

# Grace

IN THE EMPTY SPACES

Transformed by the One-Another Passages

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**LEADER'S GUIDE**

# Week One

## Love One Another

Facilitator: Use the following discussion starters, study elements, and talking points to engage and lead your *Grace in the Empty Spaces* study group through the material covered in Week One. Remember to encourage dialogue among participants and allow them to share what they learned during personal devotional time or answer any questions that arose.

### Begin by sharing a personal story from Mark McPeak:

I grew up in a small house with two brothers. I don't remember much about my early childhood; however, I do remember when my little sister came into this world when I was 8-years-old. Things changed in many ways. One of the most impactful changes was that my brothers and I moved into a bedroom we shared for several years.

You can imagine the situation for three brothers spaced six years apart. As a senior in high school, my older brother shared his room with a ninth-grader (me), and a sixth-grader—talk about reality TV!

When your only space in a small house is your bed—and maybe a shelf and a few drawers—you don't have much privacy. In fact, you share everything. Since we had only one bathroom, privacy was really only a dream.

So, we had a choice. We could find some way to get along or we could live in unending conflict. Mom and Dad often reminded us emphatically that the former was their preference. In a very close situation, where someone else was always in our business, we learned to get along. To this day, we still like to be together and though we live far apart, we manage to all connect a few times each year.

God's design for the family, His Church, and other close relationships is intentional. He means for our closeness with each other to be a benefit and a blessing. In fact, David writes in Psalm 68 glorifying God and telling of His greatness. He describes God's merciful acts: "Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. God settles the solitary in a home; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious dwell in a parched land" (Psalm 68:5-6).

God is the Father. He is the model for what fatherhood is supposed to be. So, when He gives me a father, He is doing good.

God designed family—both at home and church. When He places me in that family, He is meeting my need and giving me a place where I can be with others who love and accept me.

Key concept: God's design is for us to interact in relationship with each other; this is one of His primary means of shaping into the people He wants us to be.

Facilitator: Realize these relational topics will be a challenge for some people whose homes or even churches hold very difficult memories for them. It is very important to point out that God's ideal is often not met (it started in Eden when sin invaded paradise). But this study is about the characteristics of Christ, which are meant to be developed as we interact with each other according to His plan.

Direct participants' attention to **Day 1, Question 3:** If time permits, you can relate the connection between John 3:16 and Philippians 2:5-8. God the Father loved us so much that He gave His one and only Son. Jesus humbled Himself and gave everything. Asking students to share characteristics of the love we see divinely modeled in these passages can be helpful.

Apply this by asking: How can we demonstrate this characteristic of His love in our lives?

**Day 1, Question 5:** As group members share answers from question 5, remember to point out what a difference, what a blessing these loving acts and gestures are. What if you—as part of the Body of Christ—lived with the “love one another” mantra? How would that change the dynamics of your church? Its impact?

**Day 2:** The concept of a pure heart is a little more conceptual. Make sure your students see the tremendous importance of cleansing their hearts by daily confession of sin (1 John 1:9) and guarding their hearts (Proverbs 4:23).

As a discussion starter, consider asking:

- Without mentioning specific people others may know, how have you seen the heart of someone become corrupt, angry, bitter, or negative in some other ways? (Don't allow names to be used or to speak in specific negative ways about others).
- Is anyone willing to share specific struggles you've had with guarding your heart? (This is the first time you may be asking for personal sharing. It is critical to create a safe environment. Be sure to make some ground rules to ensure that confidentiality is maintained outside the group).

**Day 4, Question 1:** After students have shared their observations, if the points below were not mentioned, relate them to the group.

- 1 John 3:11—The message of loving is one from the beginning, even in the Old Testament. This is not a new concept. Thus, we don't have the excuse—“What? Love one another? I've not heard this before . . . .”
- 1 John 3:23—Most churchgoers would whole-heartedly nod their heads with the first part of God's commandment, that is, believing in Jesus as the Christ, God's Son; however, the commandment is two-fold, with the second being “love one another.” Is loving each other *that* important? God thinks so.
- 1 John 4:7—The Bible is clear: Love is from God. Thus, if we are part of His family, “born of Him,” and not merely “associated” with Him, then love will be a striking characteristic of our lives.

