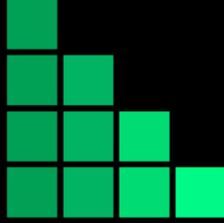


# NEW LIFE ONE STUDIES



Series: “Following The Way”

Week 7 Study Guide

Message: “The Way Is Love.”

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## SCRIPTURE

Main Text:	Cross References:
<i>John 13:34–35</i> <i>John 17:20–23</i>	<i>1 John 3:16</i> <i>Romans 5:5</i> <i>Ephesians 5:21</i> <i>Philippians 2:5</i> <i>John 13:3–5, 14</i>

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## UNDERSTANDING THE STORY

*(This section focuses on understanding what the text means —  
before jumping to what it means for us.)*

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**Read John 13:34**

**Main Idea:** Jesus establishes love as the defining command of the new covenant community.

**Commentary:**

This command is given in the upper room on the night before the crucifixion. In Scripture, farewell discourses carry weight. Jesus is not adding a suggestion to their spiritual lives — He is establishing the defining ethic of His people.

The command is “new” not because love was absent in the Old Testament (see: *Leviticus 19:18*), but because the standard has now been clarified and embodied. No longer is love measured “as yourself,” but “as I have loved you.” The reference point shifts from self to Christ. This anticipates the cross, where love will be displayed in its fullest expression.

The Greek term **agapē** (love) communicates covenantal, self-giving love rooted in commitment. It is not reactive or emotional; it is volitional and sacrificial. Jesus is defining the atmosphere that must characterize the post-resurrection community.

**Discussion Question:**

1. What does the phrase “as I have loved you” add to the command that was not present in *Leviticus 19:18*?
2. How does the timing of this command (on the eve of the crucifixion) deepen its meaning?
3. What does the use of a command reveal about the centrality of love in discipleship?

**Takeaway:**

*Jesus Himself becomes the new and ultimate standard for love.*

***(Cross Reference: 1 John 3:16)***

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***Read John 13:35***

**Main Idea:** Love is the primary identifying marker of authentic discipleship.

**Commentary:**

Jesus declares that love will serve as the identifying mark of His followers. The phrase “*by this everyone will know*” speaks of *recognition* and *distinction*. In the ancient world, disciples were identified by imitation of their rabbi. *Jesus makes love the distinguishing feature of His disciples.*

Notice what He does not say. He does not point to theological precision, spiritual gifting, or institutional strength as the primary marker. Love becomes the apologetic of the church. This does not diminish truth — it demonstrates that *truth must be embodied relationally.*

Love is both internal evidence (proof of transformation) and external witness (proof to the world). The credibility of the message depends on the consistency of the community.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Who does Jesus say will observe and identify His disciples?
2. What does this verse imply about the relationship between belief and behavior?
3. Why might Jesus elevate love above other potential identifiers?

**Takeaway:**

*Love is not only a command to obey but evidence that someone truly belongs to Jesus.*

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**Read John 17:20–23**

**Main Idea:** Unity among believers reflects the nature of God and validates the gospel message.

**Commentary:**

This prayer extends beyond the twelve to ***all future believers***. That includes us. Unity is not peripheral to Jesus' mission — it is central to it.

Jesus grounds unity in the relationship between the Father and the Son: “just as you are in me and I am in you.” This points to the theological reality of divine unity of the Father, Son and Spirit — our triune God. Jesus prays that believers would reflect that relational oneness. The unity Jesus describes is relational, supernatural, and rooted in shared participation in God's life.

The phrases “*so that the world may believe*” and “*so that the world may know*” reveal that unity has evangelistic implications. The unity of believers serves as visible confirmation of the truth of Jesus' identity and mission. This means unity is not merely about internal harmony but about external witness.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Who specifically does Jesus say He is praying for in verse 20?
2. What comparison does Jesus use to describe the unity He desires?
3. What purpose does Jesus give for this unity in verses 21 and 23?
4. How does Jesus connect unity with the world's belief and knowledge?

**Takeaway:**

*The way believers love each other helps the world see and believe in Jesus.*

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## **Read Romans 5:5**

**Main Idea:** True love originates in believers from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

### **Commentary:**

Paul teaches that God's love "has been poured into our hearts." The tense indicates a completed action with ongoing effect. Love is not something believers strive to manufacture; it is something God has already implanted through the Spirit.

