

Getting Along with People

Course by Community Christian Church (www.communitychristian.org),
a member of the NewThing Network (www.newthing.org)

Getting Along with People

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Leader's Guide – Participant's Guide

Getting Along with People

LEADER'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 1

Learn to Love

We need to follow up our words of love with action.

“Show me, don’t just tell me” is said by parents, teachers, daycare workers, and anyone else working with kids. A child will say something like “I’m sorry” after hitting another child, but his words are hollow. The child doesn’t really mean what he or she is saying; they simply want to get out of a bad situation without any consequences. The adult then tells the child that words are a good start but that love includes both words and actions. This study agrees entirely.

Lesson #1

Scripture:

1 John 4:7–16

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

Since the inception of the Internet, the word *virus* has taken on a whole new meaning to anyone with a computer. Of all the viruses that have been created and deployed through the Internet, there is one that stands head and shoulders above the rest in terms of the number of machines it has infected and the cost to repair its damage. A spokesperson from the Lloyds of London insurance syndicate estimated that at least 10 percent of all computers in the world were infected with this virus. Care to take a guess what it is? That's right, the "I love you" virus!

Despite the best antivirus software, the "I love you" virus first appeared in China in the early spring of 2000 and quickly spread across the entire world in a matter of days. What's extraordinary about this particular virus is that it was not much different from other viruses, such as the "Melissa" virus, which appeared just one year prior. Both viruses were distributed and functioned almost identically through an e-mail from a trusted friend. The recipient would be asked to open an attachment which unknowingly contained the virus.

So then why would the "I love you" virus infect and cause more damage than any other previous virus? Possibly because the words "I love you" are some of the most powerful words in the world. And when these words appear in the subject line of an e-mail sent by a friend or family member, we are compelled to open that e-mail. Even despite headline news warnings of the "I love you" virus, people across the world could not resist the temptation to find out if someone had sent them a love note.

Hearing the words "I love you" has a powerful attraction. And when "I love you" is backed up with action, it is super-powerful. God tells us throughout the Bible that he loves us, and then he backs up those words with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Our lives are to be lives of love, where we don't hesitate to say "I love you" to the people we love and then make it count with our actions.

Discussion starters:

[Q] Share a time this week when you communicated your love (not romantic love) for another without using words to do it. What did you do?

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: Loving others and loving God go hand in hand.

Of the 12 disciples, John referred to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." John did not mean that Jesus did not love the other 11 disciples, but he saw Jesus' love for him as being the overwhelming way to identify himself. The apostle John, in his letter known by us as 1 John,



wrote to believers for two primary reasons: first, to expose false teachings, and secondly, to give believers assurance of salvation. According to John, our love for others and our salvation has a positive correlation—they go hand in hand.

Read 1 John 4:7–8.

- [Q] Think of who you consider to be a “beloved” friend? What would they say about you, something you’ve done for them or said to them recently, that would demonstrate your love for them?
- [Q] Now think of someone who is it difficult for you to love. Without naming names tell us why you have trouble loving that person.
- [Q] With that one person in mind, reread verse 8 and insert his or her name: “Whoever does not love _____ does not know God, because God is love.” How does reading the verse that way affect the way you feel about that person?

Leader’s Note: *You may have not felt very good about reading verse 8 in that way. Loving God is one thing, but loving others is another thing altogether. The good news about loving others is that God understands that this can be a challenging thing. And knowing just how challenging this can be for us, he does something about it in verses 9–10, which paves the way for us to succeed in loving others.*

Teaching point two: Loving others means seeing them the way God does.

It’s tough to read verse 8 in that way. Loving God seems easier than loving others. The good news about loving others is that God understands this can be a challenging thing for us. And knowing how challenging this can be for us, he gave us verses 9 and 10 to help us.

We see others through lenses, so it’s important what lenses we use. Ask God to help you see others the way he sees them. Pray, “God, help me to see people through your eyes. Help me to see their gifts, talents, passions, strengths, and potential. Help me to love others the way you do.” This is a prayer that we will be saying for the rest of our lives.

Read 1 John 4:9–10.

- [Q] According to John, God sacrificed his beloved son because he loved us. He gave all he could give. Who is God challenging you to make more sacrifices of time and resources for?
- [Q] Assuming you are already following Christ, how can you tap into more of God’s power to love others?

Leader’s Note: *The daily practice of prayer, studying the Bible, exercising your faith through serving others, or giving more of your money, plus simply asking God for his help to love.*

Optional Activity

Purpose: *To help us learn to see others as God does.*



Activity: Advise the following people as to how they could look at their adversary the way Christ does:

- Jayne is frustrated with her son who has chosen a life of drugs instead of a life following Christ.
- Ben has a coworker who constantly makes fun of him.
- Joan is on a board with a contentious person who disagrees with everything she says.

Teaching point three: Loving others is a test of our relationship with God.

If we find ourselves failing to love others, we must question our love for God. In her book *Bird by Bird*, Anne Lamott says, “You can safely assume you’ve created God in your own image when it turns out that God hates all the same people you do.”