- 1 John 4:11—Toss the list of excuses and reasons why we do not want to show love to one another. Think about how we've treated God. And He still loves us immensely. Because of that and through Him, we can love fellow believers.
- 1 John 4:12—Through our love to other Christians, people can see God's love in action. He uses our relationships to show His love. He is loving us through His Church.

**Day 4, Question 6:** Remembering the focus of this study is transformation, not just learning. Ask study participants to tell what they have learned about themselves this week and encourage them to share ways they know they need to change. Pray God will create a sense of accountability within the group that can help throughout the study to produce real transformation.

**Day 5:** Recognize you are not, in this role, a psychotherapist. You are doing biblical discipleship. Be sensitive and treat any discussions or disclosures about Day 5 sensitively and spiritually. This study approaches personal and relational challenges as areas where God wants to change us through the power of His Word and the Holy Spirit's work. Some people in this study may need more of your time or they may need help you cannot provide (because of deep wounds or destructive behaviors/relationships that come to the surface). Pray regularly for your students and encourage them to seek the accountability and help they may need.

# Week Two

## Forgive One Another

Facilitator: Remember to be transparent with those in your study group. Be honest about not having all the answers, but be diligent to search out the answers to the tough questions. Use the following story and study insights to prompt discussion on the topic of forgiveness.

Leader, you need to approach this discussion knowing that for many participants, this will have been a difficult week. Forgiveness is so powerful because unforgiveness is so devastating.

**Begin this week by sharing the following.** These observations will be helpful for the entire study. Four obstacles that make living out the one-another passages so difficult for us:

1. **The flesh.** Our sinful nature is always battling against the work of the Holy Spirit in us. (See Galatians 5:16-17.) In some cases, we are our own worst enemy as we are drawn to be selfish, unloving, unforgiving, and so forth. (See James 1:13-15).
2. **Our enemy.** We have an enemy, the devil, who is resisting us (1 Peter 5:8)! Even after we have trusted Christ, the devil works to make us ineffective. He will work to keep us from becoming like Jesus (2 Corinthians 11:3).
3. **Our past church/religious experience.** Many of us have been warped in some way by our church experience. One common example is legalism that focuses on externals—“don’t do this or that”—with little emphasis on the internal character traits these one-another passages are meant to inspire in us. (See Jesus’ harsh words for the hypocrisy of externally focused religion in John 15:1-9).
4. **Our personal past.** The wounds we carry from our past can be a great hindrance to the transformation this study addresses. In some cases, the wounds result from past relationships where we were hurt or abused; and in other instances, they are the result of our own sinful choices. Because of these our hearts become wounded and bitter, and it is a great challenge for us to let God transform us. We need to cry out as the writer does in Psalm 109:21-22.

You may want to take just a few minutes for comments or discussion of these observations. However, be sure to leave time for the Lord to work in your group about this critical area of forgiveness!

### Share a personal story from Mark McPeak:

My siblings and I were constantly in close contact with each other in the reality of day-to-day living. What if I wanted to watch a program on the only TV in the house when my sister (eight years younger) wanted to see one of her “childish” shows? We learned to negotiate, share, and work things out. This didn’t always happen, though, without parental intervention.

When my brothers and I fought and seemingly wanted to kill each other, how did we go to sleep at night without worrying about being suffocated by our own flesh and blood? We learned to forgive, forget, and move on. It's amazing the real-life skills it took just to live together without doing long-term relationship (even bodily) harm.

The basic skills we need to live a full, honorable, and productive life can be learned in the most basic of life situations.

I have referred to the "boy's bedroom" in conversation as the "crucible" in which I was forged. To a great degree, the time I spent learning to live with my brothers shaped the core of who I am. This is the story of every close relationship. Whether it's our home as a child or an adult, a longtime work situation, or our church; relationships in close proximity are the proving ground of who we really are.

Because they are unpredictable and out of our control, over time, these real-life situations may bring our real selves to the surface:

- They reveal who we really are and move us beyond platitudes and pretense.
- They test the depth of our character by pushing us to our relational limits.
- They reveal our true emotions in the stress of crisis or conflict.

