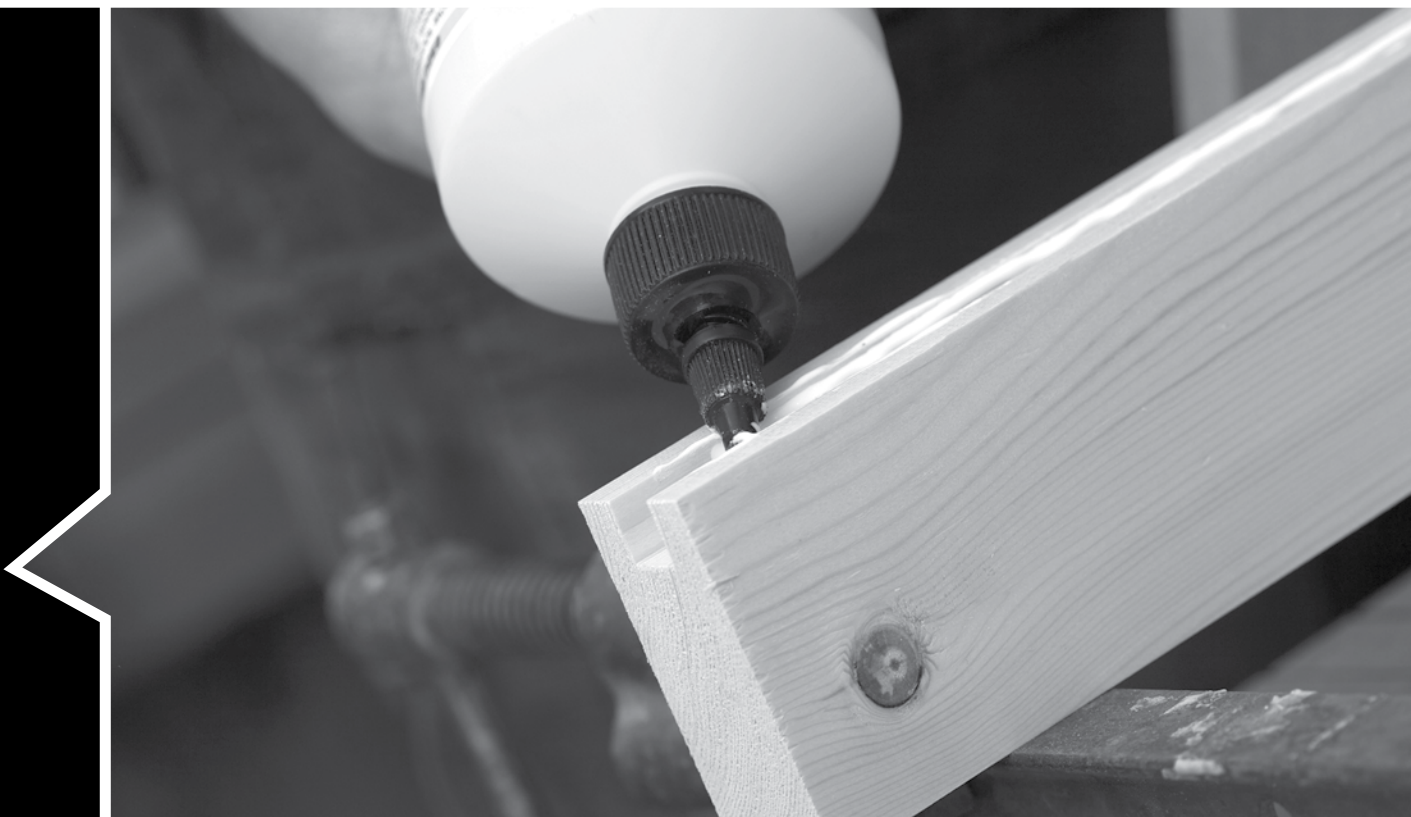


# LIKE GLUE: MAKING YOUR RELATIONSHIPS STICK



## ***Super Glue***<sup>®</sup>

It can fix just about anything. Dab a few drops of the sticky stuff on broken things, and suddenly those shattered pieces are bonded together, almost like magic.

