

# The Great Challenge

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

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*I am so glad you have chosen to take “The Great Challenge.” I am even more excited that you are not doing it alone, but with a group. When I wrote this book, I had my specific church family in mind. In fact the organization of the book came from the conversations and discussions I had in my small group as we wrestled with the challenges in their earliest forms. This was birthed out of a community.*

*Whether your church is teaching through the principles in a formal way or you are just reading the book as a small group, I am excited to see how God uses this season to grow your community.*

*I am praying for you and excited to see what God does!*

*Ryan*

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You can order “The Great Challenge” on Amazon or at [www.newcitypress.com](http://www.newcitypress.com).

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### BEFORE YOU BEGIN: A LETTER TO HOSTS

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**CONGRATULATIONS!** By picking up this packet you've shown a desire to grow in your relationship with Jesus in the best possible way, in relationship with others. Jesus even said, *"For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them."*

*Matthew 18:20*

As a host, you have an important role in connecting people to one-another and to Jesus. We want you to know that our team is praying for you as you serve. Thank you for listening to the leading of the Holy Spirit and taking this faith step to connect with others as you grow together in Jesus Christ!

We believe the best way to grow personally, relationally, and spiritually is to be connected with others in a small group. A small group is you and two or more people who get together each week in a home, office, coffee house, or other place to talk about the issues of life, what the Bible says about them, and the solutions it provides to our greatest challenges as you grow in your love for Jesus and one another.

Our hope is that you will be blessed by hosting a group! What follows in this guide are resources to assist you as you and your group grow to together.

### HELP FOR HOSTS

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#### START HERE - G.R.O.W.

##### **GRAB THE RESOURCE**

We want to provide you with everything you need to be successful as you host your group!

The discussion guide provided will have everything you need to facilitate a great conversation each week.

##### **RECRUIT A FEW FRIENDS**

**How do I get people for my group?**

- Pray about who you should invite.

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- Make a list, who do you know? Friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, people you see at church, and people you regularly see in the community are all great people to consider asking to be part of your group.
- Ask them if they'd like to get together to talk about the issues of life, what the Bible says about them, and the solutions it provides to our greatest challenges. Mention the theme of the series you will be going through. Let them know they aren't making a life-long commitment. Tell them how many weeks the series commitment you are asking them to make actually is and let them know they don't have to share anything they aren't comfortable sharing!
- Be sure to ask them face to face! You will have a much greater possibility of them attending than if you ask them any other way.
- A group can be you and two or more people you invite to join you on this journey. Small Groups come in all shapes and sizes but are typically less than twelve people.

## OPEN YOUR HOME

### When and where do we meet?

- Opening your home is a great way to show hospitality and provide a safe atmosphere for discussion, but you can meet any place that works for you and your group. It can be a home, coffee shop, or wherever you can talk openly with one another, preferably without too much distraction. Unfortunately, we do not have space for groups to meet on our church campuses.
- Consider moving the group around, taking turns hosting so it isn't hard for anyone. You can also take turns asking the discussion questions. It's a great way to involve others, and to get them more connected to the group, as well as to develop other leaders.
- Another great way to involve others is to have everyone take turns bringing a snack, or dessert, each week. Something lite, though some groups like to plan their gathering around having a meal together first, so you can have the host provide that as you rotate location or do those potluck style.
- Select a time that works best for you and your group. Groups typically meet for about 1 1/2 to 2 hours. For the most part, people will make time for whatever is

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of value to them, so if you focus on relationships rather than on a "meeting" you're likely to be more successful getting people to come regularly, and on-time.

- Be sure to communicate clearly when, where, and what time you are meeting. If there are any changes along the way be sure to communicate those to everyone as well! Be sure to find out how everyone communicates! Don't assume everyone texts, or uses email, or social media, or whatever you prefer. There may be one or two who don't, so they would miss your communication.
- Begin and end on time!