Not only are they a proving ground in the sense they reveal, they also can strengthen us:

- They help us learn and grow through both successes and failures.
- They refine our strengths as we develop skills through real-life application.

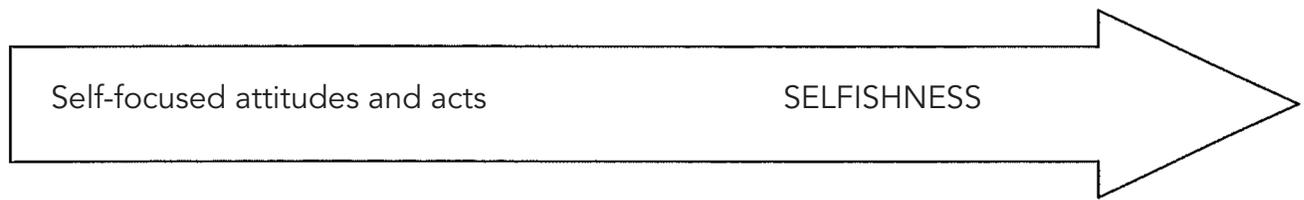
As we deal with other people in real-life, we make the choices that shape us. If we allow ourselves to be overtaken by anger and frustration, we will almost certainly develop deep resentment and bitterness. Resentful, bitter people tend to wound those around them and their attitude becomes a gift that keeps on giving. If, because of our fear, we learn to avoid responding at all, we may hide emotionally for the rest of our lives.

**Day 1, Question 1:** Some students may point out, or even get hung up on the conditional nature of forgiveness in these passages. We know that our salvation is based on God's forgiveness of us, not our works or legalistic acts. So, these passages are teaching about our responsibility to imitate Christ as Christians. Whatever they mean, it is clear God expects us to give forgiveness as a result of receiving it. This might make for a great discussion.

We all cheer for forgiveness until we are the ones extending forgiveness. Ask: What if you don't forgive? What are you becoming if you don't forgive?

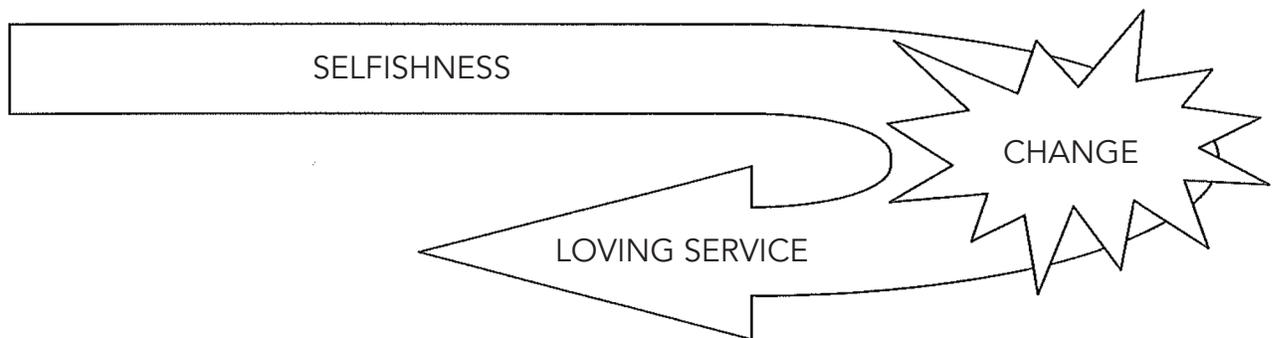
Forgiveness is not a task to complete to be a "better" person; it is a heart issue. How much are you allowing God to change you to be more Christ-like? Christ is forgiving. Are you? So, are you becoming more like Him? Or becoming something else?

Many of us start to get trapped in this process of becoming. As we go through life making choices, we begin to develop habits that are shaping us in very negative ways. Like this process:



As time passes, as we act over and over in selfish ways, we become completely focused on ourselves. Selfishness is the enemy of attitudes and actions in the one-another passages.

Through the process of sanctification (becoming like Christ in a day-to-day way), God reverses this process and turns us from people whose hearts are focused on self to serving others. This is the kind of heart that forgives.



