



PRAYER RESOURCE

John 15:9-17

9 'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. **10** If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. **11** I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. **12** My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. **13** Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. **14** You are my friends if you do what I command. **15** I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. **16** You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. **17** This is my command: Love each other.'

Prayer

Our Father, who created the universe, created this world we call home. Our Father, who breathed life into man, whose hands placed the stars into the sky, who also let his Son come to earth and to die for us. Help us, Father, to love with a heart of a parent yearning for the best for their child. Help us to remain within that love which you have provided. Help us to experience the joy of life in all its fullness, that is only available through obedience to you and your word. Help us not just to talk about love, but to show love. To be that love to all people, to show hope to those in hopeless situations, to show forgiveness and to forgive those who cannot forgive themselves. Help us to be friends of the friendless, to reach out into this world and to be beacons of light in a dark world that is in such need of your love and light. Help us to be the difference and to help us to reach our potential in you. Help us to go and bear fruit, for you and for your Church, this day and always. Amen.

Responsive prayer

To be used at the beginning of the meeting, the 'All' and 'Leader' parts could be interchanged as needed – feel free to modify as your local needs dictate.

All 'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.'

Leader Father God, help us to love, to remain in an attitude of love toward all people, to show love to our communities, to our families, to those who do not show us love, and most importantly to ourselves. Help us now and always to remain in your love.

All 'If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.'

Leader Help us to keep your commands and remain in an attitude of love towards others. Help us to experience your joy when we show your love. Help us to take strength in the joy that comes from showing your love. Help us to experience your complete and full joy.

All 'My command is this: love each other as I have loved you.'

Leader Father God, help us to love when it's hard, when we don't want to, when it hurts – because when we do that, we are showing you, because you are love in the complete and perfect form.

- Leader** Father God, help us to be sacrificial in showing love. Help us to love until it hurts, and then love some more. Help us to change this world by showing your love to one person at a time. For as long as we have breath in our bodies, help us to show your love.
- All** 'You are my friends if you do what I command.'
- Leader** Father, help us to be worthy to be called friend – to our neighbour, workmate, or family member, within our school, workplace or community, help us to proudly wear the title of 'friend' and always be available and have time for those who need a friend.
- All** 'I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.'
- Leader** Father, help us not to love and work for you out of some sense of duty, but rather help us to show your love because it is as natural to us as breathing. Help us to share not just your love, but also knowledge about you by what we do rather than what we say, and by people reading our actions as acts of love because we are loved by a loving God.
- All** 'You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.'
- Leader** Father God, thank you that you deem us worthy to be part of the answer to the world's problems by being your loved children. Thank you for choosing us to live the unique ministry and life that you have ordained for us. Thank you, Father, for the fruit that we can bear in your name, and may all the glory and honour always go to you.
- All** 'This is my command: love each other.'
- Leader** Father God, help us in this great command not to feel obligated to act in a certain way, but rather to act freely and willingly to show love to each other as we are shown love from you as our heavenly Father.
- All** Help us now and always to love one another, and to remain in your love. Amen.

Prayer Points

1. WE ARE LOVED

Have you ever stopped to think how much we are loved by God? We are loved so much that God in the form of Jesus left paradise, left Heaven, and came to earth. We are loved so much that he lived as a man, he suffered rejection, humiliation and even death that we could choose to follow him. The God who spoke life into the universe and breathed life into humanity, loves us too and loves us to be in a relationship with him.

- ◆ What is your relationship with God like?
- ◆ When was the last time you really sat in his presence and just soaked up what it means to be a loved child of God?

2. WE ARE TO LOVE

We are not placed on this world for ourselves; we are here to love one another, and in doing so we are to show God. God tells us in the Bible in 1 John 4:8 that 'whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love'. We are to be obedient to God's call to show love, and in doing so we will show love and God to the world in which we live.

- ◆ When was the last time someone showed you love?
- ◆ When was the last time you showed love?