## WORK TOGETHER

### What do I do?

- **Pray** weekly for those in your group and for the discussion! This is the most important thing you can do for the health, benefit, and growth of your group.
- Read through the material a couple of times during the week to become familiar.
- Get your house ready for guests (If it will be there). It doesn't have to look like a model home but pick up and clean up.
- Greet people as they arrive. For the first couple of weeks, if there are several people in the group, provide name tags. Provide at least water to drink and perhaps cookies. Showing hospitality is a great way to get people to want to come back.
- Have discussion guides ready for everyone the first week or two unless you have planned for everyone to have their own beforehand.
- **Pray** for the group and your time together. Ask God to help you all understand His Word and to be able to apply it to your lives. As you get to know others in the group, ask others to pray as well.
- Ask the **Connect** question(s). These are lite icebreaker questions to help everyone get to know one-another and are generally loosely connected to the theme of the discussion.
- Build relationships! Jesus commanded us to "Love One Another". Do that! Spend the first part of your time together each week re-connecting, discovering more about one another, and fellowshiping. Build Intentional Relationships - Growing together in Christ so you can **care** for one-another.
- Next, in the **Discover** section, read the Bible passage together. Have others read after each paragraph. Answer the discussion questions provided. Take time to let

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the group answer and discuss the answers together. It's okay if people have different translations, or versions, it adds to understanding and to the discussion when different words are used to say the same thing.

### How do I facilitate a discussion?

**Leading a discussion is the number one fear** of people starting a group. This is why we provide discussion questions that are not difficult to understand and will help you learn more about the Bible and be challenged to grow each week.

- Don't teach! Facilitate by encouraging everyone to participate
- Help the group discover the answers even if you know them.
- Follow the leading of Holy Spirit.
- It is okay if there is a little silence and quiet.
- Encourage more than a yes-or-no answer. Ask for more response with: Anything else?... How about?... Someone else?
- Give affirmation whenever you can.
- Involve everyone (but don't force).
- Listen when someone has problems! God might lead your group to solve problems for one another, but He may also be taking someone through some struggles for a purpose. You don't have to solve every problem but provide love.
- Don't focus on getting through the material – focus on helping people grow.
- Don't underestimate **growth** moments in your group meeting.
- Facilitate for **life-change**
- It's not just about information, but **transformation**
- Know the spiritual next steps for **each person** in your group.
- Your role is to **build** people, not just to lead a meeting.

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### Week 1 - The Command to Love

Throughout the Bible we see God's Love for man on display. His love for us results in His command for us to love Him, and to love others. In this series we are looking at how God's love can have a lasting impact on our life, and how our life can have a lasting impact on others around us, and on our community.

*“The Great Challenge is all about putting Jesus’ command to love into practice. Our goal is to actually do what Jesus told his followers to do.*

*Not accidentally.*

*Not if the opportunity arises on its own.*

*The Great Challenge is about being intentional.”*

#### **CONNECT**

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When you first heard we were going to do a series about love, what thoughts, expectations, or apprehensions did you have about coming to this first session?

We use the word ‘love’ to express how we feel about a lot of things from people to pass-times to objects. What are some of the things you have said you loved just this week?

#### **DISCOVER**

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##### **Read John 15:9-17**

<sup>9</sup>“I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. <sup>10</sup>When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! <sup>12</sup>This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup>I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. <sup>16</sup>You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. <sup>17</sup>This is my command: Love each other. (NLT)

Jesus’ command to love is not a feeling, it’s an action. What are some of the things we do to love other?

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According to Jesus, what is the greatest measure of love? What do you think He means by this statement?

What did Jesus mean by His command to "Go and bear fruit that will last"? How can we know if we have done that?

What is your first thought when you read in the Bible that Jesus loves you? What difference does his love for you have regarding your love for others?

### **This Week's Challenge**

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This week live Christ's love by spending time praying daily that during this series you will grow in your understanding and application of God's love in you and through you.

#### **Here are a couple of possibilities of how to do this:**

- Spend time **praying** and **celebrating** all that God has done in your life. Ask him to help you **grow** in your understanding and application of true love during this series.
  
- Spend time **reading, reflecting** on, and **meditating** on key Bible passages
  - John 3:16
  - 1 Peter 5:7
  - 1 John 1:9
  - John 15:9-17
  - 1 John 4:16
  - Colossians 3:14
  - 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

Plan to share with the group next week your story of what God did in you, through you, and the impact of love!

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### Week 2 - Love Regardless of Position

In the teaching and reading for this week, we are challenged to truly love one another through acts of service. Jesus clearly demonstrated this type of love when He set aside His own position of privilege as Messiah and Lord. He humbled Himself to become a servant to His disciples by washing their feet. This was an example to them of the attitude of the true love and service we must have as His followers.