Continuing this theme, Richard L. Baxter says,

A Christian is a loving letter. Love is basic to being Christian. If we love not, we are not. This is not sentimentality or effusive feelings, but good old basic love that reaches out to heal the hurt of the world. Love’s simplicity is its attraction; its transforming power is its glory. Love is practical, yet transcendent; earthly, yet heavenly. Love is the essence of the divine Author and permeates the whole of life. (“Reasons to Be Glad” Christianity Today, Vol. 34, no. 13)

Read 1 John 4:11–16.

[Q] Looking at verses 11 and 12, how deeply would you say God is dwelling in you right now based on your love for others? Since you’ve been following Christ, have you seen changes in your capacity to love others? What does your answer suggest to you about your relationship with God?

Leader’s Note: *Our capacity to love does not just grow because time passes. Something must change inside of us. If people have seen an increased capacity to love, do they attribute it to a deepening relationship with God? If people have not seen an increased capacity, why not?*

[Q] What do verses 14 and 15 have to do with our ability to love others?

Leader’s Note: *Those who acknowledge Jesus as the Christ have been adopted into God’s family, and they benefit from enjoying God’s presence like a family member. Non-Christians may experience God’s general grace and presence, but as someone who receives help from a stranger or acquaintance instead of receiving it from a Father.*

[Q] What do the words “I love you” have to do with the words, “Jesus is my Lord, my Savior, and the Son of God?”

Leader’s Note: *Making a confession of faith in Christ out loud to others has always been integral to the Christian experience. While the words themselves have no power to save apart from true heartfelt belief, they are as significant as a bride and groom’s vows to one another. Your confession of faith, “I believe Jesus is the Christ, the son of the*



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living God. I believe he has the power to release me from the penalty of my sins. I want him to be the leader of my life”, is an important part of your faith journey. It brings a private, internal reality and makes it public.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

We may never know the power of our love. Donald Miller shares a story of how he helped a friend whose alcoholism was destroying his life:

Last year, I pulled a friend out of his closet. His marriage was falling apart because of his inability to stop drinking. This man is a kind and brilliant human being, touched with many gifts from God, but addicted to alcohol, and being taken down in the fight. He was suicidal, we thought, and the kids had been sent away. We sat together on his back deck and talked for hours, deep into the night. I didn't think he was going to make it. I worried about him as I boarded my flight back to Portland, and he checked himself into rehab.

Two months later he picked me up from the same airport, having gone several weeks without a drink. As he told me the story of the beginnings of his painful recovery process, he said a single incident was giving him the strength to continue. His father had flown in to attend a recovery meeting with him, and in the meeting my friend had to confess all his issues and weaknesses. When he finished, his father stood up to address the group of addicts. He looked at his son and said, "I have never loved my son as much as I do at this moment. I love him. I want all of you to know I love him." My friend said at that moment, for the first time in his life, he was able to believe God loved him, too. He believed if God, his father, and his wife all loved him, he could fight the addiction, and he believed he might make it. (*Searching for God Knows What*, Thomas Nelson, 2004, p. 130–131)

Action Point: Write down the steps you can take this week to begin participating in the two greatest commands—loving God and loving people. Break into pairs, share these steps with each other, and pray for each other.

—Written by John Ciesniewski. Edited by Steve Brewer, Bill Barton, and JoHannah Reardon.



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PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 1

Learn to Love

We need to follow up our words of love with action.

“Show me, don’t just tell me” is said by parents, teachers, daycare workers, and anyone else working with kids. A child will say something like “I’m sorry” after hitting another child, but his words are hollow. The child doesn’t really mean what he or she is saying; they simply want to get out of a bad situation without any consequences. The adult then tells the child that words are a good start but that love includes both words and actions. This study agrees entirely.

Lesson #1

Scripture:

1 John 4:7–16

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Hearing the words “I love you” has a powerful attraction. And when “I love you” is backed up with action, it is super-powerful. God tells us throughout the Bible that he loves us, and then he backs up those words with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Our lives are to be lives of love, where we don’t hesitate to say “I love you” to the people we love and then make it count with our actions.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: Loving others and loving God go hand in hand.

Teaching point two: Loving others means seeing them the way God does.

Teaching point three: Loving others is a test of our relationship with God.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

We may never know the power of our love until we get to heaven, but God promises that it matters.

—Written by John Ciesniewski. Edited by Steve Brewer, Bill Barton, and JoHannah Reardon.



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LEADER'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 2

Learn to Give Your Life Away

To get closer to others, we need to say yes to giving others our time, authenticity, help, and the permission to be helped.

Mark Twain once said, "It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand." Bible knowledge, in itself, can sometimes cause more harm than good, such as pride and a judgmental attitude. Real growth comes from putting into practice what we do understand.

Lesson #2

Scripture:

Acts 2:42–47; 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

Many people are bold enough to declare what they think is wrong with the church, but few people suggest a solution. We often long for deeper teaching into the mysteries of God. But how often do we apply what we do know? For example 1 Peter 4:9 says, "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." It might be easy to memorize this verse, but do you practice it?