What if there were a Super Glue<sup>®</sup> for fractured relationships? How much cash would you fork over for even a tiny tube of it?

- ▶ Do you have a friendship or two that needs some repair work?
- ▶ Over the years, has your marriage become mediocre?
- ▶ Does one of your children no longer visit or call?

You're not alone. At times we all struggle to keep our relationships intact.

In *Like Glue: Making Your Relationships Stick*, you won't find a coupon for a free tube of Super Glue.<sup>®</sup> You will discover practical principles for building lifelong, meaningful friendships with others. Relationships that have grown cold can be revived—with the right “bonding agent.”

Love, encouragement, forgiveness, service, humility, and acceptance—these six ingredients from Scripture can make your relationships stick like glue. Are you ready for a relational tune-up? Are you eager to see others draw closer to you? Apply these truths to your life and see what God can do through your obedience. Only He can create the bond with others that you've always longed for.

### *Ben Mandrell*

Ben Mandrell serves as a church planter with the North American Mission Board in Denver, Colorado. Previously, Dr. Mandrell was the pastor of Englewood Baptist Church in Jackson, Tennessee. Ben loves pouring into people and watching the unique way that God's Word transforms their lives.

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# SESSION 9

# STICK WITH LOVE

## ***The Point***

Let love permeate every relationship.

## ***The Bible Meets Life***

We've probably all heard someone say, "I love him, but I don't like him." In that attitude, we treat love as some sort of concept we are required to embrace—especially with relatives—but there are no concrete, day-to-day expressions of love. Yet the starting point for any strong relationship is love, love that is expressed in both attitudes and actions. Jesus modeled this kind of love for us, and calls us to do the same.

## ***The Passage***

John 15:9-14

## ***The Setting***

Time was short. Jesus and 11 of the apostles remained in the upper room. Jesus had just observed the last supper and washed the feet of His closest followers. Judas Iscariot had already departed to make whatever final preparations remained for his betrayal of Jesus. All too soon the time to depart for Gethsemane would arrive. Jesus rehearsed for the apostles the most important matters, including the need to love others as He had loved them.

## **GET INTO THE STUDY**



**10 minutes**

**GUIDE:** Direct attention to the contents page in the **Personal Study Guide ([PSG], p. 3)**.

Show a bottle of glue.

**SAY:** "For the next six sessions we will discover how to make our relationships stick."

**(ENHANCEMENT: Pack Item 7: "Like Glue.")**

**GUIDE:** Direct the group to look at the picture (see p. 106; [PSG], p. 106).

**DISCUSS: Question #1 (PSG, p. 106): What foods do you like straight out of the oven?**

**GUIDE:** Direct attention to **The Bible Meets Life (PSG, p. 107)**. Note the illustration about stale bread and how easy it is to allow our relationships to grow stale. Stress that love is what keeps our relationships fresh.

**GUIDE:** Introduce **The Point (PSG, p. 107): Let love permeate every relationship.**

**SAY:** "Let's study Jesus' words about love from John 15."

## STUDY THE BIBLE

*John 15:9-10*

10 minutes

**TIP:** Maintain for all six sessions a display of your bottle of glue or different kinds of glue. This can help remind the group to do what it takes to make their relationships stick.

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read John 15:9-10.

**SAY:** “Love for others must be grounded in God’s love.”

**SUMMARIZE:** Note Ben Mandrell’s illustration about his coffee maker that flashed the message: **“YOUR TANK IS LOW”** (PSG, p. 108). Acknowledge humorously that it can be quite a crisis if the coffee isn’t ready when our group meets.

Note that Ben wrote, **“I poured in so that something beautiful would pour out.”**

*John 15:9-10*

**9** “As the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you. Remain in My love.

**10** If you keep My commands you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commands and remain in His love.

**KEY WORD: Remain** (v. 9)—A believer’s continual connection to Christ, like branches to a vine, is necessary for spiritual health and yields the fruit of love for others.