#### **CONNECT**

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Last week you were challenged to pray and reflect about being more loving. What happened?

What is the most loving thing you have seen someone do recently? It could be to you personally, something you observed, or even just something you heard about.

#### **DISCOVER**

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In his first letter, the Apostle John wrote about the type of love we are to have for each other. Let's take a moment and read a passage from that letter.

#### **Read 1 John 3:11-18**

*This is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another. <sup>12</sup>We must not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and killed his brother. And why did he kill him? Because Cain had been doing what was evil, and his brother had been doing what was righteous. <sup>13</sup>So don't be surprised, dear brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.*

*<sup>14</sup>If we love our brothers and sisters who are believers, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead. <sup>15</sup>Anyone who hates another brother or sister is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don't have eternal life within them.*

*<sup>16</sup>We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So, we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. <sup>17</sup>If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person?*

*<sup>18</sup>Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.*

John makes a difficult statement in verses 14 and 15 about our love for other believers being proof that we are Christians. He also says, and illustrates, that if we don't love other believers that we are not Christians.

How do you respond to such a compelling statement? How does it make you feel, especially if you have been hurt by another believer?

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We all hold positions of privilege even if we don't realize it. Privilege comes in many forms: Position, Title, Role, Possessions, Membership, etc.

- Jesus is God, Messiah, and Lord. He was also called Rabbi and Teacher.
- John had a fishing business and was an Apostle.

Think for a moment about what roles of privilege you hold. Which do you find most difficult to set aside to serve others?

In verse 17, John gets practical when he says, "If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person?" What does it mean to have "enough money to live well"? What then is the relationship between compassion and privilege (enough money to live well)?

In verse 18 John says to, "Show the truth" of our claim to love by our actions. How do you feel about what others may think if they know about your service?

*“When we love everyone regardless of position,  
we are overcoming privilege with service to others.”  
- The Great Challenge*

How does serving someone break the feelings of privilege you might have had over them?

## **THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE**

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**Demonstrate love to someone over whom you have influence or authority.**

Set aside your position of privilege to put yourself in a place of service to show real love.

**Here are some prompts to get you started if you need help.**

1. Make a list either physically or mentally of those in your life who you have influence or authority over.
  - This can be positional authority like the role of a supervisor or manager at work.
  - It can be relational authority as a mentor to others.
  - In a family there are dynamics of influence and authority between generations and even just birth order in the same generation.
2. Select a person (however you have identified your list) who has a tangible need. Serve them by meeting that need. You might:
  - Pay a bill they are struggling to pay.
  - Help with a project at work.

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- Take them out to lunch and listen to how they are doing personally.
- Do childcare, yardwork, or something else that frees up time for them go have some fun (restaurant, movie, date night, etc.) or simply to rest.
- Drop off a care package with some things they may enjoy with an encouraging note.

Be creative, but meet a **REAL NEED**, with a **REAL** act of **LOVE**, by **SERVING** them.

Plan to share with the group next week your story of what God did in you, through you, and the impact of love!

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### Week 3 - Love Sacrificially

In the Bible passage for this week, we are challenged to love Christ's church through sacrificial generosity. The early church clearly demonstrated this type of love by their example of moving from selfishness to generosity.

#### CONNECT

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Share with the group how you did with last week's challenge to **demonstrate love to someone over whom you have influence or authority.**

#### DISCOVER

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##### Read Acts 4:32-33

*<sup>32</sup>All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. <sup>33</sup>The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all.*

What does it mean to be "United in heart and mind"?

How can we have that same unity today?

How did the unity of the believers better enable the apostles to "testify powerfully"(v33)?

Do you think what the believers sold were extra items they no longer needed? Why or why not?

What is something you own that you would have a hard time sharing with others?

***"When we love sacrificially,  
we are overcoming selfishness with generosity."  
– The Great Challenge***

How does the way you have been loved effect your willingness to sacrificially and generously love others as the early church did?

How do you strengthen or overcome your previous experiences to love unselfishly?

#### The Week's Challenge

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**Demonstrate sacrificial love toward someone.**

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A sacrifice costs us something, like time, or money, to help someone else. It is being generous with more than just our surplus. A sacrifice means that we're dipping into our reserves, like missing an event, or going without, in order to lovingly provide for the benefit of someone else.

