

October 12, 2025

## Love IN Action (John 13:34-25)

*Love that breaks through barriers.*

Story: Think back to when you were in 8<sup>th</sup> grade – how you expressed love and appreciation then, probably looks different now.

Back in 8th grade, my best friend Robi had what we proudly called a pickup truck—this wasn't a Ford or a Chevy. It was a souped-up go-kart Robi's dad had built from scratch, painted fire-engine red and just big enough to fit in two middle schoolers and one person could ride in the open trunk.

One crisp Friday night in October, Robi and I recruited our fellow partner-in-crime, Ramona, for a mission. A mission of epic proportions - a late-night toilet paper tribute. Softball season was in full swing, and we wanted to show our coach some... appreciation. The kind that involves two-ply and tree branches.

We rode three miles down dusty country roads, giggling and plotting, until we reached the coach's house in town, Burlington, OK. **Under the cover of moonlight, we wrapped that yard like it was a Christmas present.** It was glorious. A masterpiece of mischief. Come Monday, the coaches were asking questions. The team was buzzing. But we knew the code: friends stick together. **No snitching. No slipping. Just shared grins and sore arms from all that throwing.**

That's how we defined friendship back then . . . you don't turn on your friends; you stand with them, no matter what.

Kids still get this. One little kid said,  
"You know you have a true friend when you smell like recess, and they still sit beside you."  
Isn't that the kind of friend we all want?  
The one who sticks with you when life gets messy —

**We are in a sermon series looking at the shape of Jesus life which reveals WHO He is.**

- Spoiler – Jesus is the BEST FRIEND!!
- He Savior for all those who believe in Him
- John 3:16 Tells us God loves the world so much He gave Jesus as His one and only Son, and that whoever believes in Jesus will live forever in His presence – we call this eternal life.
- The entire shape of Jesus' life – is an invitation into a life of LOVE.

PRAY?

- (CLIPBOARD)

The dimensions:

**UP - Jesus pursued time with Father God.**

When Jesus had worked a 12-hour day healing people, He rested in prayer with His Father.

Friends and family didn't get Who He was after doing a miracles, (multiplying fish and loaves, turning water to wine) He went to His Father in prayer.

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When Jesus lost His cousin and friend John the Baptist, Jesus ran to His Father God for comfort.

- **Jesus had laser focus on God: so that even in the valley's of life he could love others --well.**

**We too can run to God when we're overwhelmed, tired, sad, or frustrated**

**UP is our one on one time with Jesus:** often in a conversation of prayer

- Are you supposed to mention the small details in prayer?
- Do you ever wonder, if Jesus cares about the details of your life?
- As God's Son, Jesus has a full time job saving people: He's helping people that have bigger problems. You're this tiny little spec on the globe.
- **Jesus is concerned for every detail of your life. His love for you is enormous.**
- You can talk to Him about anything – and He's ready to listen:
- are you concerned about: paying your \$ rent, your teenage son and daughter, your need a new job, and then child care, your marriage, are you scared **to go to the dentist – who likes going to the dentist?! Jesus is concerned for the details of your life.**
- **UP:** we grow our relationship with Him, **become attentive to His whisper** by giving Him **our full attention** as we read His Word, in singing Praise song in key or off key.

**IN:** is doing Life together. Jesus did life with his family, at least 6 siblings, his disciples, tax collectors, he walked towards those who were sick, those with special needs, towards activist like Simon the zealot, he walked towards prostitutes, he walked toward lepers – to love them, forgive them, restore them.

At CG we practice IN by following Jesus together on a Ministry Teams like WT, hospitality, Kids ministry, prayer team, facility team. . . We practice IN in Life Groups

LG: As Pastor Neil said last week, whenever we gather in Life Groups, and someone reads the Word of God, speaking God's speech . . . something happens. Some part of ourselves changes when we **BEHOLD JESUS**. IN is mentoring someone in the Rooted Life.