For example, a family developed a passion for helping refugees from war-torn Rwanda settle into the United States. The first time they helped such a family, they invited all nine of them into their home for a two-week stay. To put this kind of hospitality into perspective, we're talking about a family that is unfamiliar with English, indoor plumbing, electricity, and deodorant.

The word *yes* frequently appears in the Bible in the form of "one another" phrases. Every "one-another" verse in the New Testament is a risky way of saying yes to other Christ-followers and their needs and allowing them to say yes to mine.

God intends for his church to be as Larry Crabb calls it, "The Safest Place on Earth." But "safest" will never mean completely safe. There is always risk. Closeness with others is messy business. Saying yes has to do with getting closer to others with our time and authenticity, and helping and being helped.

Sometimes we don't get into relationships or don't get from our relationships what we need because we don't say yes to getting close to someone; we don't risk being open and authentic. We keep things on the surface and superficial. We keep ourselves safe by not letting anyone in. We do this with neighbors, coworkers, acquaintances, family members, and even (especially!) spouses. When we say yes to spending time with people, yes to helping them with things they need help with, yes to letting others help us, yes to sharing our stories and struggles with people, it's almost always risky. When we say yes we no longer have control over what happens like we did when we played it safe by always saying no. Yes is a word of vulnerability, openness, and risk.

God calls us to take risks we otherwise might never take. He doesn't call us to risk foolishly with people who have injured and wounded us, but he does call us to risk being close to each other.

He wants us to say yes in the right way at the right time to the right things.

Discussion starters:

[Q] Share a time when you took a risk by saying yes to someone.



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PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: Say yes to others in order to obey God.

Consider these risky ways to say yes to fellow Christ-followers through the words “one another.”

- Accept one another – Romans 15:7
- Admonish one another – Colossians 3:16
- Be at peace with one another – Mark 9:50
- Be kind and compassionate to one another – Ephesians 4:32
- Be patient, bearing with one another in love – Ephesians 4:2
- Build each other up – 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- Carry each other's burdens – Galatians 6:2
- Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another – 1 Peter 5:5
- Confess your sins to each other – Colossians 3:9
- Encourage each other – 1 Thessalonians 4:18
- Forgive each other – Ephesians 4:32
- Honor one another above yourselves – Romans 12:10
- Instruct one another – Romans 15:14
- Live in harmony with one another – Romans 12:16
- Love one another – John 13:34
- Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling – 1 Peter 4:9
- Pray for each other – James 5:16
- Serve one another in love – Galatians 5:13
- Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ – Ephesians 5:21
- Use whatever gift (you have) received to serve others – 1 Peter 4:10



[Q] Isn't it good that God gave us such a short list? Of these ways to say yes to one another, which do you struggle with the most? Why?

Optional Activity

Purpose: To encourage one another in saying yes.

Activity: Break into pairs. Look over these ways to say yes to one another and share with your partner the one that exemplifies their behavior the best. If you don't really know your partner, ask them which one they would most like to develop.

Teaching point two: Say yes to others to expand God's kingdom.

Saying yes to one another goes way beyond improving relationships with other people. Christ-followers saying yes to one another are God's prescription for expanding his kingdom here on earth. To see what that looks like, read 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10.

Paul tells the Christ-followers in Thessalonica that they are looked up to by the provinces in both Macedonia and Achaia—not only in the provinces but all over the place. If you have a map in your Bible, take a look at that region.

[Q] According to this passage of Scripture, why are others looking up to the Thessalonians?

Leader's Note: *Their labor, their patience, their faith, the strength of their convictions. Certainly the Holy Spirit was pouring his blessing out on this group of believers, which would get anyone's attention. However, others were looking up to this group of believers because their actions and love for one another created ripple effects. Most often our actions speak louder than our words and this group's actions were doing just that. People are always watching Christians—they are watching for us to screw up, and they are also watching for us to do well. When we do well, they are attracted to be a part of it.*

[Q] To what degree would you say your church is being looked up to by fellow believers? Why?

[Q] In 1 John 4:9, it says that the Thessalonians deserted dead idols and an old way of life so that they could embrace and serve God. Make a list of "idols" that might need to desert (TV, overworking, gym time, pub time, etc.)?

[Q] In what way do these idols prevent us from saying yes to others (giving them our time, authenticity, and help)?

Teaching point three: Say yes to others in a radical way.

Read Acts 2:42–47. Luke wrote the Book of Acts. He made the point that people were attracted to Christ because of the authentic love they saw between Christians.

Think of those who love radically. Likely their examples goad you on to love more.



Beyond the Gates of Splendor is a documentary film that tells the true story of five American missionaries: Jim Elliot, Pete Fleming, Ed McCully, Nate Saint, and Roger Youderian, who in January 1956 were speared to death in the jungles of Ecuador by the Auca Indians.

At first, the missionaries found acceptance among the Auca, but eventually they experienced their fierce hostility.