**Here are some possibilities of how to do this:**

- **Identify**
  - List those in your Small Group who may have needs you can meet this week
  - List those on your Ministry Team who may have needs you can meet this week
  - Look for those in the church who may have needs you can meet this week
  - Consider those who have needs that may require you to gather others together to be able meet needs (Physical or financial projects).
- **Make a Plan**
  - **Pray**, asking God to identify who you are to serve this week.
  - Look for an opportunity to show Christ's love and to serve them generously.
  - Look for ways to be selfless in your service.
  - Gathers others assistance if needed.
- **Do it**
  - Provide a ride to an appointment (Or go with them to an appointment)
  - Help with basic cleaning, vacuuming, etc.
  - Take them someplace they want to go, in addition to where they need to go
  - Do housework projects like deep cleaning
  - Take care of their kids for a date, shopping, errands, or just a break
  - Take care of their yard - mow the lawn, pull weeds, trim bushes, etc.
  - Handyman projects they need done.
  - Do a project that will take a sacrifice of time (Not just spare time! You may need to give up something, or miss doing something)
  - Pay a bill they are struggling to pay, or meet another financial need

Plan to share with the group next week your story of what God did in you, through you, and the impact of love!

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### Week 4 - Love those different than you

Prior to the Bible passage for this week, Jesus had been asked about the greatest commandment. His response was to Love God and to "Love your neighbor as yourself." Our passage for this week covers both the man's response to Jesus, and Jesus' response to him. The man's response was to ask about our neighbors, and Jesus' response to him is the story we know as "The Good Samaritan."

#### CONNECT

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Share with the group how you did with your challenge from last week to **demonstrate sacrificial love toward someone?**

Getting started this week, what is the stretch of road you would avoid after dark? Is that because of experience or because of reputation?

#### DISCOVER

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##### Read Luke 10:29-37

<sup>29</sup>The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

<sup>30</sup>Jesus replied with a story: "A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

<sup>31</sup>"By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. <sup>32</sup>A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

<sup>33</sup>"Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. <sup>34</sup>Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. <sup>35</sup>The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.'

<sup>36</sup>"Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked.

<sup>37</sup>The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy."

Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."

Why do you think Jesus didn't answer the man's question directly?

Why would the priest and the Temple assistant avoid the man?

Even having compassion, the Samaritan might have helped the man without touching him. Why do you think touch was so important to Jesus as part of the care?

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What is the relationship between "compassion" and "mercy"? How are they the same, or different?

When have you been in a situation when someone showed compassion toward you? How did their compassion become action?

*“When we love those different than us,  
we overcome bias with compassion.”*

*– The Great Challenge*

How can the love of Christ free you from past bias to open your heart to be compassionate toward others in need?

### **This Week’s Challenge**

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**Demonstrate love to someone different than you.**

Connect with the individual working to identify and overcome any bias you may have. Allow the Holy Spirit to fill your heart with compassion for someone in need. Then, take steps toward building, or strengthening, intentional relationships by showing them mercy, serving them in some way.

- **Make a Plan**
  - Pray, asking God to show you who you are to show love to this week
  - Let go of a past hurt or bias you have against one or more of your neighbors
  - Look for an opportunity to show Christ's love to them
  - Connect with the individual.
- **Take a Step**
  - Speak to them kindly and have a genuine encounter with them instead of passing them by
  - Send a note of encouragement
  - Spend time with them
  - Listen to their story
  - Give a care package.
  - Build an intentional relationship by inviting them for dinner or dessert to get to know them. Ask them their story and really listen. Make it all about them.
  - Meet a physical or financial need (Even if you need to do it in secret)
  - Serve them as you would serve Christ

Plan to share with the group next week your story of what God did in you, through you, and the impact of love!

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### Week 5 – Love the Difficult

#### CONNECT

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Share with the group how you did with your challenge from last week to **demonstrate love to someone different than you.**

#### DISCOVER

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The passage for this week is part of a larger teaching from Jesus on what will happen at the final judgement. This passage is the final parable in the series of parables about what will happen at the final judgement. He declares, in Matthew 25:32 that, "He will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." In actuality, he is speaking here of the righteous and the unrighteous, those who have a relationship with him, and those who don't.

#### Read Matthew 25:34-40

*<sup>34</sup>"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup>For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. <sup>36</sup>I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.'*

*<sup>37</sup>"Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup>Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? <sup>39</sup>When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?'*

*<sup>40</sup>"And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'*

How will Jesus identify those who have been blessed by the Father?