In the movie *Evan Almighty* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4cOQZG01YE) God is played by Morgan Freeman. He says, '**You want to know how to change the world, son? One act of random kindness at a time.**' Make a commitment to show love in one ARK (act of random kindness) every day for a week, and then share this in the meeting next week. as you do this, people may ask you why – the answer is: 'Because I am loved by God and he loves you too.'

Prayer Activity

LOVED – JOHN 15:12,13,17

¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

(Preparation – The YouTube clip (www.youtube.com/watch?v=_bW-pxp_U9k), packets of love hearts sweets, available from Cash and Carry, placed in a basket.)

In the clip from *Captain America*, the Colonel does not want to choose Steve Rogers to become the 'super soldier'. Rather he wants to choose Hodges who appears a physically more adapt person. However, the doctor is looking for qualities that are not so physical, to which the Colonel replies, 'It's guts that win wars.' The Colonel then throws a grenade among the trainees who are exercising. Everyone apart from Steve runs for cover. But Steve realises that a grenade could kill everyone. So he throws himself on to it to attempt to protect his fellow trainees. The grenade is a dummy – it never explodes – but Steve shows that he is willing to sacrifice himself for his fellow man.

This is just a movie, but there are reports of this kind of event actually happening during a war – people throwing themselves on to a grenade to save their comrades, showing that 'greater love' by laying down their lives. Isn't this what Jesus did for us – throw himself on the metaphorical grenade that was a wooden cross, so that we could be saved, that we could live because he gave of himself?

Either invite people to come and take a packet of sweets, or pass them out.

As you receive this packet of love hearts with their messages on each sweet, remember the best thing you can do with a gift is share it. In this next week, take time to share this packet of sweets as a conversation starter with a friend, perhaps over a coffee or even a garden fence, wherever – it doesn't matter. Snap the tube in two and share it with a friend, and in doing so remind them that you are able to do this because of the gift of life that Jesus has given you. John 10:10 tells us that Jesus has come that we may have life, and have it to the full. Jesus laid down his life, was obedient to his Father, so that we can enjoy the sweetness of life, experience and receive his love, and then share his love with the world.

CHOSEN – JOHN 15:16

¹⁶ 'You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.'

(Preparation – you will need to source some stones from a garden centre. Have the stones in a basket and allow people to choose their stone, but do not say why.)

People are all different, as the stones in this basket are all different. Some are larger than others, some are flat, some are pointy. Think about a time when you walked by some water – a river bank, a lake, or on a beach. You see stones on the ground and you just want to reach down and pick up a stone and throw it across the water to try to skim it. How many times will it bounce on the water before disappearing? Two,

three, or four or even more? You search out the right stone for the job, a smooth flat stone that will skim over the water bouncing again and again. Or perhaps you just look for the biggest stone and throw it into the water to make the biggest splash, wetting folk near you but having the most fun with family.

Jesus tells us in the preceding verses about love, how he remained in his Father's love, and he wants us also to remain within that love. He tells us that we are loved, and that God wants us to love. But we are also told elsewhere in Scripture (Matthew 28:16-20) that we are to go out into the world to make a difference, to make disciples and be obedient in what we do.

John 15:16 tells us that each and every one of us is chosen by Jesus. Just as we have all chosen a stone, each of us is chosen for a task, a task that will bear fruit that will last. We can impact the world many times as we journey across the waters of life. Yet unlike the stone that will disappear, our influence – providing we stay within Christ's love – will ripple out many times. Sometimes the ripples will cross themselves, but our impact in Christ's name will change lives just as the surface of the pond is changed by the stone skimming across it. Or we may be like the large stone thrown into the water that makes a big splash in one area before moving on. The immediate impact of the larger stone in the water may go further than the skimming stone, but be located in a smaller area. Perhaps God is challenging you to do something big in your local area, something that will impact people close to you in a big way, sending ripples out among your community.

So take a stone, hold it, and pause. Remember that just as your stone is a singular object, so you also only have one life. Yet in the Master's hand it can impact its environment multiple times, just like the stone skimming across the water's surface; or it can make a huge impact in a localised area. You just need to be willing to offer yourself to be used by the Master, and placed where he has chosen you to be, so that in God's name you can bear fruit that will last.