- Today we are definitely practicing IN.
- Do you smell the delicious aroma of IN? We're having Potluck after 1<sup>st</sup> service and you're invited.

**OUT: Jesus didn't wait for people to come to Him – He loved people – so much so He took inconvenient unusual paths:** into a graveyard to save a demon possessed man, he went out of his way to walk into unfriendly territory to talk to a woman who was a social outcast, so she could know God's love through forgiveness and be restored into her community.

- For Covenant Grove, **OUT is mission**. Each LG serves in the community at least once a season. Go to Mexico mission trips, and help support global missions.

**As we lean into UP, IN and OUT – our lives become shaped like Jesus' life and we love the things He loves – PEOPLE!**

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- The shape of Jesus' life Provides a strong root system, a balance (rhythm) keeping our lives rooted in Jesus.
  - One of these dimensions will be easier for you, one more difficult.
  - For example, If you concentrate mainly on OUT – you get burned out – we need UP time with God.
  - We cannot manufacture love – we first receive love from God and then it cascades into our circles of friends and outward to people we don't know but encounter as we go about our day.

## PRAY

### \*IN: Designed for Community (point 1) (photo YA Mon)

\*John 13:34-35 \***"I'm giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love one another. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."** — John 13:34-35

John 13:34-35 we see Jesus' heart for community.

Jesus was saying, "Don't just say you love me — prove it by how you love each other."

From the very beginning, God's blueprint for humanity included connection. Because God tells us in Gen 2:18

***"It is not good for the man to be alone."* — Genesis 2:18**

God NEVER intended for man to be alone.

God didn't design us for isolation.

Eve was not created as an afterthought . . . she was a counterpart, formed from Adam's rib, the place closest to his heart.

- Together, man and woman were called to multiply, fill the earth, and reflect the relational nature of God Himself.
- Community is foundational.
- It's hardwired into your DNA: the need to be known, loved, and connected—to God and to others

### Let's Talk About Our Community

Modesto is home to over 220,000 people. Riverbank adds another 25,000. That's a lot of neighborhoods, a lot of households, a lot of potential for connection.

But here's the real question:

### \*Are you living in community or in proximity?

Living near people isn't the same as living *with* people.

I live on a cul-de-sac with six other families. But relationally? I'm connected to only three people.

We're surrounded by people, yet so many feel unseen, unknown.

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## **\*We are in an Epidemic of Loneliness. 2023 Surgeon General Report (cover)**

In 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General released a 70+ page report declaring loneliness a public health crisis. The findings are staggering:

- Chronic loneliness is as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day or consuming 6 alcoholic drinks daily.
- Lack of social connection increases the risk of heart disease by 29% and stroke by 32%.
- Social connection boosts survival odds by 50%. (over 7.5 years research, based on data from 148 studies).
- Are Christians the only ones concerned about loneliness or is this a Worldview issue?

Story: At the park yesterday I saw an old friend, she's about 78 years of age, she wears glasses like me, bundled up in a hoodie. My friend keeps a steady pace, now with a walker she circles the neighborhood and Ustach Park 2 to 3 times a day. We've been acquaintances for 8 years. It's been awhile since we've seen one another. Yesterday evening we happily reconnected. As soon as we saw one another we began talking. Talking . . . We don't speak the same language. As we visited she asked me, "Can you understand my English?" I replied, "Yes I can." We talked about the weather, her health and then she began talking faster and telling me about her daughter and grandchildren . . . at that point I could not understand her English. Near the end of her conversation, she said, "We've been friends a long time." She looked up at me with a smile and said, "You are a good friend. . . . Do you love me?" I said, "Yes, I do! Yes, I do!"

**We live in a world starved for connection and LOVE – God's love.**

## **\*God has the cure (point 2)**

We are a Life Group Church. We have 12 CG Life Groups which are smaller groups of 7 to 15 who meet in homes or at the church. We encourage one another by praying for each other. We do life together and meet usually once a week: read God's Word together and ask tough questions. When someone's going through a rough time we are slow to speak and quick to listen.