What does Jesus say the righteous will receive at judgement (V34)?

How, and why, does doing the acts listed in verses 35 & 36 identify someone as being a righteous person?

Why do you think faith isn't mentioned in this passage?

Which of these ways to serve Christ by serving others is, or has been, most difficult for you?

**"When we love those who are difficult to love,  
we overcome fear with presence."  
– The Great Challenge**

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How can the love of Christ free you from past bias to open your heart to be compassionate toward the lonely, disconnected, dis-enfranchised, outcast, needy, or simply the “other” you come across regularly?

### **This Week’s Challenge**

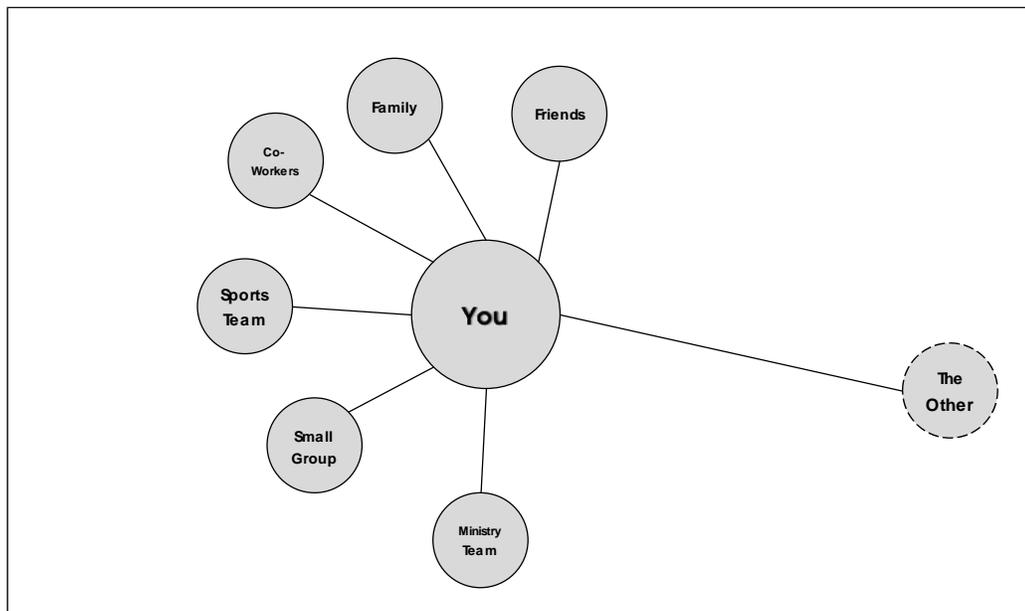
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**Love someone difficult to love.**

For this week **identify** the spheres of relationships in your life, like the image below. Look also to identify who the “Other” is in your sphere. Think about who is lonely, disconnected, dis-enfranchised, outcast, needy, or simply the “other” whom you come across regularly. **Listen** to their story. Look for a way to **serve** them. See if there might be a way to **connect** them to others.

**Here are some possibilities of how to do this:**

- **Identify**



- The "**Other**" in your relational spheres.
- The "**Other**" in your community whom you regularly encounter.
- **Make a Plan**
  - **Pray**, asking God to identify who you are to serve this week
  - Look for an opportunity to show Christ's love and to serve them
  - Look for opportunities to assist them in getting connected, or better connected, with others.
- **Take a Step**
  - Speak to them kindly and have a genuine encounter with them instead of passing them by
  - Send a note letting them know how much you **care** about them

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- Spend **time** with them
- **Listen** to their story
- **Connect** them by inviting them to your Small Group or to attend Church with you
- Do what God has led you to do to show **genuine** love and care.
- Look for an immediate need you can meet (Even if it must be done anonymously)
- **Serve** them as you would serve Christ

Plan to share with the group next week your story of what God did in you, through you, and the impact of love!

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### Week 6 - Love Your Enemy

#### CONNECT

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Share with the group how you did with your challenge from last week to **love someone difficult to love**.

What is one article of clothing that you have had a difficult time letting go of (Like a favorite t-shirt)? What has made it special to you?