*Love for others is to be grounded in God’s love.*

*Verse 9:* In the preceding passage, John 15:1-8, Jesus used the word picture of a vine and its branches to teach His followers that the Christian life cannot happen without a continual life-giving connection to Him. Though Jesus’ use of that word picture ends at verse 8, the underlying idea continues into verses 9-14—the crucial importance of remaining in Him. Beginning at verse 9, the connection between Jesus and believers is described as a loving relationship. The constancy of the relationship Jesus shares with the Father is the model for the relationship He wants to share with believers.

The meaning of **love** in the New Testament is rich and deep like the sound of the many instruments of a symphony orchestra playing together to create beautiful music. The Gospel of John has an important part to play in giving us a complete understanding of love. First, in the Gospel of John, love begins in God. In Christ, God sent love to earth to show His glory and to save lost people. Second, John teaches us that Jesus is the supreme example of love. Jesus revealed the true meaning of love in what He taught, and He exemplified true love in the life He lived. Third, love is the quality that Christ commands of His followers in how they relate to one another and to the lost.

Both usages of the word **loved** in verse 9 are in a form that describes an action that has already been completed

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in the past. Jesus spoke of the Father's love for Him in the past tense because their relationship had been complete from eternity. Jesus has always lived in perfect love with the Father. Jesus also spoke of His love for believers as a gift already given in its completeness. Jesus was so sure that He would complete His saving work that He spoke of it as though it were already done.

The central command of verse 9 is to **remain** in Christ's love. Just as a branch draws life from the vine, the believer draws life from Christ. *Remain* is used in the New Testament to celebrate God's faithfulness and the eternal truth of His Word (Rom. 9:11). In this spiritually turbulent world, Christ invites us to find in Him a source of faithful love and enduring truth. Believers can remain in Christ's love because Jesus doesn't change. He remains the eternal Son of God, the Word who became flesh and brought God's love to us.

**Remain** has the urgent sense of "you must remain in my love," for there is no other way the Christian's life can be faithful and fruitful. The absolute necessity of continual connection to Christ harkens back to the image Jesus used earlier in this chapter, of Himself as the vine and believers as branches. The strength of a loving relationship makes a more abundant life possible on a human level. How much more will an abiding relationship with Christ empower the believer to live more faithfully.

Though the believer's abiding relationship to Christ is intensely personal, it is by no means private. Those who have experienced the love of Christ can and must express that love in their relationships with others. Love toward others is the truest evidence of abiding in Christ. Verse 10 teaches us how that love for others will be expressed.

Who we love and how we live are always connected. We experience this on the level of human friendships. When you love someone, you take seriously what the other person takes seriously, and you choose your behavior accordingly. Professing to love someone but not guiding your life by that love would be an empty and meaningless claim.

*Verse 10:* In verse 10, Jesus drew the connection between love and obedience. Once again, He used His relationship with the Father as a model for our relationship with Jesus as He spelled out more specifically the results of a relationship

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**SUMMARIZE:** Explain that in John 15, Jesus made it very clear that we find an immense reservoir of love in God.

We must drink deeply from the Father's supply of love if we ever hope to pour His love into the lives of others.

The quality of our relationships with other people will always be tied to the quality of our relationship with God.

**GUIDE:** Direct attention to the word *remain* in verse 9. Invite a volunteer to read the information found in the **KEY WORD** feature (**PSG, p.108**).

Note in verse 10 how tight the connection is between love and obedience: "If you keep My commands you will remain in My love" (v. 10).

Emphasize that if we obey Christ, then we will feel the full force of His affection. Jesus will not love us more—we are already completely loved by God—but we will more deeply know and experience His love.

**SUMMARIZE:** Remaining in Jesus' love is the key to successful and fulfilling relationships. His followers must adopt His values and follow His voice. When we ignore the Holy Spirit's direction and go our own way, we are disobedient, and we sour our relationships.

