

MON 8/23

- ✓ READ John 13:34
- ✓ THOUGHT We have been created for relationships in and through God. One of our responsibilities is holding each other accountable with love. This demands that we know ourselves, be involved in each other's lives and be attentive to God's nudges.
- ✓ PRAYER God, may I love as I have been loved. Help me to care deeply for my friends and loved ones. Amen.

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TUES 8/24

- ✓ READ Ephesians 4:2
- ✓ THOUGHT "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." The ability to listen to another's story without judgment is an important piece of our call. This is the time to forget your pre-determined diagnosis and your prescription for change. Listen gently and patiently, with the intention of serving.
- ✓ PRAYER God, help me to be willing to have difficult conversations with love as my motive. Help me to listen with a servant's heart. Amen.

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WED 8/25

- ✓ READ Deuteronomy 31:6
- ✓ THOUGHT Be courageous! "Be strong. Take courage. Don't be intimidated." God is with us and won't let us down. Our tendency is to want to let difficult situations take care of themselves or to simply pray about it rather than to address it, for fear we might stir up trouble. It takes courage to lovingly speak the truth. God will give you strength.
- ✓ PRAYER God of all things, thank you for promising never to leave me. Give me your strength today. Amen.

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THURS 8/26

- ✓ READ Philippians 2:1-2
- ✓ THOUGHT "Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends." (The Message) Confronting another in Christ requires that we are deeply honest as we examine our own intentions. Is this about you, or about their best life in God? God knows your heart. Be honest!
- ✓ PRAYER Lord, open my eyes to the truths I have tried to ignore. Let me love with a pure heart. Amen.

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FRI 8/27

- ✓ READ Ephesians 5:1-2
- ✓ THOUGHT Be authentic. "Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us." (The Message) God is calling you to love like Jesus loved. Jesus spoke honestly with people and truly wanted what was best for them.
- ✓ PRAYER Lord, help me learn how to really want the best for others and to care enough to talk to them with honesty. Amen.

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SAT 8/28

- ✓ READ 2 Corinthians 12:9
- ✓ THOUGHT Be vulnerable. "My grace is all you need. My power works in your weakness." Each time you are willing to let God work in another part of your life, you will learn more about the vastness of his love. What do you need to offer to God today? Your vulnerability will lead to transformation.
- ✓ PRAYER Lord, I come to you, recognizing my limitations and your power to overcome. Thank you for loving me. Amen.

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GROUP GUIDE – UNDERCOVER

- ✓ **PRAYER** **God, we acknowledge that you are already here. May our hearts be open to your presence and direction. Amen.**
- ✓ **BIG IDEA** **We are called to live in community in connected relationships with each other. Our central responsibilities are accountability, mirroring the love of Christ, and careful consideration of our own motivations.**
- ✓ **READ** **Matthew 18:6-17**
- ✓ **DISCUSS**
 - Background details are helpful for this passage in Matthew. Basically, the disciples ask Jesus, "Who gets to call shotgun?" Jesus responded that they should be like a child and welcome the childlike. He went on to say that if they give them a hard time or take advantage of them, they will wish they hadn't and shares a harsh warning about making life harder for others. Why did Jesus go from answering "who gets to sit in the front seat?" directly to a harsh warning? Discuss the pitfalls of judgmental attitudes, religious certainty, or manipulative behaviors as you live in community.
 - "If your hand or foot gets in the way of God, chop it off and throw it away." In this passage, Jesus speaks using hyperbole to teach us truths. This phrase is used to address those who cause others to trip and fall into sin. We are encouraged to look at the things that cause us to stumble and to take those things seriously so we aren't leading others astray. What questions should you sit with before you call out someone else's sin? What might God be calling *you* to consider before confronting someone in your community?
 - In verses 12-14 we hear the parable of the lost sheep. Simple, right? God cares about the "one" and we are the "one". But wait, there's more! Because God cares, we are called to notice when our fellow believers stumble, so that a misstep doesn't become a pit of despair. Paraphrase verses 15-17 in your own words. Remember, the context of church in that day was more like our life groups of today. Notice in these verses that there is a lot of action: go, take, point out. So, we are called to get off the sidelines and onto the playing field of love. Describe a situation when hearing hard truths might have prevented heartache in your life.
 - Has there been a time when you felt a nudge to have a difficult conversation with someone you loved, but didn't? Did the outcome change how you might consider handling similar situations in the future?
- ✓ **Pray** **God, we thank you for our loved ones. Help us to love so deeply that we are willing to become uncomfortable for the sake of love. Help us to be humble while also relying on your Spirit for courage. Amen.**