In a testament to love and forgiveness, family members of the slain missionaries returned to live among the tribe, evangelizing the very people who had killed their loved ones.

In one scene, Kathy and Steve Saint, the children of Nate Saint, speak of their own baptisms administered by the Aucas who now believe.

Kimo, a participant in the killings and the baptisms, refers to Steve's baptism. "By his father's grave we did it when Steve was a little older. It was right up the river there. He brought his mother too."

Kathy says, "I was in the same water where my dad's body had been thrown, and at either side of me were the two men that in their youth had killed dad. And all I knew was that I really loved these two guys." (Submitted by Van Morris, PreachingToday.com)

[Q] This first century church lived a life of saying yes to one another. What benefits do these believers receive for themselves living this way?

Leader's Note: *The benefits included knowledge, friendship, awe, miracles, and financial security (they took care of each other).*

[Q] How has the love of Christians toward one another impacted your own decision to become a Christ-follower?

[Q] Has anyone become a Christ-follower because of an act of love on your part?

[Q] Do you think that Christians are good at demonstrating love for each other so that non-Christians notice? Why or why not?

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

In his book *Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them*, John Ortberg tells of a young man named John Gilbert. At age five, John was diagnosed with Duchenne's Muscular Dystrophy, a genetic, progressive, debilitating disease. At age 25, the disease finally claimed John's life.

Every year John lost something. One year, he lost the ability to run, so he couldn't play sports with the other kids. Another year he could no longer walk straight, so all he could do was watch others play. He lost the ability to do all the outward things that we think of that make us human. Eventually, he even lost the ability to speak.

John Gilbert suffered far more than what most of us can imagine during those years. Groups of students humiliated him because of his condition and because he had to



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bring a trained dog to school to help him. A bully used to torture him in the lunchroom where there were no supervising teachers. No one ever stood up for him; maybe they were afraid for themselves; who knows?

"What a silly species we are," John writes. "We all need to feel accepted ourselves, but we constantly reject others."

But John had other moments in his life, too. Once he was invited to a National Football League fundraising auction. When it began, one item in particular caught John's eye: a basketball signed by the players of the Sacramento Kings professional team. John so desperately wanted that ball that when it came up for bid, he felt his hand raise up in the air. Not having the funds to participate, John's mother quickly brought it back down.

They watched the bidding go up and up and up. It rose to an astounding amount compared to the value of the ball and especially compared to other items at the auction. Finally, a man made a bid that no one else could possibly match, and he won the prize.

The man walked to the front and claimed the basketball. But instead of going back to his seat, the man walked across the room and gently placed it into the thin, small hands of the boy who had desired it so strongly. The man put that ball into hands that would never dribble a ball down a court, never throw it to a teammate, never fire it from the foul line. But those hands would cherish it for as long as they lived.

"It took me a moment to realize what the man had done," John writes. "I remember hearing gasps all around the room, then thunderous applause and weeping eyes. To this day I'm amazed. Have you ever been given a gift that you could have never gotten for yourself? Has anyone ever sacrificed a huge amount for you without getting anything in return—except the joy of giving?" (Zondervan, 2003, p. 197; submitted by Gino Grunberg, PreachingToday.com)

Action Point: How might you take additional steps to say yes to one another to ensure that the Lord adds to the number in your sphere of influence who are being saved? List practical ways.

Leader's Note: *Some ideas: Be willing to invite a Christian family and a non-Christian family from your neighborhood over for dinner or a game night. If you are in a small group, plan a social night where you invite non-Christian friends or neighbors. If your small group is doing a relationship-oriented study or a felt-need study, tell a neighbor about it and invite them. Invite friends and neighbors to a service or fellowship at church. Be willing to serve your neighbors. Get to know your neighbors – what kinds of music do they like, what kinds of movies, what types of sports or hobbies or interests do they have?*

—Written by John Ciesniewski. Edited by Steve Brewer, Bill Barton, and JoHannah Reardon.



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Getting Along with People

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 2

Learn to Give Your Life Away

To get closer to others, we need to say yes to giving others our time, authenticity, help, and the permission to be helped.

Mark Twain once said, "It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand." Bible knowledge, in itself, can sometimes cause more harm than good, such as pride and a judgmental attitude. Real growth comes from putting into practice what we do understand.

Lesson #2

Scripture:

Acts 2:42–47; 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

God calls us to take risks we otherwise might never take. He doesn't call us to risk foolishly with people who have injured and wounded us, but he does call us to risk being close to each other. He wants us to say yes in the right way at the right time to the right things.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: Say yes to others in order to obey God.

Teaching point two: Say yes to others to expand God's kingdom.

Teaching point three: Say yes to others in a radical way.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

Some ideas to say yes to: Be willing to invite a Christian family and a non-Christian family from your neighborhood over for dinner or a game night. If you are in a small group, plan a social night where you invite non-Christian friends or neighbors. If your small group is doing a relationship-oriented study or a felt-need study, tell a neighbor about it and invite them. Invite friends and neighbors to a service or fellowship at church. Be willing to serve your neighbors. Get to know your neighbors – what kinds of music do they like, what kinds of movies, what types of sports or hobbies or interests do they have?