**SAY:** "We must stay close to the Lord and let nothing become more important than loving, trusting, and obeying Him."

**DISCUSS: Question #2**  
(PSG, p. 111): **What do we expect from the people who love us?**

*(Alternate: How would you describe the connection between "remaining in love" and "obeying commandments"?)*

**TRANSITION:** "Since God is the source of our love for others, our love for others must mirror Jesus' love for us."

of constant, trusting love. Jesus and the Father share a perfect and eternal love. His abiding love for the Father led Jesus to obey the Father's will completely. One of our clearest examples of the connection between Jesus' love for the Father and His obedience to the Father's will came in the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus agonized with the terrible cost of bringing salvation to a lost world. While pleading with God to give Him some other way to fulfill His saving mission, Jesus surrendered His life to obey God's plan, no matter what the cost (Matt. 26:36-46). In the same way, Jesus said the believer's abiding relationship with Him will lead the believer to obey His commands—to trust Him enough to choose faithfulness to His mission no matter what the cost.

The word **commands** is plural in verse 10. Later, in verse 12, Jesus will speak of one central command, the command to love. The use of the plural here may help us understand another important truth about Jesus' obedience to the Father and ours to Christ. While the cross was Jesus' greatest moment of sacrificial obedience to God's saving will, it was by no means the first or the only. Every day Jesus lived, He poured out His life in obedience to God's call. He obeyed God's commands by reaching out to sinners, welcoming and blessing children, touching and healing broken lives, enduring the trick questions and selfish motives of religious leaders, telling stories that made God's truth clear to the minds of common people, even sitting down to eat with the ones the self-righteous rejected. Jesus obeyed the Father's commands every day in every relationship. In the same way, believers may face some climactic moment of decision in which we pay a great price for great faithfulness; but we, like Jesus, will keep the commands in a daily walk with Him and in a variety of ways as we encounter people with all kinds of needs who need God's love expressed in ways they can experience and understand.

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## John 15:11-12

11 “I have spoken these things to you so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.

12 This is My command: Love one another as I have loved you.

### *Love for others is to mirror Jesus’ love for us.*

*Verse 11:* In verse 11, Jesus took another step in describing a life of love. He has already taught us that the believer remains in a loving relationship with Jesus that is expressed as obedience to His commands. Now He added that He calls us to a life of loving obedience so that we may experience **joy**. Jesus does not call His followers to a life of duty and drudgery. He calls us to the only way of life that leads to genuine joy. This calling runs counter to our culture, which often equates happiness with resisting and rejecting any costly commitment. Jesus’ teaching corrects this misunderstanding by helping us see that deep joy comes only through deep commitment. Jesus’ call might be compared to that of a music teacher who invites a young musician to become his or her student and then challenges the student to take on the daily discipline of study and practice. Only the student who obeys the teacher’s instructions will know the joy of mastering the instrument and playing the most challenging and beautiful music. Only the disciple who, out of love for Jesus, is obedient to His commands will experience the kind of joy Jesus knew already; He calls it **My joy**, the joy of bringing salvation to a lost world.

Prior to 15:11, the word **joy** appears only twice in the Gospel of John (both in 3:29). Beginning with this verse, Jesus used the word *joy* seven times before His arrest and crucifixion. The closer Jesus got to the cross, the more He spoke of the joy He experienced in doing God’s will and the more clearly He called us to follow Him in obeying God so that we might share the joy of living with spiritual purpose. The more faithfully we take up our crosses, through our obedience to Christ’s commands, the more His joy will be in us. The same Greek word used in verse 9 to describe the

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## STUDY THE BIBLE

### John 15:11-12



10 minutes

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read verses 11-12.

**GUIDE:** Note the humorous statement in the opening paragraph of the PSG about a person who claims to know Christ **“but forgot to inform his face” (PSG, p. 111).**

Ask for a show of hands from group members who have known this kind of person (no names please).

