your Word.

**Day 34—April 14**

**Holiness—Psalm 37:5–6**

Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will do this: He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun.

**Prayer:** Dear Father God, consecrate my life through prayer. Let me have a heart full of holiness to encourage all people to pray.

**Day 35—April 15**

**Soul Food—Psalm 19:7–9**

The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making the wise simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous.

**Prayer:** Thank you, Father, for the Bible. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, my God and my Redeemer.

**Day 36—April 16**

**Judgment—Romans 2:1–4**

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God’s judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of His kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?
Prayer: Father God, who holds the world in His hands, the one who hears and answers all our prayers, may your name be exalted over all the earth.

Day 37—April 17
A Mediator—Hebrews 5:7–9
During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save Him from death, and was heard because of His reverent submission. Son, though He was, He learned obedience from what He suffered and, once made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him.
Prayer: Dear God, I come before you with a thankful heart that Jesus is our mediator between heaven and earth. Help us, Father, as prayer warriors to continue to walk in faith and in your will for our lives.

Day 38—April 18
A Giving Spirit—1 Corinthians 8:6
Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.
Prayer: Father God, as we pray for others, missionaries, the poor and neighbors in need, open our hearts to material needs. Also let us have a praying heart and a giving heart.

Day 39—April 19
Wrong Motives—James 4:1–3
What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.
Prayer: Dear God, please guide us not to pray selfish prayers, but let our motives be pure and right.
Day 40—April 20

**Special Prayer—Jeremiah 33:1–3**

While Jeremiah was still confined in the courtyard of the guard, the word of the Lord came to him a second time: “This is what the Lord says, He who made the earth, the Lord who formed it and established it—the Lord is His name: ‘Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.’”

**Prayer:** Thank you, Father, for specific prayers and how you touch each of our lives in special ways. Help us to always be in touch with you.

Day 41—April 21

**Life Is Short—Psalm 116:1–2**

*I love the Lord, for He heard my voice; He heard my cry for mercy. Because He turned His ear to me, I will call on Him as long as I live.*

**Prayer:** Dear God, don’t stop hearing my voice or my cry. Don’t turn your ear from your servant, for life is but a breath in my nostrils.

Day 42—April 22

**Reconciliation—2 Corinthians 5:11–15**

*Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. If we are “out of our mind,” as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.***

**Prayer:** Dear Father God, let us always preach the truth; let the gospel message come from our hearts, not our heads.

Day 43—April 23

**A Man of Prayer—1 Samuel 12:23–25**

*As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right. But be sure to fear the Lord*
and serve Him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things He has done for you. Yet if you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will perish.

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, may our prayers be as effective as Samuel’s were, and let us have a praying heart night and day.

**Day 44—April 24**

**Restoration—Psalm 50:10–12**

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of my salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord Jesus, thank you that all our troubles will be answered by prayer this day. Thank you for the relief of your blessings.

**Day 45—April 25**

**Too Busy to Pray—Isaiah 40:29–31**

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

**Prayer:** Dear Father God, help us never to be too busy doing Christian work that we start to neglect prayer. Draw us closer to you each day through prayer as we continue to do your work.

**Day 46—April 26**

**Persistent Prayer—James 5:13–16**

Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. 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. And their prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well: the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. 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.

**Prayer:** Lord, I pray that the Spirit, who is in each of God’s children, gives us the persistence to keep on praying until our prayer is answered.
Day 47—April 27

The Wonder of God’s Love—Psalm 17:6–8

I call on you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer. Show me the wonders of your great love, you who save by your right hand those who take refuge in you from their foes. Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings.

Prayer: Lord, as the Psalmist prays, so I call upon you in prayer. Show me the wonder of your great love this day, for you are the God who saves by your righteous right hand. Keep me as the apple of your eye and hide me in the shelter of your wings. Lead me to someone with whom I may share the wonder of your great love. For it’s in Jesus’ name that I pray. Amen!

Day 48—April 28

Trust in God’s Unfailing Love—Psalm 13:5–6

But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord’s praise, for He has been good to me.

Prayer: Lord, as the Psalmist prays, so I call upon you, trusting in your unfailing love. My heart rejoices in your salvation and I sing to you with all my heart for you have been good to me. Amen!

Day 49—April 29

Great Love in Simple Gifts—Matthew 10:42

And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.

Prayer: Master and Lord, I thank you for calling me to be a disciple of yours. As we get ready tomorrow for our church-wide outreach, I pray for my brothers and sisters at Trinity and for others who will be joining us in this Love Project. Help us to serve others gladly, knowing your promise—that we will certainly receive our reward from you as we give simple gifts like a cup of cold water with great love in Jesus’ name. Amen!
Day 50—April 30

Live by the Spirit and so Love Your Neighbor as Yourself—
Galatians 5:13–16

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Prayer: Gracious Lord and God, fill us with the Holy Spirit that we may go forth in your power and grace, serving one another in love. Grant us the fullness of your Spirit that we may love our neighbor as ourselves. Grant us humble and yielding hearts to your love flowing in and through us. And may those we serve see you, Jesus, and come to know you as their Lord and Savior. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen!
General Guidelines for Everyone

 Charm Group Size: Each group will vary somewhat in size. Ideally, seek to form a small group of 8 to 12 attendees. When a group is larger than 12, the members with a tendency to be quieter will often not participate.