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LEADER'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 3

Learn to Say *No*

Sometimes saying no is the most Christ-like thing you can do.

Many people think that saying no is self-centered or even un-Christian, but often it's the other way around. The times we say yes when we should say no (or when we simply fail to say no) are often motivated by the desire to avoid conflict or to be accepted, which is pretty self-centered. The kind of no God wants us to say is no to things that are destructive and damaging to people and relationships, including us.

Lesson #3

Scripture:

Acts 4:1–33; Galatians 2:11–14; 2 Timothy 2:22–25; 3:1–6

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

Saying no, just like saying yes, is important to keep relationships healthy. For example, consider a church's and individual's priorities. We want to say yes to the best, which means we may have to say no to some good things. To do that we have to define what we are passionate about. By defining our passions, we can say no to the things that have the potential to distract us from our primary mission.

Our priorities act as a filter for the many opportunities that demand our time, talent, energy, and resources. Sometimes it is important for us to say no in order to remain focused and true to our mission of helping people find their way back to God. When an opportunity fails to fit into our priorities, we say no. In contrast, when something does fit into our priorities, we are free to say yes.

Discussion starters:

[Q] Share a time when you were told no and it offended you only to find out later that *no* opened the door to something much better.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: We need to surround ourselves with wise counsel.

No is about what we won't allow, what we won't go along with, what we won't say yes to. No is about relational boundaries: what we will and won't accept from others. Our inability or failure to say no to certain things is at the heart of some of our most significant relational problems. God wants to help us get better at saying no when it counts.

When God says no to us in his commands, it's always for our own good and the good of our relationship with him. Many have an image of God as someone who says no to limit our enjoyment in life, but it's really the other way around. God says no to the things in our life that hurt, damage, and destroy.

Read 2 Timothy 2:22–25 and 3:1–6. Paul was Timothy's coach or mentor in the Christian faith. Sometimes coaches, mentors, or friends are better at observing when we need to say no to behaviors, habits, attitudes, and responsibilities that should not be ours. We all have blind spots.

[Q] Share a time when someone wisely suggested you say no to something. Did you listen? Why or why not? How did it turn out?

Leader's Note: Example: a close friend discourages you from taking on any additional responsibilities in your neighborhood homeowners association because you



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are already over-extended. Example: your parents encourage you to stay in a smaller home to build equity before you move into a larger home that would be a stretch to afford.

- [Q] Have you mentored someone in the Christian faith or advised them about spiritual issues? What types of instruction or guidance did you provide?

Leader's Note: Examples: provided an overview of the Bible, encouraged them to join a small group or be baptized, taught them to pray, or some foundational concepts of theology (what is God like? Who is Jesus? Who is the Holy Spirit? What is the condition of mankind before coming into relationship with God through Jesus? How does salvation work, etc.), and so on.

- [Q] What are the things on Paul's "Stop doing" or "Don't do it" list for Timothy? What are some things that need to be on your "stop doing" list?
- [Q] What are the things on Paul's "Pursue this" or "Do this" list for Timothy? What are some things that need to be on your "start doing" or "pursue this" list?

Teaching point two: We need to say no to well-meaning people when they conflict with God.

Read Galatians 2:11–14. The Jewish Christians accused Paul of watering down the particulars of what it meant to be a Christian to make the faith easier for non-Jewish people to accept. Paul accused the Jewish Christians of adding rules and laws to the Christian faith that were unnecessary for salvation (like dietary restrictions, circumcision, Sabbath regulations, etc.). Sometimes saying no has to do with standing up to someone for something you believe is right or wrong.

- [Q] Have you ever had a confrontation with someone about a belief, practice, or behavior that you felt was in conflict with the teachings of the Bible? Tell us about it.
- [Q] How do you think the church and the practice of the Christian faith would be different today if Paul had not stood up to Peter and the Jewish Christian leaders?
- [Q] What are some expectations about how you practice your faith that come from people instead of from God and Bible? How can you say no to some of these obligations and still keep peace and unity in the church?

Teaching point three: We need to say no to the wisdom of the world.

Read Acts 4:1–33. Sometimes saying no means speaking up when the world wants you to keep your faith quiet.

Nineteenth-century evangelist and pastor, J. Wilbur Chapman said, "It's not the ship in the water but the water in the ship that sinks it. So it's not the Christian in the world but the world in the Christian that constitutes the danger."

- [Q] Who or where intimidates you when it comes to speaking the truth about Christ? Why?



- [Q] According to these verses, Christians have access to power and confidence that comes from the Holy Spirit (v. 8, 31). Have you ever felt that you didn't have the words to say to someone who was angry at God or critical of the Christian faith, but then received wisdom from the Holy Spirit to help speak God's truth with confidence? If so, tell us about it.
- [Q] Have you ever felt that the Holy Spirit has helped you to say no to a temptation you couldn't resist in your own power? How?