Acknowledge that consistent scowls and grimaces on a Christian’s face don’t go with the joy Jesus talked about in verse 11.

Jesus had already told His followers that remaining in His love would be expressed in obedience. Now He explained that this life of loving obedience would result in joy.

**SAY:** “Obeying Jesus is not a grim, teeth-clenching exercise. Living in Christ should produce joy in the heart!”



**DISCUSS: Question #3**  
**(PSG, p. 112): How does our joy or lack of joy impact our relationships with others?**

**SUMMARIZE:** Call attention to verse 12. Note the love of Jesus must never be bottled up. It must flow in and out of us: "This is My command: Love one another as I have loved you."

Stress that Jesus expects His followers to love others in the same way He has loved us. Write the statements below on a board or large sheet of paper.

- He gave.
- He forgave.
- He pardoned.
- He was gracious, kind, merciful, sacrificial, and intentional.

Help the group understand that when believers love people as Jesus does, we begin to break down their defenses. Even cynics' hard hearts can begin to soften up when they encounter Jesus' love through us.

believer's abiding in Christ is used in verse 11 to describe Christ's joy dwelling in the hearts of obedient believers. As we abide in Christ and obey His commands, His joy, the joy of a life of spiritual significance, abides in us.

When will the believer's joy be **complete**? When Jesus spoke these words to His disciples, the joy they experienced by obeying Christ's commands to express their love for Him was real and life-changing. Their joy, however, would become more complete when they witnessed Jesus' resurrection and saw another step in His saving work completed. The joy that comes to believers today by loving and obeying Christ is genuine, but is only a foretaste of the joy we will share when Christ returns and completes His saving work by taking us to heaven. Salvation is real the moment we trust Christ. We are made more like Christ as we grow through sanctification. Our salvation will come to completion when Christ returns. In the same way, Christian joy is real today, will grow as believers join Christ in His saving work, and will come to completion when we see Him face to face.

*Verse 12:* The many commands of verse 10, the many ways we obey and serve Christ as an expression of our abiding love for Him, are all rooted in one central command that Jesus gave in verse 12. He called it **My command** because it was His not only through the words He was about to speak, but through the life He now lives among His followers. Jesus embodied the power of keeping this commandment and gave His followers an example of a life fully dedicated to answering its call. He asked nothing of His disciples that He had not already given them by serving them and, soon, by sacrificing His life for them. In giving His central commandment, Jesus restated the new commandment He gave in John 13:34 almost word for word.

In making love for fellow Christians the central command to His followers, Jesus reminds us that the internal life of the church cannot be separated from its mission to the world. The church can be no more effective in fulfilling its mission than it is loving within its fellowship. The love believers have for one another is the clearest evidence and most powerful witness that they are Jesus' disciples (John 13:35).

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Christians are called to love one another in the same way Jesus loves them. This means that a Christian loves not only those deserving of love, but all of those within the fellowship of believers, lovable or not. This command parallels Jesus call to a “perfect” love—a love for all people—that imitates God’s love for all humanity (Matt. 5:43-48). This commandment is simple to understand and incredibly difficult to carry out. Only by abiding in Christ and depending on His presence and strength is obeying this command possible.

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## **John 15:13-14**

**13** No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends.

**14** You are My friends if you do what I command you.

***Love for others means sacrifice.*** Verse 13: Jesus connected His sacrificial love for sinners with the costly love believers must have for one another. Knowing what His love for us would demand of Him and wanting us to understand what the command to love might require of us, Jesus gave in verse 13 a clear definition of the love He spoke of in verse 12. Love, said Jesus, is voluntarily laying down one’s life for others.

Jesus had already spoken of and demonstrated this kind of love. He had told His disciples that He is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep (John 10:11,15-18). The word **for** means on behalf of, in place of, or as a substitute for. The picture is that of a criminal who is about to be punished when, just as the blow is about to fall, a friend throws his body over the criminal and takes the punishment in the guilty one’s place. Knowing He soon would die on the cross, Jesus held up His own life as an example of the greatest sacrifice love can demand. Christ’s followers, then and now, must be prepared to lay down life itself for the sake of the gospel.

