

The Communal Disciplines

A Practicum on Loving One Another

Love One Another

Love others as Christ has loved me.

The overarching question to ask is this:

What would others start to look like if I loved them the way Christ loved me?

This practicum contains:

- *Personal Study and Reflections*
- *Personal Practices*
- *Group Study*

Love One Another: (read through the "Love One Another" passages.)

- **1 John 3:11** For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.
- **John 13:34** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.
- **Romans 12:10** Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.
- **2 Thessalonians 1:3** We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.
- **1 John 4:12** No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.
- **2 John 1:5** And now I ask you, dear lady - not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning - that we love one another.
- **John 13:35** By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.
- **John 15:12** This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.
- **John 15:17** These things I command you, so that you will love one another.
- **1 Thessalonians 3:12** and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you,
- **1 Thessalonians 4:9** Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another,
- **1 Peter 1:22** Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,
- **1 Peter 4:8** Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.
- **1 John 3:23** And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.
- **1 John 4:7** Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.
- **1 John 4:11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.
- **Romans 13:8** Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

"...that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."

KNOW: *How has Christ loved you?*

Take some time to look at how Jesus loved people:

Self-sacrificial - 1 John 3:16 "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers." More than dying for his people, Jesus also gave himself to people often.

Forgiving - Matthew 26:28 "...for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." There are an incredible amount of references for Jesus teaching and practicing forgiveness.

Understanding - Luke 5:22; Matthew 9:4; Mark 2:8; Luke 6:8; etc... "Jesus knew what they were thinking..." Jesus knows the thoughts of the Pharisees, sinners, his disciples, etc... The testimony of the Samaritan woman at the well was this: "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did!" **John 4:29**

Realistic - Matthew 17:2, 26:37; Mark 5:37, 9:2, 13:3; Luke 9:26. There were times when Jesus limited himself to the 12 disciples, and times when Jesus only brought Peter, James and John to the transfiguration and to pray with him in the garden.

Intimate - John 14:20-21 "In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 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." Jesus invites his followers to experience the deep love that he shares with the Father.

Intentional - Mark 3:13-15 "And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons." - Jesus' love and calling always had a purpose and a mission.

BE: *How does Christ's love make you feel? What emotions/responses/thoughts are evoked at the thought of being "loved" by Jesus?*

Does Christ's definition/demonstration/example of love differ from how you define or demonstrate love? Where is it similar? Where is it different?

"Jesus loves me." Do you really believe that?

DO: *How, then, can you love one another?*

Practical Steps: The next several disciplines are the practical carrying out of what it means to "love one another." However, for the practical guide, let us walk through in both self-examination and with an eye toward intentionally practicing this type of love.

Love as a priority:

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

What (mentioned above) do you value more than love?

How can you make love a priority, a greater value, in each of these areas?

Characteristics of Love:

4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never ends.

How have you seen these modeled? How have you modeled them?

Which of these come easier for you? Which of these are very difficult for you?

Pursuing Love:

8b As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

What would it cost you to pursue love above all else?

What are the biggest challenges/obstacles to this pursuit?

Small Group Discussion:

OPENING

1. Before the group, think of people who have demonstrated love well, either to you or to others. Think of times when you've experienced love well. Think of times when you've had a hard time receiving love. Be ready to share experiences and stories of others who you have seen or have been the recipient of who have demonstrated love in a tangible way.
2. Ask everyone to share: What is something good that has happened this week that we can all rejoice in? What is something big on your plate this week that we can all pray for. Don't rush this time and be intentional about listening, hearing the stories, bearing each others' burdens, celebrating together. Ask questions, be interested, and make an effort and risk a certain level of vulnerability in your time of sharing.
3. Read through 1 Corinthians 13 above, out loud and with feeling.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are general concepts of "love" that you have seen? How are these similar and how are they different from what Paul writes in 1 Cor 13?
2. What characteristics of love do you feel better at demonstrating? What characteristics of love do you feel better at receiving?
3. What characteristics of love do you struggle at demonstrating? What characteristic of love do you struggle at receiving?
4. Share with each other stories of times that you have witnessed or experienced great love. How did it make you feel? What did it inspire in you?
5. Knowing and experiencing Christ's love are 2 varying thoughts, but they are both important. We can *know* that Christ has loved us, because it is his promise in Scripture for those who trust Him, while not presently experiencing what we think that should feel like. How have you both *known* and *experienced* Christ's love for you?