#### DISCOVER

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##### Read Colossians 3:8-15

*<sup>8</sup>But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. <sup>9</sup>Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. <sup>10</sup>Put on your new nature and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. <sup>11</sup>In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized-slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.*

*<sup>12</sup>Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. <sup>13</sup>Make allowance for each other's faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. <sup>14</sup>Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup>And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.*

What do the traits listed in V8-9 have in common? How are we to "have stripped off" such practices?

What are we to clothe ourselves with? Why does Paul say this is so important?

Why is Paul's statement in V11 so important?

What does it mean to "Make allowance for each other's faults" and to forgive anyone who "offends" us (V13)? Why is it essential that we forgive?

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“When we love our enemies,  
we overcome anger with forgiveness.”  
– The Great Challenge

How can the love of Christ free you from past anger or hurt to open your heart to forgive, or to build bridges in areas where you may have bias?

### **This Week’s Challenge**

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**Show forgiveness to someone who hurt you.**

For this week identify broken relationships in your life. If that isn't an issue, or isn't possible, identify cultural, religious, or racial bridges you need to cross. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you move from anger to forgiveness.

**Here are a couple of possibilities of how to do this:**

- **Identify**
  - A specific broken, damaged, or strained relationship in your life
  - A cultural, religious, or racial issue you need to address
- **Make a Plan**
  - Pray, asking God to take away any anger you feel
  - Look for an opportunity speak openly and honestly with someone from that area
- **Take a Step**
  - Look into what really made you angry. What would their perspective be?
  - Go visit a worship service different than your own
  - Determine what bridge you want to build, or restore, in the relationship
  - Talk with the person on the phone and begin building or restoring a relationship
  - Listen and learn about that area
  - Meet face to face and discuss the primary issue
  - Forgive and let go of offense
  - Request forgiveness
  - Look for ways to build, begin to build, or restore bridges together.

Plan to share with the group next week your story of what God did in you, through you, and the impact of love!

# The Great Challenge

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

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### Week 7 – Unity is the Gift of Love

#### CONNECT

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Share with the group how you did with your challenge from last week to **show forgiveness to someone who hurt you.**

#### DISCOVER

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When someone is close to death, their words carry a greater weight, especially if they know the time is near. Today we are going to look at a small part of Jesus' prayer with his disciples at the last supper.

#### Read John 17:20-21

“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.”

How does it make you feel that you are part of the group, “all who will ever believe in me,” that Jesus prayed for at the last Supper?

How do you think we, the church, are doing in regards to Jesus' prayer for unity?

What is your role in this?

We have been taking individual challenges each week to love in a very specific way that Jesus commanded us to. As we look back, each act overcame a specific point of division among people.

*When we love everyone regardless of position, we are **overcoming privilege** with service to others.*

*When we love sacrificially, we are **overcoming selfishness** with generosity.*

*When we love those different than us, we **overcome bias** with compassion.*

*When we love those who are difficult to love, we **overcome fear** with presence.*

*When we love our enemies, we **overcome anger** with forgiveness.*

Privilege, selfishness, bias, fear and anger are the causes of division in the world. Jesus gave us the solution to all of this with his command to love. In fact, it is more than the solution...it's the pathway.

# The Great Challenge

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

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*“Unity is the gift of Love” – The Great Challenge*

Over the past few weeks, how has your perspective or priority of loving others changes?

Have you experienced the ‘gift of unity’ as a result of one of the challenges during this study? If so, share how.

### **Looking Forward**

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Jesus’s command to love others and the pursuit of unity in the Body of Christ is much bigger than a seven-week challenge. It’s a lifestyle and a life-long pursuit.

The goal of The Great Challenge is not to just finish the study...it is to challenge each and every one of us to live this way every day. Now that is a challenge.

Difficult...yes.

Impossible...not with the power of the Holy Spirit.

A daily dependence on the Holy Spirit’s guidance will lead us to love.

A daily rhythm is helpful as well. Whatever your daily startup routine looks like, add the simple prayer... ”God, give me an opportunity to love someone today.” However you close your day, add a point of reflection. I typically assess the success of my day by determining if I accomplished everything I set out to do. Now I add the question, “how well did I love today?” If love is Jesus’ primary command, the answer to that question should have a big impact on what I determine success or failure.

Are there some other ways you can keep the pursuit of loving others intentionally at the forefront of your life?

How can being part of a group like this help the pursuit of love?