 Charm Meeting Frequency: For the 50-day spiritual life journey, commit to meet every week during the 50 days. That constitutes eight sessions plus a social event after the 50-day journey to celebrate how God has moved in your lives and to discuss whether some in your group would like to continue meeting either every week or every other week thereafter.

 Charm Safe Environment: Create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved (no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes).

 Charm Group Attendance: Give priority to the group meeting and call the host(s) if you will be absent or late.

 Charm Respect Confidentiality—“What Is Shared in Small Group Stays in Small Group”: Please keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group.

 Charm Building Relationships: Get to know other members of the group and pray for them regularly.

 Charm The Love Project Service Day: Encourage each member of the small group to sign up for one service project at Trinity Church on April 2, the service project sign-up day. Most small groups will not do a service project together, thus encouraging getting to know others in the church body through serving together in a broader way. If your group continues after the Love Project 50-day journey, you may elect to do a service project together as a small group at a later date.
Important Information about the Love Project Service Day

April 30

The Love Project Service Day will be a whole day of worshipping the Lord. We will worship the Lord through singing, praising, praying, teaching, fellowshipping, and, finally, sharing God’s love by serving others in the community. Here is the schedule:

- **8:00 a.m.–9:00 a.m.** Worshipping the Lord together in Spirit and in truth at Trinity Church with singing, praying, and teaching
- **9:00 a.m.–9:45 a.m.** Love Feast Brunch at Trinity
- **10:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m.** Going into the community to share the love of Christ in service to others

The service projects will be broken down into three categories:

1) **Clean**
   - Clean someone’s house—indoor or outdoor work
   - Help the community by cleaning streets, streams
   - Serve the community by clearing conservation trails
   - Other types of cleaning projects

2) **Collect**
   - Collect a laundry basket of household items for refugees in Worcester through the Worcester Alliance for Refugee Ministry (WARM)
   - Collect furniture items for refugees in Worcester through WARM, collecting on Saturday, April 29, and bringing to refugees
   - Other types of collection projects

3) **Care**
   - Bake goods for emergency care workers and first responders in the community
   - Write letters to soldiers who are serving overseas
   - Make blankets for the homeless
   - Other types of caring projects
PLEASE SHARE YOUR IDEAS FOR SERVICE PROJECTS. Just pick up a Service Project Proposal Form (they’re printed on pink paper and copies are located in the foyer and in the barn) and fill it out. Then give it to Sherri in the church office or to any member of the Outreach Committee by MARCH 26 and your suggestion could become one of the official service projects of our Love Project initiative.

If you have questions, feel free to contact any of the people listed below. They will be happy to talk with you about your proposal.

Outreach Committee Members:

Keith Carville ............................................. keith@carvillesc.com

Jen Fletcher .............................................. Jen1515@hotmail.com

John Jorgensen ................................... JohnSJorgensen@gmail.com

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Linda Lawrence ............................................. dllawr@verizon.net

Kathy Romeo ....................................... kathrynromeo@yahoo.com

Pastor David Smith .......................... David.Smith@trinitybolton.org

Eileen Wilder .......................................3awilderfam@comcast.net

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Sherri Bieniecki ................................... secretary@trinitybolton.org
Helps for Hosts

Thank you for your willingness to serve as a host for your small group. Hospitality is one of the spiritual gifts God has given to the body of Christ to build up Christ’s church.

“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms”. 1 Peter 4:8–10.

Hospitality is the special gift that God gives to certain members to provide an open house and warm welcome to others. Those with this gift are a key to helping new people feel welcome and desirous of becoming a part of the church body.

Here are some ideas to assist you in your ministry as a small group host:

1) **Don’t try to do it alone.** You may elect to ask another to join you as a co-host to prepare the beverages and refreshments, or you may ask each member of your small group to bring some snacks for your group. Try to have some healthy snacks of fruits and vegetables along with some sweets if you are able. If you ask someone to co-host with you, that person can come early to help you set up and stay a little later to help you clean up after everyone has gone home. You may elect to serve beverages as your guests arrive and then bring out the snacks after the discussion and prayer time has concluded.

2) **Be friendly and be yourself.** Greet people at the door with a big smile. Show them where to hang their coats, or take them for your guests. Your greeting will go a long way to help people overcome their inhibitions. For some people, this is their very first experience with a small group and they are unsure what to expect. Don’t try to do things like other hosts you have witnessed. Just be friendly and be yourself.

3) **Put your pets in another room.** Some people are cat lovers or dog lovers and others are not. Some may be allergic to certain animals and you will want to show special love and concern for all your guests.
4) **Let your guests know where they can park.** If you live in an area where you share parking with your neighbors, let your guests know where they can park. If there will be overflow parking in front of your neighbors’ houses, you may want to alert your neighbors that you will be hosting a small group for several hours. Ask them if they would mind if your guests park in front of their property. You may even take the opportunity to invite your neighbors to join your group for the 50-day journey.