CLOSING

Tonight, being in this group and being heard, have you felt (even if it is only a small measure) "loved?" Why? How?

If so, take time to celebrate that. If not, were you craving more? Were your expectations off? Did other people not value you? Are you willing to share that you did not particularly feel loved and invite people to help find out why?

TAKEAWAY

1. Think about how you have seen, known, remembered and hopefully experienced love (even if only a small measure) in your time tonight.
2. Think and pray about the people in your family and in your gospel community and at Refuge that you can show love toward.

3. What can you do, intentionally, to show love and value to these people? Some will require greater depth and intentionality than others.

Greet One Another

Love others as Christ has loved me.

The overarching question to ask is this:

What would others start to look like if I loved them the way Christ loved me?

This practicum contains:

- *Personal Study and Reflections*
- *Personal Practices*
- *Group Study*

Greet One Another: (read through the "Greet One Another" passages.)

- **Romans 5:7** Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.
- **Romans 6:6** Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.
- **1 Corinthians 6:20** All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.
- **2 Corinthians 3:2** Greet one another with a holy kiss.
- **Peter 5:4** Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.
- **Ephesians 5:9** ...addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,

"Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you."

KNOW: How has Christ welcomed you?

Take some time to look at how Jesus greeted his disciples in these different settings:

Matthew 14:27; Mark 6:50; John 6:20 - Jesus walking on the water

Matthew 28:10 - The women at the tomb

Luke 24:36; John 20:19, 21, 26 - Jesus appearing to the disciples after His resurrection.

Luke 10:5 - Jesus sending out His disciples.

BE: How does Christ's welcome make you feel? What emotions/responses/thoughts are evoked at the thought of being "welcomed" by Jesus?

Consider hearing one of the following statements from Jesus, Himself: "Do not be afraid." "Fear not." "Peace be with you." How would you respond to Jesus?

DO: How, then, can you welcome/greet others?

Practical Steps:

1. *Constantly evaluate if you are living in harmony with brothers and sisters in Christ.*

*See "live in harmony," but for now, is there a hindrance of either sinning against or being sinned against that needs to be addressed, talked through, repented of and forgiven, with anyone?

2. *Make every effort to develop a sincere interest in others.*

This might take a lot of practice and intentionality. Make sure to listen to others and not just form responses.

3. *Consider the aspects of physical affection when greeting other Christians.*

Though there are several cultural boundaries to be aware of, physical touch (handshake, pat on the back, hand on the shoulder, hug, side-hug, etc...) with proper (holy) motivation, can be a great source of welcome and encouragement.

4. *Either work toward sincerity in the common, cultural greetings or develop a new greeting.*

If you ask someone, "How are you doing?" make sure to wait for and listen to the answer. Jesus always greeted in peace, the greeting "Peace be with you" or "peace to you" carries great potential as a way of greeting people.

Small Group Discussion:

OPENING

1. Before the group meeting, arrange to have several group members dress up (if possible) and greet other members according to the custom of different cultures. Here are some possibilities, but you can do other fun research!!:

Russian: Dress in a Russian cap and fur-trimmed coat. Greet arrivals with a bear hug and a kiss on the right cheek.

Eskimo: Dress in a hooded parka. Greet arrivals by holding both their arms below the shoulders and rubbing noses.

Asian: Dress in Asian clothing. Greet arrivals with a bow.

Corporate: Dress in a business suit. Greet arrivals with a brisk handshake.

2. Form teams of three. Have each team list what they consider to be the top five insincere or cliché greetings. Compare lists, awarding each team a point for every time one of their statements appears on another team's list.

Discuss: If you used one of these greetings only when you really meant it, how often would you say it? What purpose do these greetings serve if we really don't mean what we're saying?

FOR DISCUSSION

1. "Greet one another with a holy kiss..." Paul is not necessarily saying that we (today) should greet one another with a kiss as was custom in that culture, but he is saying that greeting one another is important. If Paul were writing the same commendation to Christians today, how might he word it? How would Paul suggest we greet one another?

2. What significance does the function of greeting have among a group of Christians? Why do you think it is important enough to merit mention five times in the New Testament?

