"The New Community People"

John 13:34-35

STRENGTH for the Journey with Joe Stowell

Part of the RBC family of Ministries

Individual Study Introduction

After listening to the audio segment, use the following questions as your time allows. You may want to record your answers or jot down thoughts and notes in a personal journal. You may also want to use your journal as a record of your prayer time with God. Write out your prayer or simply record your requests and the areas of your life you are releasing to God. This written record will help you to watch God's movement in your life. You'll see more clearly the ways God is giving you "strength for the journey"!

Getting Started:

Joe Stowell states that God never intended that we live in isolation, but rather that we be part of His church and that the church be a close-knit team.

- What is the most close-knit team (a sports team or otherwise) you have been a part of?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you feel that your church is a team, a body working together?

Strength through Scripture:

Read John 13:34–35.

1. What is the significance of the reality that love is a choice, not a feeling?

2. Do you generally take the initiative to reach out in love to fellow believers, or do you rely on others to make the first move?

3. How much do you identify with Joe when he says, "Agape love will get you out of the swamp of yourself"?

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Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Lesson 4

Notes:

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

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4. How intentionally do you plan ahead to do acts of love?

5. Would God say that your love for others is more reciprocal (loving to get something in return) or nonreciprocal?

Digging Deeper:

If you have enough time, answer one or more of these optional questions. But be sure to save time for the final two sections.

1. Read Romans 5:6–8. How does it make you feel to know that God's love was a choice He made in eternity past to take the resources of His own Son and to meet the need of your lost, hopeless condition outside of Jesus Christ? How does that act of love draw us into relationship and fellowship not only with God but also with one another?

2. How does my making a choice to meet others' needs bring glory to God and show the world what God's love is really like?

3. How difficult is it, even for Christians, to love others unconditionally? Why is this true and what could you do to leap this barrier and love regardless?

Strength through Reflection:

1. Can you recall a fellow believer showing you sacrificial love—love beyond the edge of convenience and comfort? Can you recall demonstrating sacrificial love to another person?

2. Do the exercise in the "Call to Action" below.

Notes:

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Notes:

Strength through Prayer:

Spend a few moments in prayer. Thank God for all the ways He loves us. Make a commitment to love others—whether you feel like it or not.

You may want to begin your prayer with these words:

"I praise You, Father, that Your love for me is unconditional: it doesn't rise or fall on my performance. Thank You for taking the initiative; I can love You because You first loved me. Empower me to have Your kind of love for others—choosing to love regardless of my feelings and expressing a love that is nonreciprocal, intentional, sacrificial, unconditional, and others-focused."

Closing Call to Action:

Get a piece of paper and on the top of the sheet write: Love . . .

Then write this list of seven phrases:

Is a choice
Is nonreciprocal
Takes the initiative
Is intentional
Is sacrificial
Is unconditional
Is others-focused

This is how Jesus loves us—and then asks us to turn around and love others in the same way. Choose at least three of these phrases and next to each write the name of someone with whom you could share this kind of love this week. Then make a plan as to how you could accomplish each act of love.

When you do the above, some people in your world will know that Jesus loves them, because you have been there for them.

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