



“Love One Another”
Sermon Series Prayer Guide

Shalom United Methodist Church

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 13:34-35

Week 4: "Praise and Thanksgiving"

In 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul wrote, "Therefore encourage one another and build up each other." Here in Romans, Paul offers more instruction on how to live alongside others: serve the Lord, rejoice, be patient, contribute to the needs of others, be hospitable, bless others – especially those with whom you disagree. All of these are ways to encourage and build up others in faith.

One of the things that we are lacking in our relationships with others today is a genuine desire to encourage and build each other up. We hesitate to share our gratitude. We rarely seek out opportunities to show our appreciation for others. We know we are thankful, but when is the last time you told someone that you love and appreciate them? My guess is that this is not a practice we engage in everyday. So, this week, as you reflect on what it means to build up others, to bless and not curse, to rejoice or weep with others, take the time to do those things. Share with someone in your community or in the church the reasons why you appreciate and love them. Post a note of thanks, or lift up something positive about a friend or sister/brother in Christ on social media. Send that person a handwritten note (snail mail is always wonderful to receive!) telling that person why you appreciate them, and why you give thanks to God for their role in your life.

And, while you are at it, use this brief prayer each day this week as you spend time connecting with God:

God of joy, I praise you today for (name). Thank you for making them who they are. Thank you for what they mean to all who love them, including me.

Romans 12: 9-15

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

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Use this page to keep track of the things you see, the people you encounter, or the prayers you offer to God while out on your prayer walk.

- Look for evidence of hardship, hurt, or injustice. How might the Church be a presence and a source of hope for those people or situations?
- Look for signs of hope: Where do you see evidence of God's grace and God's people at work?
- Pray for discernment: ask God to show you what God is already doing, and how you can be part of that kingdom work.

And, while you are at it, use this brief prayer each day this week as you spend time connecting with God:

God of purpose, I place one foot in front of the other for you today. I am willing. Work through me for your kingdom.

A Note from Pastor Peter

I came up with the idea to provide a resource in conjunction with this sermon series after several conversations with people over the last few weeks – all centered around other times when we have shared in the practice of prayer together. After a couple of these conversations happened, I started to wonder if it was time to offer another opportunity for us to join together in a common process. Then a couple more of those conversations took place, and I knew it was probably time. I should also mention that my wonderful wife, Rev. Katy Borhauer, also thought this was a good idea, and her support and assistance was invaluable in putting together this guide.

So, over the weeks of this series, as we explore some of the Bible's "one another commands," this guide will provide us with an opportunity to focus our lives on becoming more like the people God desires us to be, both as individuals and as a community of faith. Over the next few weeks, I invite you to spend some time each day engaging with a different spiritual practice, rooted in prayer, that reflects the Scripture lesson for that week. In this way, we will have a chance to draw closer to one another, and to God, as we share in this journey.

My prayer for each one of you as we begin this new process is that these next few weeks will help you to draw closer to God and to one another, with a renewed appreciation for how God has called us to love and care for each other, just as God loves and cares for us.

Blessings,

Pastor Peter

Galatians 6:7-10

Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ... Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

Week 3: "Prayer Walks"

This week we are once again going to explore "prayer walking" as a spiritual discipline. The purpose of prayer walking is to seek God's guidance, mercy, and transforming power for our community and for ourselves as God's servants. It helps us to become more aware of our community, and helps us to encounter others outside of the walls of the Church. Like we see in 1 Peter 4, prayer walking can help us to serve one another, by using the gifts and tools that God has given us. This practice helps us to trust that God will provide us with the opportunities and the gifts to share his love with those we encounter, and to cover the world around us in prayer, trusting that God is here among us each day.

This week, pick a place in the community, and go on a prayer walk (or bike ride or drive). When you are out, don't call attention to yourself, yet be open for interactions with those you encounter. If anyone asks what you are doing, be prepared to respond: "I'm from Shalom UMC, and we are out praying for our neighborhood." Ask if they would like for you to pray with them. Keep your eyes open, and try to see the world through God's eyes. Ask yourself, "What would God celebrate here? What would God heal? How can we pray for what we see?"

Some topics to consider:

- How can we pray for, and support, various groups of people in the community?
- Pray for those who are working to maintain your community, and those who are out of work or unable to work at this time.
- Pray for the children, teachers, and staff of the schools in your community.
- Pray for the services and community events that have been put on hold, and the people affected by those decisions.

1 Peter 4:7-11

The end of all things is near; therefore be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers. Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Week 1: "Porch Prayers"

Paul's instruction to "bear one another's burdens" reminds us that God is always with us, and so is our family in Christ. The world has changed this year: from online worship to social distancing. People are feeling more isolated than ever, and are yearning for any measure of meaningful human contact. We have a responsibility as Christians to help one another in our struggles, but seldom do we truly let others lean on us. So, this week take some time to bear someone else's burden. Call a friend. Drop by their house. Sit on the porch and have a cup of coffee (or tea, or lemonade, or whatever). Take time to have a real conversation. Ask questions and listen for the answers.

There are so many ways that we can help to bear the burdens of others, but we can only see the chance if we look it. Don't just ask how you can help – offer something simple. A friend is overworked and tired? Bring dinner over. Are they stressed from the schedule the kids keep and don't have time for themselves? Volunteer to take over for a day. Do you know someone who feels alone? Call once a week to check in. But, most of all: pray. Pray and invite God to help you be a sign of grace. Pray and ask God to help you provide comfort. Remember that you are one of the many ways that God is at work in the world right now. Our presence, our actions, and our prayers are all connected. We need a little of each to be more fully present and reflective of God's love. So, call up a friend. Share in conversation. Offer support for their needs. And pray. Pray with them, and pray for them each day this week.

And, while you're at it, use this brief prayer each day this week as you spend time connecting with God:

Helping God, give me the strength to share in the burdens of my sisters and brothers in Christ, and to allow them to share in mine. Amen.

Matthew 18: 21-22

Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.'

Week 2: "Intercessions"

That title just above doesn't seem to have anything to do with forgiveness – but it is closer than you'd think, which we'll come back to in a moment. As difficult as it is to follow Jesus' instructions on forgiveness, sometimes we get it right. At least, we happen to occasionally stumble into forgiveness every once in a while. Just like Peter, we wonder how much forgiveness is enough? Is it one time? Certainly seven must be enough! Then comes Jesus saying not seven, but seventy-seven (or seventy times seven). Whether 77 or 490 times – lets be honest that we don't come close to offering enough forgiveness to those who have sinned against us. And why is that? Because we wait for people to ask for it, or to express their penitence.

The powerful thing Jesus knows about forgiveness is that it has just as profound an affect on us if we offer it to someone who has asked, as if we offer it to someone who has not. Forgiveness isn't always about being sorry; it is about letting God help us move beyond the pain, anger, frustration, jealousy, etc., that we feel and hold onto.

So, this week, don't just offer forgiveness to someone who has sinned against you. Whether you offer it to the person or offer it before God, don't stop there. Go the extra step and pray for them. Ask God to bless that person, and intercede on their behalf before God. Lift up those people who you need to forgive. As you pray them, ask God's healing, restoration, and love to fill their lives.

And, while you are at it, use this brief prayer each day this week as you spend time connecting with God:

Loving God, I lift up to you today my brothers and sisters in Christ. Meet them today. Hold them today. Heal them today. Amen.