3. Read Colossians 3: 12-14. How can Christians reflect this kind of relationship in our greetings? What forms might those greetings appropriately take?

4. What level of physical contact do you consider appropriate among Christians when they are greeting one another? In what situations would you consider more physical contact appropriate? How can you safeguard against abuse? Against being misunderstood?

5. What are the best ways you have seen or experienced people greeting each other?

CLOSING

Develop a group greeting that you can use when you see other group members. For example, you might like to combine a statement that each member of the group finds meaningful (something like "God be with you") with a gesture or embrace. Whatever you choose, talk through its significance so that it becomes a meaningful ritual for your group, not merely another cliché greeting. Use your greeting to close the meeting after praying together.

TAKEAWAY

1. What thought about "greeting one another" are you taking away from this gathering?

2. Think and pray about ways to greet other Christians in a way that is culturally acceptable, sincere and biblically encouraged.

3. What are the boundaries culturally and for you personally that should be in place for physical touch. How do you engage with more (but appropriate) physical affection with those close to you? How do you engage (modes and means) with encouraging and appropriate physical affection with others?

***info taken from Gene Getz Building Up One Another*

Encourage One Another

Love others as Christ has loved me.

The overarching question to ask is this:

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This practicum contains:

- Personal Study and Reflections
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- Group Study

Encourage One Another: (read through the "Encourage One Another" passages.)

- **Romans 12:10** Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor
- **1 Thessalonians 4:16-18** For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words
- **1 Thessalonians 5:11** Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.
- **Hebrews 10:24-25** And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

"Encourage one another and build one another up..."

KNOW: From where does our encouragement come?

In referring to the Holy Spirit, did you know another term for *Helper* is *Encourager*?

- **John 14:16-17** - And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another **Helper*, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."
- **John 15:26** - "But when the **Helper* comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me."
- **John 16:12-13**
- "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."

BE: What is the role of the Holy Spirit in you?

- In **John 14:25-30** the Holy Spirit teaches, reminds us of what Christ has said and brings us peace.
- In **Romans 8:1-17** the Holy Spirit gives life, helps us submit, helps us fight sin and temptation and reminds us that we are God's children (sons).
- In **Galatians 5:16-26** the Holy Spirit guides our steps, helps us obey and bears good fruit and compels us to encourage one another.

How is the Holy Spirit an encouragement to you? Your new identity? Your walk and value as a follower of Christ?

DO: What do we encourage others toward?

Hebrews 10:19-25

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Practical Steps:

1. Encourage in the Faith. It is important to know the basis of our encouragement that comes from Scripture. There are many encouragements that sound good and use "god-language" but are not from Scripture. "God will never give you more than you can handle" is not in the Bible. "God helps those who help themselves" is not in the Bible. "God wants you to be happy" is not even in the Bible. Our encouragement in the faith must be rooted in the faith and the grand story of the Bible. Encouragement rooted in the grand story can revolve around this:

- **Creation** - human worth and value is rooted in creation, every person is an image bearer of God, therefore, valuable. You can encourage people that their value and worth does not have to be earned, they are valuable because God created them. This is what should also compel us to value every person.
- **Rebellion** - sin is a self-delusion that we can find what we ultimately need from something other than God. It is something that has infected every person that taints our dependence on God. We often need reminding and rebuke to turn from our sin to trust God. As Jesus' illustration about "the log in our own eye." Identify with people as sinners, not as someone who is removed or above sin. Ask this question: "if this were my sin, what would be helpful for me to hear from someone?"
- **Redemption** - remind each other often that it is Christ's love for us that merits our trust in Him. He is not frustrated at us, though sometimes He is frustrated alongside us. Guilt is a terrible motive and does not produce long term change. "It is the kindness of the Lord that leads us to repentance." If someone opens up and repents to you, prize that! Be humbled that someone would risk embarrassment and shame to make themselves known to you. That is a tremendous honor! Remind each other that God's love is profound!
- **Restoration** - Encourage each other that our hope is not in a better tomorrow, but it is in a better *one day*. If God solved all of our problems today, we would have more tomorrow. Hope can be encouraged that *one day* God will make all things new. With that perspective, it allows us to face today and tomorrow for what they are, knowing that God's work will be completed.