Leader's Note: *Usually you can tell when God has been at work when you find yourself turning away from temptations that usually you can't resist (where did I find the power to say no to that?).*

Optional Activity

Purpose: *To help us practice saying no to the world and yes to Christ.*

Activity: *Imagine being in pre-war Iraq on a business trip. While there, you are observed praying before lunch. After lunch you are returning to your conference room when the Iraqi National Guard arrest you (just like the Jewish Temple Police in the Acts passage). You are taken all the way to the top—to Saddam Hussein—who questions and threatens you to never pray to Jesus or use Jesus' name while in his country. Knowing that the Bible instructs you to not lie, how will you respond? Take turns sharing your thoughts.*

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

So how do we know what to say yes to and what to say no to? The answer lies in knowing God's Word and consulting him in prayer. David F. Wells says,

What then is the nature of petitionary prayer? It is, in essence, rebellion—rebellion against the world in its fallenness, the absolute and undying refusal to accept as normal what is pervasively abnormal. It is, in this its negative aspect, the refusal of every agenda, every scheme, every interpretation that is at odds with the norm as originally established by God. ("Prayer: Rebelling Against the Status Quo")

Action Point: Where do you need to say no to someone or something to remain true to God's Word for your life? Be specific.

—Written by John Ciesniewski. Edited by Steve Brewer, Bill Barton, and JoHannah Reardon.



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Getting Along with People

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 3

Learn to Say *No*

Sometimes saying no is the most Christ-like thing you can do.

Many people think that saying no is self-centered or even un-Christian, but often it's the other way around. The times we say yes when we should say no (or when we simply fail to say no) are often motivated by the desire to avoid conflict or to be accepted, which is pretty self-centered. The kind of no God wants us to say is no to things that are destructive and damaging to people and relationships, including us.

Lesson #3

Scripture:

Acts 4:1–33; Galatians 2:11–14; 2 Timothy 2:22–25; 3:1–6

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Saying no, just like saying yes, is important to keep relationships healthy. For example, consider a church's and individual's priorities. We want to say yes to the best, which means we may have to say no to some good things. To do that we have to define what we are passionate about. By defining our passions, we can say no to the things that have the potential to distract us from our primary mission.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: We need to surround ourselves with wise counsel.

Teaching point two: We need to say no to well-meaning people when they conflict with God.

Teaching point three: We need to say no to the wisdom of the world.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

So how do we know what to say yes to and what to say no to? The answer lies in knowing God's Word and consulting him in prayer. David F. Wells says,

What then is the nature of petitionary prayer? It is, in essence, rebellion—rebellion against the world in its fallenness, the absolute and undying refusal to accept as normal what is pervasively abnormal. It is, in this its negative aspect, the refusal of every agenda, every scheme, every interpretation that is at odds with the norm as originally established by God. ("Prayer: Rebelling Against the Status Quo")

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Getting Along with People

LEADER'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 4

Learn to Say *Please*

Saying please is about asking the right way.

Please is about how we get our needs met, especially when there is conflict. Many of us have not learned how to ask others for what we need from them. Or we resort to control tactics such as arguing, criticizing, shaming, or shutting-down instead of asking for what we need to resolve the conflict. *Please* is not about manners; it's about asking for what we want. Asking is what we need to do instead of all the relational pushing and shoving we do that doesn't work. *Please* is about learning to ask when it counts.

Lesson #4

Scripture:

Matthew 5:5; 6:5-8; 7:7-12

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

A wise man once said, "Authority can never be assigned or given to anyone. It must be earned with patience and a genuine investment in the lives of people you are working with. Stop trying to tell people what to do and instead, start asking them for their help. And when necessary, say *please*."

In *The Divine Conspiracy*, Dallas Willard suggests that Matthew 7:7 (ask ... seek ... knock) is not just about how we pray to God, but how we deal with each other in community. He says that "request is the heart of community," because when I truly ask things of people, I am not demanding, manipulating, pushing, or telling them what they should and shouldn't do: "When I ask someone to do or to be or to give something, I stand with that person in the domain of constraint without force or necessitation. We are together. A request by its very nature unites. It is a way of getting that requires us to go through the freedom of the person being asked. In the very act of asking, in the very nature of the request, we acknowledge that the other person can say no. That is how we are to relate to others."

Discussion starters:

- [Q]** Share a time when someone demanded something of you. How did that make you feel? How did you respond?

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: Good relationships are marked by meekness and humility.

Saying *please* in the right way starts with having the right attitude. The Scriptures for this discussion guide are part of the 111 verses from Matthew 5, 6 and 7 that are often referred to as Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount." At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives us an adjective that should define our character when it comes to getting what we want. The word *meek* used by Jesus in Matthew 5:5 is rooted in Old Testament Scripture-Psalm 37:11, "But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace." To be meek means to humbly acknowledge your dependence on the goodness and grace of God, and to refuse arrogance toward others. Let's find out what Jesus has to say.