We gather in Life Groups because we need more of Jesus, and we need Jesus in each other.

Last week Pastor Neil said: "When LG member speaks with Bible in hand something happens." When you speak God's speech.

The Word of God is spoken in Life Groups as we munch on snacks, and pray with one another.

## **LIFE GROUP STORIES**

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Job Find: 2 months ago several Life Groups and others prayed for a sister who need a new job. Our friend was patient – months of waiting (anxiety of what could happen). LG friend told her to go apply with an organization. . . . and we prayed. Several weeks later She received a call for an interview . . . last week our friend began her new job. She didn't get the job she applied for – it was a better position than the one she applied for.

- As we have conversations in the Word of God something happens and pray – something happens – every time.

COVENANT GROVE has amazing LG Leaders. CG staff is thankful and proud of these Leaders. Our staff simply cannot meet the needs of everyone in our congregation 365 days a year.

- **LG Leaders are First Responders** organizing care for their Life Group.
  - When a LG member is in the **hospital**, LG brings meals to your house or soup and medicine to your door – your fav sandwich to your hospital room, drinks and snacks to sustain you as you care for your loved one in the hospital.
  - One LG recognized when a family was going thru a difficult time and took **6 children horseback** riding – joy and laughter back into their lives.
  - LG's journey with one another through valleys and celebrate with one another in the victories!
- John 13:35 <sup>35</sup> Your love for one another will **prove** to the world that you are my disciples.

**\*Covenant Grove Life Groups: Abide, Grounded, Cultivate, Son-Up, Grateful Hearts, , Faith Forward, True Fellowship, 3 Strands, Fuel, Forge, Sole Sisters, Young Adults**

**The name of the Life Group names are chosen with intention. The names offer a glimpse of the culture for each group.**

Mon night **Abide** 6:30pm - Jn 15:9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love." Abide – making our home in Jesus.

Tuesday night 6:30pm **Grounded** Men's Group – grounded – traction in faith – connecting with coffee and the Word.

Wed morning online Women's Group - **Son-Up** – rise up early! Dive into the Word at 6:30am This group values Friendship and Fellowship.

Wed evening online group **Cultivate** meets at 6:30pm cultivating strong roots in the Word and relationship – meet for coffee once a month

Wed evening 7:00pm meets in a home **Faith Forward** – this group pumps one another up to get out of the boat like Peter, walk by faith and not by sight.

Thursday morning 10:00 **Grateful Hearts** meets at the church – this group has a BIG heart of compassion for others.

Thursday evening 6:30pm **True Fellowship** meets in a home. Shared faith, and shared lives. Love and support one another as they grow deeper roots to reflect God's character.

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Friday evening at 6:30pm **Fuel** meets in a home in Modesto. With God and one another we dive into the Word and gain fuel for our week.

Saturday morning at 8:30 **Forge** meets at the church building – iron sharpens iron. Deepening relationship with God and cheering one another on.

**Young Adults** ages 18-29 years of age. Bounce church, park, to homes. Currently at the church at 7:00pm on Mondays. This group is on fire for Jesus – talking about the Word, eating together and sharing their faith.

## **What does community look like for you? (looking for a LG)**

Mark 2:1-5 Historical Context

Capernaum, nestled along the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, was a thriving center of trade and daily life in Jesus' time. It attracted merchants, fishermen, and travelers with its strategic location and bustling markets.

- The city also bore the mark of Roman occupation, evidenced by a stationed garrison of soldiers. Capernaum was home to five of Jesus' disciples: Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Matthew and the city served as a central hub for Jesus' ministry after He left Nazareth.

**\*Mark 2:1-5 When Jesus returned to Capernaum several days later, the news spread quickly that he was back home. <sup>2</sup> Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door. While he was preaching God's word to them, <sup>3</sup> four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. <sup>4</sup> They couldn't bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, so they dug a hole through the roof above his head. Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "My child, your sins are forgiven.**

**\*2:5 Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, "Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!" NLT**

(Men carrying in friend) 5 GUYS LIFE GROUP IS THRU THE ROOF!!!