2. The Holy Spirit can use anyone to encourage. Always be on the lookout and be aware of where encouragement can come from. It doesn't need to be from the pastor or from more "holy" people. Be sure to notice and look for encouragement everywhere and from everyone.

3. Be together! You cannot be encouraged nor can you encourage if you are absent from gathering with the body. You are needed. Your voice is needed.

4. Be intentional. Make a list of 10 people that you see and appreciate. Not always the pastor or people in front, but the people you see serving, struggling, faithful, etc... Write out things about them that are encouraging you. Tell them often of the little things you see that encourage you. Some of them can be the things they do, some of them can be general encouragements of God's design for them.

Small Group Discussion:

OPENING

Go around the room and share a time where people felt encouraged in a deep way by someone.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read **Ephesians 4: 14-16**. Why is it important to know, understand and use the Bible appropriately for encouragement? How have you experienced or seen this done poorly? How have you experienced or seen this done well?
2. How does the Church do at "encouraging one another" in our day? What is done poorly? What is done well? How can we get better?
3. What does it mean to have "the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3: 16)?
4. Why is it important to also use the Word of God sensitively? How can we "speak the truth in love" without making people feel we are using Scripture as a weapon—or even as a "club"?
5. What good experiences of encouragement from your past can you hold on to and need reminding of? What wounds and words of pain from your past do you need redeemed by the present community around you?

CLOSING

Write down the specific ways that other people would like to be encouraged. Also take note of wounds and words that have been harsh in other people's lives. Make a commitment to one another to encourage one another.

Pray together a prayer of encouragement and celebrate God's constant encouragement to us through the Holy Spirit.

TAKEAWAY

1. What thought about "encouraging one another" are you taking away from this gathering?
2. How will you specifically and intentionally practice encouraging the people in your group?

***small group discussion taken from Gene Getz *Building Up One Another**

Live in Harmony with One Another

Love others as Christ has loved me.

The overarching question to ask is this:

What would others start to look like if I loved them the way Christ loved me?

This practicum contains:

- *Personal Study and Reflections*
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Live in Harmony with One Another: (read through the "Harmony" passages.)

- **2 Corinthians 10:12** Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.
- **2 Corinthians 13:11** Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.
- **Galatians 5:15** But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.
- **Galatians 5:26** Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.
- **Ephesians 4:32** Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.
- **Romans 12:16** Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.
- **Romans 15:5** May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,
- **Colossians 3:9** Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices
- **James 5:9** Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.
- **1 John 1:7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.
- **Romans 14:13** Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.
- **James 4:11** Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.
- **Mark 9:50** Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus..."

KNOW: What does it mean to be "in Christ?" What does it mean to be the "body of Christ?"

The letters of Paul alone refer to being "in Christ" or "in Him" or "in the Lord" over 160 times, so it is important to understand what that means! **Gal 3:26-28** probably gives the best definition: "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." It is a completely different and most foundational new identity.

BE: Most of our dis-harmony revolves around preferences of what is acceptable or what makes us acceptable. If our new identity is “in Christ,” if He has achieved our acceptability, what does that do to our preferences?

Paul says in Philippians 2 that this mind is ours “in Christ.” What does a mind “in Christ” look like?

DO: How can we actively live in harmony with other Christians?

Practical Steps:

1. *Don't think too highly of yourself - Romans 12:3.* Be humble. To be “in Christ” is not have to prove yourself right. Be humbled by the fact that Jesus knows everything and you do not.
2. *Be quick to listen - James 1:19.* This can also be incorporated with “love as you want to be loved.” Everyone wants to be understood. Listen to others with the goal of understanding. Be careful not to form responses while you're supposed to be listening.
3. *Deal FIRST with the log in your own eye - Matthew 5:7.* Everyone has blind spots, when your identity is in Christ, you can invite people to help you see the issues in your life. When living in harmony, those issues allow you to approach other people carefully, with self-awareness and humility.
4. *See clearly - Matthew 5:7.* The goal is not to *not* judge. The goal is to judge in a manner that is helpful. What is necessary to move forward? Repentance and forgiveness? Agree to disagree? Further discussion to gain deeper understanding? Prayer for our enemy?
 1. If a situation involves repentance and forgiveness, it is an entire process to enter into together. Including counting the cost of what sin has been committed and what it has cost, righteous anger over what has been lost or forfeited and the offended eventually expressing the willingness to pay that cost for reconciliation to occur. This can be a long process. Community and mediation can help.
 2. Praying for your enemy is not just praying that they would change, it is pleading to God on their behalf.
5. *Agree in the Lord - Phil 4:2.* Do not demand that everyone must think like you, but find the greater commonality that you can live under. Christians hold differing views and differing passions while still under the Lordship of Christ. Learn to value the differences that create harmony while learning to work together in greater unity toward the mission.