For most Christians, laying down one’s life does not happen in one great act of sacrifice. Most often, loving others demands countless moments of small sacrifice, laying down

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**DISCUSS: Question #4**  
**(PSG, p. 113): How have you experienced the joy of loving others as Christ loves you?**

*(Alternate: What does this passage tell us about God’s design for our group?)*

**TRANSITION:** “The love of Jesus flowing through us to others often does not work at our convenience. This kind of love sacrifices for others.”

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## **STUDY THE BIBLE** **John 15:13-14**



**10 minutes**

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read verses 13-14.

**SAY:** “Jesus set the price high, defining love by supreme sacrifice. The way to build a relationship is often through pain and suffering.”

**GUIDE:** Emphasize the amount of pain we are willing to endure for another person is often the measure of our love for him or her.

Call attention the image of the firefighters on **PSG page 114**. Comment that sacrificial love can often feel like going through the fire for another person.

**SUMMARIZE:** Explain that for most Christians, laying down one's life does not happen in one great act of sacrifice. Most often, loving others demands countless moments of small sacrifice, laying down position and status to serve others in the spirit of Jesus.

Some Christians may lay down life itself in a moment of great sacrifice for Christ. Every Christian is called to lay down life by giving it away, one moment at a time, in listening, teaching, coaching, helping, witnessing, and serving the needs of others in Christ's name.

position and status to serve others in the spirit of Jesus. The disciples saw this kind of love in action as Jesus laid down His garments and clothed Himself as a servant, taking up a towel and basin of water to wash their feet (13:1-17). Some Christians may lay down life itself in a moment of great sacrifice for Christ. Every Christian is called to lay down life by giving it away, one moment at a time, in listening, teaching, coaching, helping, witnessing, and serving the needs of others in Christ's name.

*Verse 14:* Jesus' calling us His **friends** is a powerful revelation of the relationship He offers us, but it is a truth that is easily misunderstood. Some are tempted to confuse the friendship Jesus offers with an irreverent familiarity with Jesus that makes Him "one of us." A careful understanding of John's use of this word will keep us away from this error. The Gospel of John first uses the word *friend* to describe the special honor bestowed on the man chosen to be best man of a bridegroom (3:29). Though honored to be chosen and blessed to share the joy of the wedding, the best man is a servant who works hard to support the bridegroom and make the wedding as perfect as possible. He never sees himself as equally important as the bridegroom. John the Baptist used this word to describe his relationship to Jesus. John saw his ministry as being like the work of a best man. He was honored by being chosen to play a part in Jesus' ministry, but John understood that his job was to serve Jesus humbly and point others to Him. Christians are blessed beyond measure that Jesus, through His saving work and His call to discipleship, has chosen us to be His friends, but this is not a friendship between equals. He remains the Lord. Our friendship with Him is found in our willingness to do what He commands, specifically to love one another in the way He has loved us. Like John the Baptist, Christians are to work, seeking no glory for ourselves, but pointing others to Christ and His invitation to find life in Him.

True friendship with Jesus leads to action. Jesus said that we are wise if we hear His teachings and put them into practice (Matt. 7:24-27). Calling Him "Lord" must be matched by doing God's will (v. 21). Friendship with Jesus is an inward

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experience of His abiding love, but that personal relationship must be expressed in a lifestyle of obedience to His call, a daily demonstration that what matters to Jesus matters to us as His followers. We reveal true friendship with Jesus when we obey His command to love others. The world will know we are Christians—friends of Jesus abiding in His love and obedient to His call—by our love.

ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO/LOUISE KOHL SMITH

## BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR



At Ephesus, the Church of St. John.

The following excerpt is from the article, “Love In John’s Writings” (Sum. 2011), which can be purchased at [www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator](http://www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator).