Changing the process is hard, especially as we get older. The longer we live in a specific habit pattern, the deeper the pattern is ingrained into our lives.

**Day 4:** An interesting biblical example of the forgiveness process at work is Paul's frustration and impatience with the young man John Mark. Read Acts 15:39 and see how Paul's feelings about John Mark caused him to separate himself with his ministry partner Barnabas.

Later in 2 Timothy 4:11, evidently John Mark became a more dependable minister and Paul was willing to forgive him. Ask:

- How important was it for Paul to be open to John Mark, giving him time to change and the grace to recognize it?
- What would Paul and John Mark have missed without the power of forgiveness operating in their lives?
- What can we learn and apply about the importance of forgiveness in our lives?

# Week Three

## Submit to One Another

Facilitator: While it is very important to allow study participants to share their questions, observations, and personal experiences, be diligent to avoid allowing group members to “chase rabbit trails,” getting off topic and point. Gently steer participants to the discussion at hand; and encourage a more detailed conversation of non-related issues for after the group meeting.

**Open with this text:** The kind of submission described in the New Testament is a Christian grace. It is part of the work of sanctification—where God makes us more like Jesus. In fact:

- We submit because that’s what He models for us.
- We submit because it glorifies God when we do.
- We submit because through our submission, God creates beautiful relationships and breaks down those things that divide us.

As the authors of this study, Emily and Mark have often thought of a word picture that illustrates one of its central truths. Picture a set of gears or cogs with interacting teeth. As these gears rotate, the teeth interact with each other to make a machine operate smoothly. Now picture these gears rusted and almost fused together from neglect and lack of use. This is a word picture representing our relationships with each other as believers. As we interact with each other in prideful ways, our relationships break down and get bogged down . . . frozen and rusted. But, as we seek to be humble before the Lord and each other, God’s grace, like oil, begins to flow into our relationships. They are lubricated with grace, and we interact with a smoothness that is supernatural. The authors like to picture the oil of the grace of God flowing freely and generously into the empty spaces between those gears. As they begin to rotate faster and faster, the operation becomes smoother and smoother. The rust and corrosion no longer binds the operation because the oil is so powerful. Not only do they now work, but these relationships also begin to heal. The past wounds no longer have control over us as they once did. Healing restores health to our relationships and interactions with each other.

The conviction that God wants to do this for His people is central to this study. We are meant to interact with each other in the context of a free-flowing grace that makes our relationships work. Imagine how powerful this is not only for us, but also for those who don’t know our Lord!

**Day 1:** As much as God hates pride, He loves humility. Read the interesting story in Numbers 12. The narrative is about God acting on behalf of His servant Moses. Notice verse 3: “Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.” The KJV and NKJV translate the word *meek* as “humble.” By God’s testimony, Moses was the most humble man alive. Discuss these questions: What made God so angry at Miriam and Aaron? How does God act on behalf of Moses?

Can you see grace surrounding Moses—given by God for his sake? How is Moses’ humility on display, even in this story?

Facilitator: Note the following points from the story in Numbers 12.

- Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses because of the woman he married (verse 1).
- It seems their criticism (gossip) was just a smokescreen for their jealousy that Moses was more highly regarded as a prophet/leader than they were (verse 2).
- It’s clear they were becoming overtaken by their pride.
- There is a great illustration of God’s truth in 1 Peter 5:5, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”
- God heard what Aaron and Miriam said (verse 2), and He went into action consistent with 1 Peter 5.
- Moses demonstrated again his humble and submissive heart (verse 13).
- God reinforced again the principle from 1 Peter 5 by responding to Moses’ request (verse 14).

**Day 1, Question 2:** While these concepts are interesting to discuss in theory, they are “where the rubber meets the road” in the life of the church. Perhaps, an honest discussion about this topic should be accompanied by prayer for the Lord to work His grace in your students’ lives. Be sure to avoid a criticism of others in the church during this discussion; this time is meant to be an uplifting experience.

**Day 1, Question 3:** Some answers may include:

- Leading with a servant’s mindset, that is, leading by example. If he or she wants hard workers or a task performed a certain, that person rolls up his or her sleeves and does it. Working as he or she wants others to work, following the example.
- Understanding the giftedness of those underneath him or her, and not placing tasks or requirements on those not equipped to complete them successfully. In other words, setting up others for success based on their abilities.
- Recognizing his or her dependence on the Lord and constantly seeking counsel from God’s Word, through prayer, and his or her community of believers.