Small Group Discussion:

BEFORE THE GROUP

You might survey the group and see if there is a hot-topic that people would like to explore. It might be theological, political or cultural. The trust level of the group can help determine the depth of the discussion and exactly how “hot” the topic should be. In his book *“Jesus Outside the Lines,”* Scott Sauls has several hot button issues where he explores the varying viewpoints.

OPENING

1. What groups or teams are you a part of (family, church, club, team, etc...)? Where amongst those groups do you see the most unity? What does it feel like?
2. What unifies these different organizations?
3. What does “harmony” look like within the church? Give some tangible examples of what you believe we should be looking for.

DISCUSSION

1. What are issues of disunity within the church? How do you see these exploited? Are there issues that you feel are worth dividing over?
2. Have you seen divisive issues that have been overcome? Have you experienced “harmony” amongst believers where there were differences?
3. Read Jesus’ prayer in John 17:20-25. Jesus prays this prayer with disciples from extremely various backgrounds. How do you feel reading Jesus’ prayer?
4. In vs 23, there is an element of supernatural and human submission that play a role in harmony. What must happen in the church to “become one in Christ?” What must happen in you?
5. What areas of your life and in the church can you labor toward harmony and unity? How can you make a difference?

CLOSING

Remember and reflect on areas of disunity that you have seen in the church: Where are the breakdowns in those areas? Read back over the areas that you have influence: How can you work toward understanding? How can you work toward the “one body” that we are promised in Christ? Read back over the practical steps in the first part of this study and examine the areas of your own participation in the church where you can change. And finally, Pray for unity!

TAKEAWAY

1. What are one or two thoughts about “living in harmony” you will take away from this gathering?
2. Think and pray about the areas of disunity and the areas under your influence. What can harmony look like?
3. What are specific things and people you can pray for?

**info taken from Gene Getz *Building Up One Another*

Bear with One Another

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Bear with One Another: (read through the "Bear With One Another" passages.)

- **Ephesians 4:2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,
- **Colossians 3:13** bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
- **Galatians 6:1** Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
- **James 5:16** Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.
- **1 Corinthians 6:7** To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?
- **Titus 3:3** For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.
- **Romans 12:5** so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another
- **Ephesians 4:25** Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved...Bear with each other..." Col 3:12-13

KNOW: *In Christ, you are holy and dearly loved.*

One of the hardest things for God's people to understand is that they are truly loved. Read through some of these passages, do they convince you?

- **John 3:16** *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*
- **Romans 5:8** *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
- **Galatians 2:20** *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God. Who loved me and gave himself for me.*
- **Ephesians 2:4-5** *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved—*
- **1 John 4:9-11** *In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*
- **Zephaniah 3:17** *The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.*

- **1 John 4:7-8** *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.*
- **1 Peter 5:6-7** *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*
- **Job 34:19** *who shows no partiality to princes, nor regards the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands?*
- **Psalms 86:15** *But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.*
- **1 John 3:1** *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.*
- **Deuteronomy 7:9** *Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations,*
- **Proverbs 8:17** *I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.*
- **Jeremiah 29:11** *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*
- **John 13:34-35** *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*
- **Psalms 136:26** *Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever.*
- **Romans 5:2-5** *Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*
- **Colossians 2:6-7** *Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.*
- **Hebrews 12:28-29** *Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.*

BE: Therefore...clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Grasping that we are loved not only enables us to clothe ourselves with these attributes of love, but it also reveals how Christ clothed Himself in order to love us. We can only give what we have, in Christ, received. How has Christ, in Scripture, and through others, demonstrated these attributes to you?

DO: Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.