Read Matthew 5:5.

- [Q]** Without looking up the word *meek*, what do you think it means? Give an example of this word used in a sentence or in a scenario.

Leader's Note: *Dictionary.com* defines meek as: a) showing patience and humility; gentle and b) easily imposed on; submissive. *The Bible* defines meek as humbly



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acknowledging your dependence on the goodness and grace of God, and to refuse arrogance toward others.

- [Q] According to Jesus, meek people will inherit the earth. What do you think it means to inherit the earth?

Leader's Note: *This is part of a list where everything is turned upside down. Usually the bold and powerful advance, but God gives says that being meek will ultimately matter and be rewarded. He could be referring to the new earth that Christians will occupy in the future.*

Read Matthew 6:5-8. Learning to say *please* in the right way involves humility. Whether going before God in prayer or going to others to ask for something, we need to resist saying *please* in a manipulative way to get what we want.

- [Q] What do you ask God for most often? How have you tried to manipulate God or others to get what you want in the past? Share your experience.

- [Q] How can you avoid doing that in the future?

Optional Activity

Purpose: *To help us check our own attitudes.*

Activity: *Divide the group into threes and fours. Ask each person to share with their group something they are trying to accomplish or acquire right now that is being met with resistance. After everyone has shared briefly, ask them, "Is it possible that a lack of meekness (or arrogance) on your part towards others might be the source of resistance? Sharing this in itself will take a meek and humble spirit. Give it a try."*

Teaching point two: Good relationships are marked by caring as much for the other person as yourself.

On the TV sitcom *Seinfeld*, a favorite character is the "Soup Nazi." In order to get his wonderful soup, you had to do everything the Soup Nazi's way. You had to line up, stand up straight, no talking, no day dreaming, step up to the counter, state the type and size soup you wanted, and move to the right. Any deviation from this and the Soup Nazi yelled, "No soup for you!"

Too often we treat others this way. Instead, we should be affirming and encouraging each other with a gentle attitude, and above all, treating others the way we want to be treated.

Read Matthew 7:7-12.

- [Q] The antonyms for ask, seek, and knock are command, insist, and force. How do these antonyms make you feel when others use them with you?

- [Q] If we take Jesus' words in verse 8 at face value, what does it mean?

Leader's Note: *There is no reason to not take Jesus' words a face value. But many people don't believe that is just about asking, seeking, or knocking. Most people understand that there are three classes of prayer requests: first, there are things we*



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want that God definitely knows won't be good for us. We don't receive these things from God—we usually have to take them, steal them, or sacrifice to get them. The second type of requests is the “maybes”—maybe God does want this job promotion for us, maybe not. These second type of requests are usually matters of his specific will for us—who we marry, our careers, etc. The third type of request is for things that God definitely wants for us—wisdom, patience, love, self-control. We can be 100 percent confident that if we persist in asking, he will give us these things.

[Q] Share a current situation in which you need to put Jesus' strategy of asking, seeking or knocking into practice.

Leader's Note: *The things we often persist in praying for are things like “Lord, help my father to come to understand who you are and accept your grace.” God doesn't make robots that do his bidding, but he does shield people from evil, coordinate events to display weird coincidences, plant ideas or dreams, and inspire Christ-followers to share his love with them.*

People often give up praying for something they know God wants for them because they don't receive it immediately. Learning to say please in the right way for the right things often involves persistence, both with God and with people.

[Q] What is something you have had to persist in asking for before you received it (either from parents, God, or from others in your life)?

[Q] Sometimes God or others know that we are asking for “snakes”—things that won't be good for us. Is there anything that you've persistently asked for that you eventually realized wasn't God's will for you to receive? Tell us about it.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

In his book *Pursuit of God*, A. W. Tozer describes a truly humble person:

The meek man is not a human mouse afflicted with a sense of his own inferiority. Rather, he may be in his moral life as bold as a lion and as strong as Samson; but he has stopped being fooled about himself. He has accepted God's estimate of his own life. He knows he is as weak and helpless as God has declared him to be, but paradoxically, he knows at the same time that he is, in the sight of God, more important than angels. ... He knows well that the world will never see him as God sees him and he has stopped caring.

Action Point: Close in moments of silence by asking the group to consider whether they are humble before God and others. Give them time to confess this to God, then close the meeting in a verbal prayer.

—Written by John Ciesniewski. Edited by Steve Brewer, Bill Barton, and JoHannah Reardon.



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Getting Along with People

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 4

Learn to Say *Please*

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Lesson #4

Scripture:

Matthew 5:5; 6:5-8; 7:7-12

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

In *The Divine Conspiracy*, Dallas Willard suggests that Matthew 7:7 (ask ... seek ... knock) is not just about how we pray to God, but how we deal with each other in community. He says that “request is the heart of community,” because when I truly ask things of people, I am not demanding, manipulating, pushing, or telling them what they should and shouldn’t do: “When I ask someone to do or to be or to give something, I stand with that person in the domain of constraint without force or necessitation. We are together. A request by its very nature unites. It is a way of getting that requires us to go through the freedom of the person being asked. In the very act of asking, in the very nature of the request, we acknowledge that the other person can say no. That is how we are to relate to others.”