**Day 2, Question 4:** There are a number of deep spiritual truths in Philippians 2:6-11—the idea of the deity and humanity of Christ; what it means that He “made Himself nothing” or “emptied Himself.” It might be interesting to discuss these in some contexts, but it seems clear in this passage that the main point is for us to see the humility of our Lord and how we need to be like Him. Be encouraged to avoid distracting discussions that might be valuable in another context, but might be a diversion from what God wants to do in group members’ hearts and minds in this study.

**Day 5, Question 4:** John 13:1-17 is so amazing. Have you ever read about any leader in history doing something like this? There have been military leaders who led their troops into battle and never asked

their followers to do anything they were unwilling to do. But, Jesus here does the most menial task reserved for the lowliest servant. Daily life made the feet filthy, and they needed washing. Jesus was not too good to do this lowest of work. His humble service demonstrated a deep, sacrificing love for His followers. He loved them. He wanted them to see this kind of love demonstrated (remember Philippians 2?). He wanted them to show this same love to those they would lead. He wants us to do the same. Begin a discussion by asking how we can practically imitate Jesus in acts of humble submission as we serve others around us.

# Week Four

## Pray for One Another

Facilitator: Practice what this week's study teaches—pray for one another. Carve out time to pray for each group member specifically. It may also be a good and encouraging idea to e-mail or phone participants to ask how you can pray for them.

There is something mystical about prayer. Since we are communicating with One we can't see, we are involved in the spiritual realm. So, prayer can be a real challenge for all of us. You may want to begin by acknowledging this challenge and allowing participants to share their struggles.

Hopefully the teachings and their time this week has reemphasized the value of prayer and will help them make a recommitment to meeting with their heavenly Father.

**Day 1, Question 2:** Some ideas that might be helpful in discussing the passages listed here are:

- We all know the importance of rest (sleep) especially when we are involved in exhausting work (such as people ministry). It is amazing that Jesus balanced sleep with quiet time in prayer with His Father. He literally drew strength from time in prayer. It makes you wonder—for some of us prayer is hard work, yet for Jesus it was strengthening.
- While all of us certainly need rest, we also need the resources that come from prayer. And, we need to be working on the relationship aspect of prayer as well. We have these promises: “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you” (James 4:8); “But from there you will seek the Lord your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 4:29); “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him” (John 14:21). God is knowable and approachable. We can come to Him in prayer.
- Jesus prayed as He made a critical ministry decision—choosing His 12 disciples. While we do not understand everything about the interaction of His divine and human natures, and, we know Jesus knew all things, even He did not make this major decision without spending time with the Father.
- We need to emphasize not only the importance of praying, but also of modeling it for those who follow us.
- This might be a good time to emphasize the criticality of developing the habit of prayer in all circumstances. If we do not pray over low-pressure decisions and in easy situations, we may not be strong enough to pray when we are greatly tempted. The strength to overcome in great times of temptation comes from God through prayer. Jesus had been a praying person His entire ministry. Praying at this time of His greatest anguish was the natural thing for Him to do.

**Day 2, Question 1:** Matthew 5:8; 15:8 may hit at the struggle many of us have. We want to be “good Christians,” but we often fall short. There are a few ways to reconcile this: we can just quit and say “I

can't do this;" we can become a hypocrite and give up on being real; or we can be humble and continue to seek the Lord while being honest about our weaknesses and shortcomings. Pretending is a real problem for many of us. Maybe you can challenge your students to be real, not only with God, but also with one another. Remind them of what we learned in week three about God's operating on behalf of those who are humble.

**Day 3, Question 2:** Some of these ideas are: interceding for the good of His followers that they will be unified (17:11), kept from the evil one (17:15), that they will be sanctified (17:17)—all of these things and more are for their spiritual good. How often are our prayers for physical needs? Jesus' prayer of protection is a spiritual one, not necessarily physical—how differently the spiritual prayer warrior sees the situations of life!