Practical Steps:

1. *Evaluate yourself. Try to be very honest without being crushing. What are you critical of? What are your weaknesses? What are your idiosyncrasies? Consider the following areas:*

- What do I do or not do at home that irritates my family? (Spouse, kids, parents, siblings, roommates, etc...)
- What do I do or not do at work that irritates my coworkers?
- What do I do or not do at church that irritates my brothers and sisters in Christ?
- What do I do or not do that irritates my friends?

2. *Evaluate your attitude toward other Christians:*

- Do you expect more or less from others than you do from yourself?
- Do you criticize others in areas that you have weaknesses?

3. *Make a list of Christians (both specific people or 'types') that you have trouble relating to.*

- Make a list in a private journal.
- Go through the list and ask yourself "why do I have difficulty with these people?" Is it justified? Is there an action I can take? Is it something I need to address in myself? Have they hurt me? Do they remind me too much of my own weaknesses?

4. *Make efforts toward reconciliation:*

- What are things that need to be changed in me?
- How can I begin the process of forgiving those who have intentionally or unintentionally wounded me? (see 'process of forgiveness')

Small Group Discussion:

OPENING

1. Go around the room and list at least one pet peeve that you have about other people and one that you believe or know other people have about you.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read Matthew 18:23-35 out loud.

2. Where do you find yourself in this story? What emotions does this evoke in you? Sympathy? Anger? Guilt?

3. How are you like the servant when he was forgiven? When is a time that you have experienced or seen great forgiveness? Is there someone in your life that has shown you great patience? How did that affect you? How did it affect the way you see yourself?

4. How are you like the servant when confronting someone who owed him? Can you be demanding? Do you feel pressure? Do you justify your actions of vengeance while forgetting patience that has been shown to you? What happens in your heart in a case like this? Whether or not you say anything out loud, how do you see a person that *owes* you something?

5. How are you like the servant who was not forgiven? Have you ever had a debt held over you? Have you ever *not* experienced forgiveness in an area where you needed it? How did that affect you? How did that affect the way you see yourself and others?

6. What would it look like for you to *bear with* someone? To forgive them and exercise patience with them? What has it looked like for someone to *bear with* you? How can you proactively take a posture toward other people that lowers your tendencies to get annoyed with them and heightens your desires to show patience and grace?

CLOSING

Read these passages together:

Matthew 18:21-

22 Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” [22] Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Colossians 3:12-

15 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

Take 2 pieces of paper. On the first sheet of paper, write out any wounds or hurts that people have done to you that you have not forgiven them of yet. On the second sheet, write out a list of offenses that you have committed against God that you have not asked for forgiveness yet. Either in smaller groups or privately, take time to pray through these. Ask God for forgiveness and commit to addressing the list of people that you need to forgive.

TAKEAWAY

1. What thought about "bearing with one another" are you taking away from this gathering?
2. What are some intentional steps you will take this week to not get irritated with people and to work toward forgiveness with others? BEYOND THIS, PUSH TOWARD LOVING ONE ANOTHER, WANTING THE BEST, EMPATHY

**info taken from Gene Getz *Building Up One Another*

Serve One Another

Love others as Christ has loved me.

The overarching question to ask is this:

What would others start to look like if I loved them the way Christ loved me?

This practicum contains:

- *Personal Study and Reflections*
- *Personal Practices*
- *Group Study*

Serve One Another: (read through the "Serve One Another" passages.)

- **1 Peter 4:9** Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.
- **1 Peter 4:10** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:
- **1 Peter 5:5** Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."
- **1 Thessalonians 5:15** See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.
- **John 13:14** If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.
- **1 Corinthians 11:33** So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another —
- **1 Corinthians 12:25** that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.
- **Galatians 5:13** For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.
- **Ephesians 5:21** submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

"For you were called to freedom. Do not use your freedom as an opportunity to indulge the flesh, but to serve one another."

KNOW: *In Christ, you have been set free.*

Colossians 2:20-

23 *If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations*

"Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" (referring to things that all perish as they are used)— according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-

made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

Our "do's" and "do not's" are not what makes us righteous. Christ is what makes us righteous.

Therefore, we are freed from having to try to walk a balance beam of behavior to try to prove how righteous we are. So, in Christ, we have been freed from trying to appear good.

BE: *What does it really mean to "be free?"*

Colossians 3:1-

2 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

In Christ, we are actually *free* to be who God created us to be. We are actually free to love and serve and become the body of Christ.