“The verb *agapao* occurs throughout ancient Greek literature; the noun *agape* appears primarily, however, in biblical literature. The term [occurs 30 times] in John’s writings. Additionally, more than half of all

the New testament occurrences of the verb *agapao* (143 times) appear in John’s writings (72 times). By his prominent use of these two words for love, the apostle set out to describe his unique understanding of the nature of God’s love and the importance for Christ’s followers to practice love.”

Read “Jesus’ Teaching About Love” in the Spring 2015 issue. A previous article, “Abide: The Meaning” (Winter 1999-2000), can be found on the DVD in the Leader Pack or can be purchased at [www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator](http://www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator). Look for Bundles: Bible Studies for Life.

Subscribe to *Biblical Illustrator* at [www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator](http://www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator), or call 1-800-458-2772.

**DISCUSS: Question #5**  
(PSG, p. 115): **When have you experienced the power of sacrificial love?**

(Alternate: What opportunities do you have to lay down your life for others?)

**DO:** Ask volunteers to share their responses to the activity, “Pour In, Pour Out” (PSG, p. 115).

## SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

**All people want to experience love. The power to receive love and share it begins only when we accept the love of Christ, which He exhibited so profoundly in His life, and ultimately, in His death for us on the cross.**

Each week, make yourself available either before or after the session to speak privately with anyone in your group who wants to know more about becoming a Christian. See the article, “Leading Someone to the Greatest Decision of All,” on page 2 for guidance in leading a person to Christ.

## LIVE IT OUT



5 minutes

**DO:** Emphasize **The Point:**  
**Let love permeate every relationship.**

**GUIDE:** Review **Live It Out** (PSG, p. 116; see text to the right). Encourage group members to consider which application option God is calling them to adopt this week.

**Wrap It Up**

**GUIDE:** Remind the group that relationships without love can become stale and dry. But with love, relationships are continually made fresh.

**PRAY:** Ask God for help in recognizing where we have failed to show love and for strength to love one another as He has loved us.

## LIVE IT OUT

Have any of your relationships gone stale? Or is one beginning to? Consider at least one of these ideas that can boost your level of love in the lives of others. Which fits best with where you are in your spiritual life today?

- ▶ **Let love go.** Are you holding back your love in any relationship? Read John 15:9-14 again. Identify one verse that speaks to you in a special way about how God would have you move forward in this relationship. Confess to God today any lack of love on your part, and pray for His strength to let love begin permeating this relationship.
- ▶ **An unexpected gift.** Think of someone in your life who may feel unloved. Offer a gift to show your love to him or her. Attach a simple note expressing your love and an offer to get together for coffee or lunch.
- ▶ **Sacrifice something.** Give up something this week that hinders a relationship from being strong. For example, if golf gets in the way of your time with family or someone who regularly needs you, sell your golf clubs! Or give a favorite piece of furniture to a young mom just getting started. Be creative, as you sacrificially love.

Like the heel of a loaf of bread, our relationships can become stale, hard, and flat. Love requires continual refreshment to remain healthy.



## My Thoughts

## My Group's Prayer Requests

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**Additional suggestions for specific groups** (women, men, boomers, and singles) are available at [BibleStudiesForLife.com/blog](http://BibleStudiesForLife.com/blog).

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit [MinistryGrid.com/web/BibleStudiesForLife](http://MinistryGrid.com/web/BibleStudiesForLife).

## Healing Love



When Gage was 3, I received the news that he was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). My initial response was one of deep sadness and despair. Family members go through stages of grief when a child is diagnosed with autism. Some get stuck there. Others move from grief to action and later to acceptance and hope. It is a journey, and each navigates the road differently.



To continue reading “Healing Love” from *Mature Living* magazine, visit [BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles](http://BibleStudiesforLife.com/articles), and enter the article title in the search bar. Or use your smartphone to access the article directly by scanning the QR code.