**Day 3, Question 3:** This should be a point of rejoicing to know that Jesus is to this day an intercessor for us. Prompt your group members to vocalize praise to Christ for this blessing.

**Day 4, Question 3:** It is a special ministry to bear the burden of another person's failure. When someone falls, he faces the consequences of his failure. In many cases, these consequences include broken relationships and great pain. Helping your brother or sister bear the burden of sin and failure is a huge commitment, but it is such a powerful ministry.

**Day 5, Question 3:** Since you know your group of students, you should have the discernment to help them select prayer partners. Some may never have done anything like this before, so be reassuring. Learning to pray for one another is vital to the spiritual development of every Christian.

# Week Five

## Fellowship With One Another

Facilitator: You may assume that those involved in a Bible study are followers of Christ. However, don't always assume such. Perhaps during this study session, you can present the gospel through Bible passages and/or your testimony.

As we become more “wired,” and communicating has been device-enabled, we have never needed genuine interaction more. We were made to connect with each other—in real human sharing, heart-to-heart. Discuss the ways we are pulled apart from each other by our busyness and the craziness of life. Have we actually lost the value and importance of really connecting? What do you and your students think?

**Day 1, Question 2:** In the example of MADD, the people who join are often very passionate about their purpose, but they may be completely incompatible in other dimensions of life (religion, politics, socio-economics, etc.). Think through some of the other groups mentioned by your group participants. Contrast these other self-selecting groups with the church community, which calls for us to develop a oneness that permeates so much of our lives.

**Day 1, Question 4:** In Ephesians 2:8-10, Paul presents this truth clearly: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Not only are we saved, but there is also a plan for us to carry out “good works.” We are saved, placed in community, and prepared to do good; this is what the one-another passages are all about!

Application questions:

- Are you saved? Are you ready for the good works God has prepared for you?
- Are you active in the community of the church? Are you truly fellowshiping?

**Day 2, Question 7:** As we have studied, it is not at all possible to conjure up this unity through organizing for it or leading people into it. It is a work that God does. When Jesus prayed in John 17, He asked the Father to create unity among His followers. He unifies us as we submit to Him. It is a spiritual dynamic when God makes His people unified and it brings Him glory.

**Day 2, Question 8:** Write out your ideas about this sense of unity. What should this be like? What does this kind of fellowship mean: “being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind?”

**Day 3:** Consider these verses when discussing this day's topics:

- 1 Corinthians 1:10—I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.
- Philippians 2:1-2—So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.
- Philippians 1:27—Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.

What phrase or idea appears in these verses? What does it mean to have “one mind” or be of the “same mind?”

**Day 3, Question 4:** Acts 2:42-47 needs balance from you as your students think about it. While we see an amazing harmony among believers and extraordinary results—people coming to Christ, needs being met, community, and agreement—there are some concerns. Some believe these early Christians may have gone too far because they expected the imminent return of Christ. Some believe the collection later taken to aid the Christians at Jerusalem may have been, in part, the result of their decision to stop thinking about earthly concerns, such as employment and managing their money, etc. The one-another passages do not call us to do as the believers in this passage did. But they do call us to have the attitude and many of the practices they had. The passage is a powerful picture of what God can do when we choose to live in community with high regard for the concerns and needs of our brothers and sisters. Help your students gain this balanced understanding. You will not only help them with these principles, but also with their ability to maturely think through the Scriptures.

**Day 4, Question 3:** While we're focusing on each other in the Body of Christ, this idea is very important in evangelism. In the judgment, the Lord will say to some, I was hungry and you took me in (Matthew 25:35). He values the hospitable, compassionate heart that reaches out to the homeless and hungry. It begins in the church and goes outside the walls to the lost.

**Day 5, Question 1:** These passages include many of the negative behaviors that are so destructive to healthy interaction in churches. It might be good to look at some of them individually, depending on the time you have. Look at them from this perspective—the power of the gospel to make us like Christ is the same power that helps us overcome these negative tendencies.

# Week Six

## Minister to One Another

Facilitator: Certainly congratulate and thank the group participants who have stuck with this Bible study and with you as a leader. However, emphasize this study isn't about completing a task, but about transformation of the heart. The one-another principles can continue to grow in each group member, and then grow in impact for your church.