DO: Use your freedom to serve one another!**Galatians 5:13-**

14 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

When Adam fell on our behalf, our focus became about "me." The whole law is fulfilled on first loving God as God, then loving our neighbor as if we were loving ourselves. The "do" is this: how would you want to be loved? take that and "do" that for the people around you.

Practical Steps:

What is fruit of selfish love vs fruit of serving others?

Gal 5:19-21 contains selfish, sinful love: *Sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, dissension, selfish ambition, factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies.*

Gal 5:22-23 contains fruit produced by the work of the Holy Spirit in us: *Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

1. Are there ways that we can serve others that really flows out of sinful, selfish desires? Why does that matter?
2. Ask yourself the following questions to see if you are A: serving others and B: serving others in love.
 1. How often do I serve others? How often am I served?
 2. What do I feel when I hear of others' needs? *compassion? guilt? obligation? love? anger? weight?* How do these different emotions affect how and who I serve?
 3. Why are guilt and obligation more sinful and selfish reasons to serve? What fruit do these motives bear when you serve? What would repentance look like for those to become redeemed reasons to serve others?
 4. How has Christ served you? What do you gain from Christ's service?
 5. The selfish desires might be hidden, but they can destroy you. Who can you ask to join you in prayer that you would A: serve others regularly, B: allow that service to reveal good and sinful desires, C: experience the Spirit's fruit in yourself and in others as you continue to serve.

Small Group Discussion:

OPENING

Go around the room and ask this question: *What is something that has brought you joy this week that we can celebrate? What is something you really need this week that we can pray for and maybe help with?*

2. Form groups of 3: If you could have a personal assistant, what are the top 3 things you would have them do for you? What, then, are the things that would allow you to do more of?

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read Gal 5:13: What is the relationship here between “freedom” and “serving” when it comes to being a Christian?

2. What are Christians actually “free” from? When and how do you experience this freedom? What are Christians “free” *for*? How do you develop and grow this freedom?

3. What are ways, specifically, that Christians can serve one another? How does the fruit of the spirit in Gal 5:22-23 impact why and how Christians ought to serve one another?

4. What are the biggest obstacles for you to serving others? What are the greatest opportunities?

5. How does Refuge do (or our group, more specifically) at serving one another? How can we, together, work toward serving each other and others at Refuge more specifically and “in love?”

CLOSING

TAKEAWAY

1. What was difficult for you in looking at "serving one another?"

2. What was helpful for you in this time?

3. What would be different about you serving *in love*? What would be most important? What fruit could that bear in your life? What obligations would that remove? What opportunities would that present?

4. Where, how and who can you serve this week? How can you prepare to serve more out of love?

**info taken from Gene Getz *Building Up One Another*

Teach and Admonish One Another

Love others as Christ has loved me.

The overarching question to ask is this:

What would others start to look like if I loved them the way Christ loved me?

This practicum contains:

- *Personal Study and Reflections*
- *Personal Practices*
- *Group Study*

Teach and Admonish One Another: (read through the “teach and admonish one another” passages.)

- **Romans 15:14** I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.
- **Colossians 3:16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
- **Hebrews 3:13** But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly”

KNOW: What is the “Word of Christ?”

Paul is not talking simply about the “words” Jesus said. Paul is talking about the message that points to Jesus, describes Jesus, tells us who Jesus is and what Jesus has done. This means the *whole* counsel of the Bible. We should be in God’s Word, knowing, listening, reading. We should be driven there by questions, fears, hopes, doubts, faithfulness, desire, joy and sin. God’s Word is not a magical reference book where we open it up to find the answers to the questions, it gives us, rather, the greater reality that we are actually a part of and calls us to fix our eyes there. Refer back to the personal disciplines for prayer, meditation and study.

BE: Let it “dwell in you richly.”

One of the things that is constantly overlooked in Scripture is the motive. It’s not simply that *what we know* leads to *what we should do*. There is a great necessity to examine the *why*. We don’t just read the Bible to know the Bible. We read the Bible to know and trust God, to follow Him and grow our faith in Him. To do that, we don’t just need to dwell in God’s Word, but have God’s word dwell deeply in us.

God’s word dwelling in us should:

1. Makes us aware of our sin. **Romans 7:7-8**
2. Enables us to trust Jesus. **2 Timothy 3:14-15**
3. Enables us to grow in our faith and trust of Jesus. **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

DO: Out of that, we teach and admonish one another with all wisdom.