This connects love directly to new life in the Spirit. The Spirit mediates God's love into the believer's heart, making Christlike love possible. Without the Spirit, unity collapses into performance. With the Spirit, *love becomes fruit*.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What does the phrase "poured into our hearts" suggest about the abundance of God's love?
2. How does this verse ground love in divine initiative rather than human effort?
3. Why is the role of the Holy Spirit essential in conversations about unity?

### **Takeaway:**

*Christlike love flows from the Spirit's work within us.*

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## **Read Ephesians 5:21**

**Main Idea:** Unity grows through humility and mutual submission.

**Commentary:**

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” This verse serves as a heading for the relational instructions that follow in Ephesians. Submission here is mutual — it describes a community posture, not a hierarchy. The motivation is crucial: **“out of reverence for Christ.”** The word reverence implies awe-filled recognition of Jesus’ lordship. When Christ is rightly exalted, self-exaltation diminishes. Submission is not weakness; it is strength expressed through humility.

In the broader context of Ephesians, unity is something believers are called to “maintain” (see: *Ephesians 4:3*), not create. The Spirit has already established it. Submission protects it.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What motivates mutual submission according to this verse?
2. How does mutual submission differ from forced hierarchy?
3. How does reverence for Christ reshape relational dynamics within the church?

**Takeaway:**

*Reverence for Jesus produces humility toward one another.*

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**Read *Philippians 2:1–8***

**Main Idea:** The pattern for unity is the self-emptying humility of Christ.

**Commentary:**

Paul appeals to shared participation in Christ (*“if you have any encouragement... any common sharing in the Spirit”*). Unity flows from **shared identity**. He then commands believers to adopt a specific mindset: *humility that considers others above oneself*. The

theological foundation follows in what many scholars consider an early Christian hymn (verses 6–11).

Christ, though existing in the form of God, did not exploit His status. Instead, He “emptied Himself” (kenōsis), taking the form of a servant and humbling Himself to death on a cross. This downward movement defines the pattern of Christian love.

The logic is clear: if the eternal Son moved downward in humility, how can His followers cling to status, preference, or pride? Unity is protected when believers imitate the self-giving posture of Jesus.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What motivations for unity does Paul list in verses 1–2?
2. What specific attitudes does Paul command in verses 3–4?
3. How does Christ’s example in verses 6–8 ground Paul’s call to humility?
4. What does the “downward movement” of Christ teach about greatness in God’s kingdom?

**Takeaway:**

*Christian unity is sustained when believers imitate the humility of Jesus.*

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**Read John 13:3–5, 14**

**Main Idea:** Secure identity enables sacrificial service.

**Commentary:**

John emphasizes Jesus' authority and origin before describing His act of foot washing. "*Jesus knew...*" That knowledge fuels humility. Because He was secure in His relationship with the Father, His authority, His identity, and His future, He did not need to grasp for status.

Foot washing was reserved for the lowest servant. By taking the towel, Jesus redefines greatness. Authority in God's kingdom expresses itself through service.

When Jesus commands His disciples to do likewise, He establishes servanthood as normative Christian behavior.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why does John highlight Jesus' authority before describing His humility?
2. What does this reveal about the relationship between identity and service?
3. How does Jesus move from example to command in this passage?

**Takeaway:**

*When identity is secure in Jesus, Christians find the freedom to lower themselves and express love through humble service.*

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## **MAKE IT PERSONAL**

1. Jesus says love is the evidence. If someone evaluated your life only by your relationships, would they clearly see Christ?

2. Where are you tempted to protect status, preference, or pride instead of walking in humility?
  3. Are you being shaped more by Jesus or by something else? (*Social media, influencers, friends, etc*).
  4. What would it look like this week to “wash feet” in a specific relationship?
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## LIVING IT OUT

1. **Submit to the Spirit.** Ask the Holy Spirit to cultivate humility in you.
  2. **Choose humility.** Practice putting others first — listening, honoring, and serving even when it’s difficult.
  3. **Protect unity.** Refuse to participate in division, gossip, or cynical conversations. Pursue peace and reconciliation.
  4. **Love through action.** Look for practical ways to serve, encourage, and care for others this week.
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***For LifeGroups:***

## ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER

**Share:**

1. Where is God challenging you to grow in love right now?
2. When have you experienced Christlike love from another believer?

**Pray together:**

Ask the Holy Spirit to form Christlike love in your hearts. Pray that your group and church would be marked by humility, unity, and sacrificial love. Ask God to help your lives reflect Jesus so clearly that others are drawn to Him through your love.