Every believer must be a minister! When Jesus left His disciples and ascended to Heaven, he left us with “marching orders.” We call these the Great Commission. Every version of it is powerful (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8). The John 20:21 version is so simple:

“Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.’”

Just like the Father sent Jesus to live among us and to reveal His truth—Jesus sends us to do the same. We are His eyes to see the needs of a lost world, His hands to help those who cannot help themselves, His feet to take His message where it has not been proclaimed, and His heart to look upon lost and helpless people with His compassion.

In short, we are the only physical representation of Jesus the world has now. And, amazingly, that is His plan. We are His ministers. So, how are we doing?

Most relevant to this study, how are we doing in serving each other?

### Share this personal story from Mark McPeak:

I used to be a giver. My parents raised me to think about other people before myself. So, early on as an adult, I poured myself into other people. It seemed I was always helping someone talk through a problem, think through a decision, or cope with a challenging relationship.

Several times a year I was helping someone move. I was at the church a lot helping with projects and programs. I always had some international or indigent person who needed my help and lots of my time.

Then, I stopped doing a lot of those things. I got busy. I got “focused” on my career and on developing myself personally. I got a job that required more of me. Eventually, I went back to school.

My children got into a busier part of their lives and there was always something to do with them. They became the target of a lot of my extra-curricular activities.

Truthfully, I think I just became more me-centered; “success” became more important to me. I guess I've always wanted people to think a lot of me, so I wanted to become something to make sure that happened.

We're all different when it comes to giving and investing in other people. As I observe and think about people, I see a continuum that looks like this:



*Givers*, like Jesus, choose to put others first (Philippians 2:5-8). They do this because they put God first. This makes them focus on others before themselves; they are motivated by love.

*Receivers* tend to be more passive. They are approaching “dead weight” when it comes to making the world a better place. They see needs—their own. And, while they might want to help others and make things better, they tend to be just too overwhelmed or apathetic to ever act. They are often the objects of others’ benevolence and good deeds. Receivers often are pessimistic in their outlook.

*Takers*, like givers, are active choosers. They act to change the world, but not for the good of others. Their seeming acts of kindness are done because in some way they benefit (even if only by elevating their ego or status).

Everyone falls somewhere on this line.

The world would be a much uglier place without givers (we’re all glad they’re here).

While your past has an influence, where you fall on this continuum is not determined by your background, opportunities, or even personality/temperament, it’s based on your choices.

I want to follow the pattern of the Lord. Paul urges us in Philippians 2:5-8 to adopt His attitude.

“He . . . made Himself of no reputation . . . . He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death.” So, you might draw this illustration and ask your participants to place themselves on this continuum. Discuss the importance of following the example of Jesus and becoming a giver, a servant.

**Day 1, Question 2:** Paul zeros in on these behaviors because: 1) They are so destructive to the harmony, love, fellowship, and effectiveness God has designed for us to enjoy; 2) and they are all too common in human relationships, even, unfortunately, in the church.

**Day 1, Question 3:** In Week Three, we looked at Jesus’ example of what a submissive mind is like. Philippians 2:6-8 says of our Lord: “who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Help your students see that Jesus intentionally gives us the ministry of the Holy Spirit so that we can be like Him and reflect these fruits in our lives.

**Day 3, Question 4:** Paul writes to the Thessalonians about the good news that Christ will return for His people in the second coming. He challenges us to encourage each other when we know something good. Our practice should be to use encouraging words regularly to build up our brothers and sisters.

**Day 5, Question 2:** Martin Luther based his song “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” on Psalm 46. How powerful are these words as we share them together in worship? “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea” (Psalm 46:1-2).

As you conclude the study with your participants, encourage them to share their journey in light of the conclusion.

We can see so much of His plan to change us in these one-another passages we’ve studied together. Hopefully, having completed this study, you have:

- Looked honestly at how much your life and character reflect the qualities and attributes of Christ.
- Identified things that need to change—ways you need to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus.
- Begun to allow Him to make some of those genuine changes in you.

Encourage your students to continue this journey of Christ-likeness, allowing Him to change His church and the world through the power of His love in them!