How does the Word of Christ dwelling in us, then flow outward to teaching and admonishing one another?

As the Bible leads us to repentance and deeper trust, how do we, then, lead each other to repentance and deeper trust?

“Admonishing” means to “counsel” or “correct” each other. This is a strong part of teaching one another and when it is necessary, here are some elements that are necessary:

1. *Done with deep concern and love for the other.*

Paul wept for those who had left the faith. It is easy to correct someone to make ourselves feel better. Ask yourself, "What do I really want for this person? Do I love them enough to risk rejection?"

2. Must often be done face to face.

Paul says in 1 Thes. 2:11-12 that he has dealt with elders like a father deals with his own children. It is easy to generalize and it is easy to talk to other people about other people. When we want to help someone turn, grow and trust Jesus more, it needs to be personal.

3. Done with persistence.

Rarely is someone convinced, changed or grown after one encounter. It is often necessary to remind, encourage, rebuke, remind, love, confront, remind, and keep pressing, just as the Holy Spirit does with us.

4. Done with hope and love, not shame.

Most of us feel shame, so most of us motivate with shame. Shame changes no one for the better. In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul says "*I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children...*" Shame can only motivate out of fear and guilt, but it is the kindness of the Lord that leads us to repentance.

5. Done with the proper end goal.

Paul tells us in Colossians that he labors and toils to present all *mature in Christ*. The goal of teaching and instructing and even admonishment is restorative, not punitive. It is never the goal to punish someone, it is always the goal to help them grow. 1 Thessalonians reminds us to "*build one another up.*"

6. Done within the context of "one another."

There should always be guidance on obedience within the body of Christ. We should encourage each other often so that if/when correction is needed, it is a natural conclusion, not inconsistent with what is normally preached and practiced.

Practical PERSONAL thoughts toward proper teaching and admonishing:

1. Have I "*dealt with the log in my own eye*" first. Ask these questions to help:

- Are there sins in my life that are tainting my view of this person or this situation?
- Do I know what the Bible teaches about holiness and am I aware of what is sinful vs what might be a preference?
- Do I often approach others out of a deep love for them?
- Am I willing to talk to someone in private with discretion? Or am I tempted to be passive aggressive in a more public setting?
- How can I be persistent with someone without being obnoxious or overwhelming?
- Is my main motive to build others up?
- Do I really want to see others grow in their maturity in Christ?

2. Is there someone within the church from whom I should seek counsel? Gospel Community leaders? Elders?

3. Prayer.

Small Group Discussion:

OPENING

Have each person in the group respond to these questions:

1. My attitude about receiving constructive criticism is...

- No pain, no gain.
- Grin and bear it.
- Ignorance is bliss.

My attitude toward giving constructive criticism is . . .

- This is going to hurt me more than it hurts you.
- Let George do it!
- What goes around, comes around.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read **Romans 15:14** and **Colossians 3:16**. What is the relationship between “admonishing one another” and “accepting one another”? (Rom. 15:7)

2. How would you define “admonishing one another”? Give some specific examples to illustrate your definition.

3. Based on Romans 15:14, how confident are you of others at Refuge to admonish one another? How competent are you? Why must we “earn the right” to admonish someone else? How willing are you to offer admonition? How willing are you to receive it?

4. Read **Acts 20:31**. What was the meaning of Paul’s admonishing believers “in tears”? How can you keep your motivations in check? Why is personal admonition most effective? When should it move to involve the church as a whole?

5. Why is mutual admonition important to the body of believers? Is admonition at Refuge mainly preventive or mainly corrective? How has this small group been a form of “preventive admonishing” in your life?

CLOSING

Form triads and share your responses to Step 1 of “Practical PERSONAL thoughts toward proper teaching and admonishing.” As a group, challenge each other, encourage each other, and pray for each other. Remember to make this a place of trust!

TAKEAWAY

1. What thoughts about “teaching and admonishing” are you taking away from this gathering?

2. Are there current situations where you feel you should be more proactive in regards to teaching and admonishing?

3. Will you take time to work through the responses to Step 1 in these situations and with your own heart?

**info taken from Gene Getz *Building Up One Another*