5) **If you are able, provide a variety of seating options,** as some people prefer a straight-back chair and others a stuffed chair or sofa.

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**Tips for Small Group Facilitators**

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1) **Try to begin and finish on time.** We recommend that you meet for 90 minutes to two hours. Here are suggested time breakdowns for these two time periods.

**The 90-Minute Small Group:**

- 7:00 Welcome guests and serve beverages (10 minutes)
- 7:10 Begin with brief opening prayer by a volunteer (2 minutes)
- 7:12 Read Scripture and discussion questions in Study Guide (40 minutes)
- 7:52 Discovery Questions (10 minutes)
- 8:02 Pray for one another, taking prayer requests and answers to prayer from those willing to share. Have one person keep a log of the prayer requests of the group and answers to prayer received. Facilitator will close the prayer time when he/she senses the time is right (13 minutes).
- 8:15 Fellowship time with refreshments (15 minutes)
- 8:30 People can leave around this time
The Two-Hour Small Group:

6:30  Welcome guests and serve beverages (10 minutes)
6:40  Begin with brief opening prayer by a volunteer (2 minutes)
6:42  Read Scripture and discussion questions in Study Guide (55 minutes)
7:37  Discovery Questions (13 minutes)
7:50  Pray for one another, taking prayer requests and answers to prayer from those willing to share. Have one person keep a log of the prayer requests of the group and answers to prayer received. Facilitator will close the prayer time when he/she senses the time is right (20 minutes).
8:10  Fellowship time with refreshments (20 minutes)
8:30  People can leave around this time

2) Be sensitive to those in your small group who may prefer to be active listeners rather than contributing orally to the discussion. They may be unsure of their faith or prefer to be quiet by temperament. Try to avoid reading Scripture, answering discussion questions, or praying by going around in a circle. Some people may not appreciate the pressure to participate in such a forced way, while others will welcome participation at all levels.

3) When you ask a question, be patient. Sometimes people need a moment or two of silence to think about the question. Someone will eventually respond. After someone responds, affirm their response with a simple, “Thanks” or “Great answer,” then ask, “How about somebody else? Would someone who hasn’t shared like to add anything?”

4) Create a safe setting where people can pose their questions and ideas without feeling judged. Remember that we are at different points in our faith journey. Give reluctant members time to blossom over time when they feel they are loved and appreciated and that the group will value their input. This is particularly true for new groups or for new members in your group.

5) Prepare well ahead of time by reading the Scriptures and answering the discussion questions. Circle three or four questions that you want to spend a little extra time on. Pray for each member of your group ahead of time by name—that the Lord will open their hearts and minds to His Word and grow in
them a love for the Lord and for others. Pray that the Lord will grow in them a heart for service. In Session 6, there is a prayer for those in your group who want to become Christ-followers. You may use this prayer after any session during the 50 days. Please let our pastoral team know of those who prayed to receive Christ in your group. We have follow-up material available for you to hand out.

6) **Session 5 ends with a foot-washing exercise that you may or may not choose to do in your small group.** If you elect to do the exercise, let people know ahead of time so they can have clean feet, socks, and clothing conducive to a foot-washing experience. See more details in Session 5 of this Study Guide.

7) **Plan a celebration social event after the final session of the 50 days for your small group.** Directions are given at the end of Session 8 of your Study Guide. At that social event, take a poll of those who would like to continue meeting as a small group, either every week or every other week. Next steps will be available from our small group coordination team.

8) **Prepare your group for Testimony Sunday on May 7.** After Session 8, encourage each person in your group to write a testimony of how the Lord blessed them, stretched them, and grew in them a heart for Him and for service to others. Find out who in your group is willing to share orally in a two- to three-minute testimony of thanks to the Lord in Testimony Sunday on May 7 at either the 8:00 or 10:45 service. Have the others submit by email to Sherri (secretary@trinitybolton.org) their written testimony to be included in a testimony book we are compiling. See additional instructions at the end of Session 8 in this Study Guide.

9) **Rotate small group facilitators.** You may have other gifted leaders who are willing to share in the workload of leading the discussion and teaching time. Avoid the temptation to give everyone a chance to lead. Try to maintain teaching consistency for the study, either by alternating with a co-facilitator or facilitating each week yourself. Some people are called to this ministry role and are given spiritual gifts in leadership and teaching—others are not.
Thanks

My thanks to my administrative assistant Sherri Bieniecki and our proofreader and editor Sabina Sayles for the many hours they spent combing through the manuscript of the “Love Project” study guide for grammar, sentence structure, and formatting. Without their help this guide would never have gone to print.

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Thank you to the elder team and the members of Trinity Church, Congregational, in Bolton for the devoted prayers, support, and constant love. Their passion for serving others as unto the Lord Jesus Christ has been an inspiration to me and I could not have written this guide without them.

Finally, it is my prayer that this 50-day journey of love will not only better prepare you to reach out in love to others now, but also that it will be just the first of many more love projects to come into your life as you follow the Lord Jesus Christ as His bondservant.

Soli Deo gloria!

David A. Smith