

5-Day Devotional: They Will Know

Day 1: The Marker of a Disciple

Reading: John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:20-21

Devotional: Jesus didn't leave us guessing about how the world would recognize His followers. The marker isn't our knowledge, our worship style, or our religious activities—it's love. This love is agape: selfless, sacrificial, and unconditional. When we claim to love God yet harbor resentment toward our brother or sister, we deceive ourselves. The litmus test of our relationship with the invisible God is our love for the visible people around us. Today, ask yourself: What do people really know me for? Is love my defining characteristic? The Holy Spirit empowers us to love beyond our feelings and preferences. This isn't about perfection but about direction—consistently choosing love as Christ loved us.

Reflection Question: Who in your life is difficult to love, and how can you demonstrate Christ's love toward them today?

Day 2: Getting Into the Vice

Reading: Ecclesiastes 10:10; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Devotional: A dull axe requires more strength and produces less fruit. When we try to love in our own power, we create damage rather than precision. God's sharpening process requires us to get into His "vice"—His Word and His presence—and stay put. This isn't comfortable for our flesh. Like an axe secured for sharpening, we must remain stationary in Scripture, allowing God to file away the nicks of unforgiveness, pride, and self-reliance. The friction produces heat, but it also produces effectiveness. Don't fight the process. When God puts His finger on an area of dullness in your life, He's not condemning you—He's preparing you for greater fruitfulness. Submit to the Master's hands.

Reflection Question: What area of your life feels "dull" right now, and are you willing to stay in God's presence until He sharpens you?

Day 3: Removing the Debris

Reading: Jeremiah 29:11; Proverbs 19:11 (Amplified)

Devotional: Before an axe can be truly sharp, the debris must be removed—the nicks, burrs, and damage accumulated through use. In our lives, these are the hurts, offenses, and disappointments that dull our ability to love. Perhaps you've been wounded by church, betrayed by a friend, or disappointed by circumstances. These experiences can become false doctrine if we let them. God wants to remove these chunks, not to punish you, but because He has your future in mind—thoughts of peace, hope, and purpose. His refining process is meticulous because you're worth the detail. Trust that what He's removing isn't for your harm but for your freedom. Forgiveness is the file that removes resentment's debris.

Reflection Question: What past hurt are you allowing to dull your edge, and will you surrender it to God's refining process today?

Day 4: Love Grows Cold No More

Reading: Matthew 24:12; Romans 13:8

Devotional: As lawlessness increases, Jesus warned that love would grow cold. We see this manifesting daily—division, hatred, and self-centeredness abound. But as the body of Christ, we cannot allow this coldness to infiltrate our hearts. The antidote is simple yet profound: spend time with the Father. The amount of time you invest in God's presence should correlate with your growing love for others—both believers and the lost. If you're spending time with God and growing colder, examine the quality of that time. When we truly encounter His love, we cannot help but overflow with love toward others. Owing nothing to anyone except love isn't a suggestion—it's how we fulfill the law.

Reflection Question: Is your love growing warmer or colder, and what does this reveal about your intimacy with God?

Day 5: They Will Know

Reading: John 15:9-12; Matthew 22:37-39

Devotional: Let it be said of Faith Family Church—and of you personally—that they know how to love one another well. This is the giveaway, the marker that leaves no room for misunderstanding. Love isn't a feeling we wait to experience; it's a commandment we choose to obey. Jesus modeled perfect love, then commanded us to replicate it. He didn't ask us to do something He hadn't already demonstrated. As you abide in His love and keep His commandments, His joy remains in you and becomes full. Your reputation, your social media presence, your talents—none of these tell the world you're His disciple. Only love does. Choose today to love sacrificially, forgive freely, and serve willingly. This is your reasonable service.

Reflection Question: What specific action will you take this week to demonstrate Christ's love in a way that makes your discipleship undeniable?

Weekly Challenge: Identify one person you struggle to love and intentionally demonstrate agape love toward them three times this week—through prayer, service, or encouragement. Journal about how God sharpens you through the process.

They Will Know – Scripture References from the Sermon

Explicitly Mentioned References:

1. **John 13:35** - "By this all will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another"
2. **John 13:34** - "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another"
3. **Ecclesiastes 10:10** - "If the axe is dull and one does not sharpen the edge..."
4. **Matthew 24:12** - "Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold"

5. **Proverbs 12:16** - (mentioned for homework, not read)
6. **Proverbs 19:11** (Amplified) - "Good sense and discretion make a man slow to anger..."
7. **1 Corinthians 13:4-7** - (mentioned for homework, love chapter)
8. **James 1:19** - (mentioned for homework)
9. **John 15:9-12** - "As the Father loved me, I also have loved you. Abide in my love..."
10. **1 John 4:20-21** - "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar..."
11. **Matthew 22:37-39** - "Love the Lord your God... love your neighbor as yourself"
12. **Romans 13:8** - "Owe no one anything except to love one another"
13. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** - "All scripture is given by inspiration of God..."
14. **Jeremiah 29:11** - "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you... thoughts of peace"

Alluded to or Paraphrased:

15. **John 3:16** - "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son"
16. **Ephesians 5:25** - "Husbands, love your wives" (referenced in context)
17. **John 10:10** - "steal, kill, and destroy" / "life more abundantly"
18. **Hebrews 4:16** - "come boldly to the throne of grace" (referenced in closing prayer)
19. **1 John 1:9** - "cleansed of all unrighteousness" (referenced in closing prayer)
20. **John 15:1-2** - The vine and vine dresser/pruning (discussed in context)
21. **Luke 22:50-51** / **John 18:10** - Peter cutting off the servant's ear (referenced)

Suggested Verses Aligned with Main Themes:

Based on the sermon's emphasis on **love as the marker of discipleship** and **being sharpened by God**, these additional verses align with the themes:

- **Hebrews 12:11** - Discipline/sharpening produces righteousness
 - **Proverbs 27:17** - "Iron sharpens iron"
 - **Colossians 3:14** - "Above all these put on love"
 - **1 Peter 4:8** - "Love covers a multitude of sins"
 - **Galatians 5:22-23** - Fruit of the Spirit (love being first)
-

They Will Know – Small Group and Personal Study Guide

Text: John 13:35

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker

Icebreaker Question: What do you think you're currently known for by those closest to you? Is it what you'd want to be known for?

Key Takeaways

1. **Love is the marker of a disciple** - Not our knowledge, talent, or reputation, but our love for one another
 2. **Agape love is commanded, not suggested** - Selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love that desires the highest good of another
 3. **We must get "sharp" through God's Word** - Like a dull axe requires more strength, living without being sharpened by Scripture makes loving others exhausting
 4. **The sharpening process requires staying in the "vice"** - Remaining in God's presence even when it's uncomfortable
 5. **Love growing cold is a sign of the times** - We must intentionally guard against this in our lives
-

Discussion Questions

Section 1: The Marker of Love

1. Read John 13:34-35 together. Why do you think Jesus chose love as THE identifying mark of His disciples rather than something else?
2. Pastor Josh mentioned several things we often want to be known for (funny, athletic, smart, popular, social media presence). How do these compete with being known for love?
3. When have you witnessed someone demonstrate genuine agape love? What impact did it have on you?

Section 2: The Challenge of Agape Love

4. Agape love is defined as "selfless, sacrificial, unconditional, willingly desiring the highest good of another at the expense of self." Which part of this definition is hardest for you personally?
5. Read 1 John 4:20-21. This is a hard truth. Why is it impossible to love God while hating a brother or sister? Have you experienced this tension?
6. Why are humility and repentance so crucial to maintaining love in the church family?

Section 3: Getting Sharp

7. Read Ecclesiastes 10:10. What does it look like in practical terms to be "dull" when trying to love others? What damage have you seen (or caused) when operating in your own strength?
8. The sermon described God's "tool shed" or "vice" as the place where He sharpens us through His Word and presence. What keeps you from

staying in that place consistently?

9. Review the sharpening process mentioned:
- Securing the ax head (staying in God's presence)
 - Removing debris and damage (dealing with past hurts)
 - Establishing the proper edge (allowing God to shape us)
 - Refining, honing, and polishing (ongoing sanctification)

Which step do you sense you're in right now? What is God trying to remove or refine in you?

Section 4: Practical Application

10. Read Matthew 24:12. "Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold." What are specific signs that our love is growing cold? How can we guard against this?
11. Pastor Josh said, "Let it be said of Faith Family Church that they know how to love one another well." What would need to change in our church (and in this group) for this to be completely true?
12. Who is someone you find difficult to love right now? (You don't have to name them.) What would it look like to love them with agape love this week?

Reflection Questions for Personal Time

(Take 5-7 minutes for individual reflect on, then share as comfortable):

1. Where am I trying to love in my own strength instead of God's grace?
2. What "big chunks" or past hurts do I need to let God remove so I can be sharpened?

3. Am I easily offended? Do I quickly forgive? Do I harbor resentment?
 4. What is one specific action I can take this week to demonstrate agape love?
-

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge: Choose ONE to focus on:

Option 1: Get in the "tool shed"

Commit to 15-30 minutes daily in God's Word and prayer, specifically asking Him to sharpen you and show you where you're dull in love.

Option 2: Study the homework passages

- Proverbs 12:16
- Proverbs 19:11 (Amplified)
- 1 Corinthians 13:4-7
- James 1:19

Option 3: Reconcile

If the Holy Spirit brings someone to mind you need to apologize to or forgive, do it this week.

Option 4: Intentional love

Identify someone (in church or outside) who is difficult to love and take one specific action to bless them.

Option 5: Fast from offense

When someone says or does something that would normally offend you, immediately pray for them instead of rehearsing the offense

Closing Prayer

Pray together:

- For God to make us known for our love
 - For grace to love with agape love, not in our own strength
 - For humility to stay in God's "vice" and be sharpened
 - For any specific situations group members shared
 - That Faith Family Church would be marked by extraordinary love for one another
-

Memory Verse for the Week

John 13:35 - "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Leader Notes

- Be prepared to model vulnerability by sharing where you struggle to love well
- If discussions about specific people get negative, gently redirect toward personal responsibility
- Encourage the group that this is a lifelong process—we're all being sharpened
- Consider following up mid-week to ask how people are doing with their action steps