Some may think cheesy illustration, sometimes love is cheesy, sometimes love makes a worship service go longer, love can be embarrassing, the love of Jesus pushes thru all these things, through barriers

We love these 5 GUYS!!

Back to the Scripture:

- This is a regular neighborhood . . . nice homes not makeshift housing.
- Let's say the house is owned by Joe. Joe is hosting the best gathering in town. Everyone has come to hear Jesus, who teaches like no one they've ever heard.
- As the Life Group of men approach the house where a huge crowd has gathered, their hearts beat a little faster. No one is willing to budge and make a pathway for them to enter and get close to Jesus.
- The friends are determined, they're not turning back.
- Suddenly dusts begins falling from the ceiling.
- No one asked Joe if they could climb on top of his roof.

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- No one applied for a building code permit to cut through a roof.
- No one asks Joe anything . . .
- The 4 friends don't wait for permission – they're moving with conviction.
- To place their friend right in front of Jesus as they lower him through the roof.

That's what love looks like. That's what doing life with faith-filled friends looks like.

**Without 4 determined faith-filled, big- thinking, risk-takers – the paralyzed man would not have made it to Jesus.**

### **\*Love in Action Breaks through barriers (point 3)**

**to carry people to Jesus.**

The LOVE that jumps out of the box, the social norms of “this is the way it must be done.”

**\*1 Cor 13:7** Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. (NLT).

What are you willing to do to break through the norm to ensure people receive an invitation to be part of a Life Group – where they can experience the Love of Jesus, where people can hear God speech and receive His healing.

**This is for someone.**

**Some of you are experiencing barriers in your life right not.**

**Just because there's a barriers blocking your way, you are tempted to give up. You're afraid to HOPE. But Jesus has a way. Where your hearing no's Jesus may be saying NOT YET**

**A barrier or obstacle in your path does not mean God isn't working.**

- If you identify with the man on the mat . . .you can't get to where you want to go. It's realistically impossible.
  - **Our God is able! Maybe your mat becomes your battleground of prayer and praise. Ask your Life Group to join you in prayer. and you not only pray for victory but you thank God for the victory.**
- **Maybe you identify with the 4 men carrying the friend on the mat.**
  - **Your arms are tired of carrying the weight, your friend your family depends on you.**
  - **Ask for help? Your church is here to help you.**
- **What would have happened if the 4 men carrying the mat said,**
  - **“We can't carry you that far, we only have this much time, no that's not the way we do things, to get to Jesus you must go through the front door.**
  - **Front door faith, I'll love others when it lines up with what I believe.**
  - **The paralyzed man would have**
  - **Missed receiving Jesus' love for Him.**
  - **Missed being forgiven sins**
  - **Missed His physical healing.**

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**5 guys Life Group would have missed a faith experience that would change them FOREVER**

**Our own healing occurs as we seek the healing of others by: loving them and carrying them to Jesus.**

**Jesus doesn't just see the person receiving prayer.**

**He sees the faith of every person in your Life Group praying: for your new job, praying healing for your wounded heart, praying healing over your mental health or physical needs, praying for you to have reconciliation with your child . . .**

**In community with friends and with Jesus we are transformed changed.**

**Jesus says, "Love one another as I have loved you."**

**<sup>35</sup> Your love for one another will *prove* to the world that you are my disciples.**

## **ACTION STEPS**

**\*You Prove God's love when: you show up.**

**You Prove God's love when: faith moves you to action.**

**Prayer moment with question prompt**

- Are you willing to say: "I need help," I'm not doing life alone.
- Or Life Group Host – have a LG at your home
- Or Life Group Leader we have people to equip and prepare you.

Jesus invites you to be in community with Him, God and Holy Spirit.

He invites you into a larger community where you can grow in confidence in who you are in Christ.

**Prayer**

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