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: Good relationships are marked by meekness and humility.

Teaching point two: Good relationships are marked by caring as much for the other person as yourself.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

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Getting Along with People

LEADER'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 5

Learn to Say *Thank You*

Those two words can salvage attitudes.

Saying “thank you” is all about expressing gratitude to the people we love for what they do for us and who they are. It’s about getting good at catching others doing something right instead of always complaining about what’s wrong. In this discussion guide, we’ll take a good look at how important and precious those we love are to us and commit ourselves to being ones who regularly express our appreciation in ways that count. We’ll also discuss what it means to say “thank you” to Jesus for what he did for us on the cross. Gratitude is at the heart of the commitment to follow Christ.

Lesson #5

Scripture:

Luke 17:11–19; Acts 2:38; Romans 5:6–8; 10:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:11–18

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

Have you ever heard someone say, "I love my job so much, I'd do it even if they didn't pay me"? Three things motivate someone to feel this way. First, they have a job that allows them to use their God-given spiritual gifts and earthly talents. Second, they have a job that allows them to fulfill a God-given passion for making a difference in this world and in the lives of others. Third, they have a boss who frequently tells them how much he or she appreciates them. Their boss knows the power of words and how to genuinely say "thank you" for their efforts.

Sometimes just a few words and three minutes of your time is all it takes to make someone love their job because they feel appreciated, even if the task at hand isn't their passion.

Gratitude is the key to the health and enjoyment of all our relationships. We are told in the Bible to give thanks to God at all times, and that includes the people in our lives. Someone once said the deepest need in human nature is the need to feel appreciated. Throughout the New Testament, the apostle Paul tells the people he leads how he thanks God for them.

Discussion starters:

[Q] Who can ask you for just about anything, and before they finish asking you are already nodding your head yes? Or vice versa, who can you ask for just about anything, and you know they will say yes.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: We need to get into the habit of expressing our thankfulness to God.

Read Luke 17:11-19. People with leprosy had to announce their condition if they approached anyone or if others came near them. Leprosy is a disfiguring disease, and they were considered unclean during Jesus' time. Because the people of that day didn't know what caused leprosy, they were terrified to be around anyone with the condition, so lepers were banished outside of the city to their own colonies. To be healed would have given the person his life back.

[Q] How would healing change their lives not only physically, but in other ways? What would be a modern-day disease that might be comparable in repugnance?

Leader's Note: *Sometimes leprosy went into remission. A leper who thought he was healed would go to a priest who could declare him clean (see Leviticus 14). Once declared clean the leper could once again live in society. Lepers were in the lowest class of society. A healed leper got more than his physical health back; he got all his*



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relationships back. Some modern day diseases that have the stigma that leprosy did could be AIDS, drug addictions, sexually transmitted diseases, and mental illnesses.

- [Q] If you were one of the ten lepers, what reasons could you possibly have for not going back to thank Jesus?
- [Q] What is something you have been healed of (not necessarily something physical)? What are some reasons you are not as grateful as you should be?
- [Q] There was a deep hatred between Samaritans and Jewish people. The Jews considered the Samaritans a mixed race, half-breeds, who also combined Jewish religious ideas with pagan concepts and practices. What do you think is the significance that the only leper to return to give thanks was a Samaritan?

Read Romans 5:6-8. Paul used the words *powerless, ungodly, and sinners* to describe us before we came to know Christ. Jesus, before you ever knew him or could thank him, allowed himself to be crucified that you might find peace with God even though you didn't deserve it.

- [Q] How often do you think we need to thank Christ for this? How can we thank him?
- [Q] Read Romans 10:9 and Acts 2:38. What does saying "thank you" to Jesus include according to these verses? What will be the result of such thankfulness?

Optional Activity

Purpose: *To develop a thankful attitude.*

Activity: *Make a list of at least ten specific things you need to thank God for. Take time this week to give thanks to God for these things in prayer.*

Teaching point two: We need to be thankful to God for everyone he has put in our lives.

The Christ-following journey is a lifelong one, and it is often beset by ordeals and tests of perseverance. An encouraging word when faced with trials can be the difference between finishing strong and falling down.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11-18.

- [Q] Both those in authority and those who are weak are mentioned in these verses. Why do both need our encouragement?
- [Q] What about people that you don't necessarily care for? How can you even want to affirm them?

Leader's Note: *We ask God for his love for them and to see them from his point of view.*

- [Q] Which circumstances does Paul say we don't have to give thanks for in verse 18? How can we learn to give thanks to God for the hard stuff? Why should we?



Optional Activity

Purpose: *To demonstrate the power of affirming words.*

Activity: *Ask for a volunteer to sit in the middle of your group circle while every other group member says one thing they appreciate about that person. Give everyone in the group a turn to be in the middle. If you are not accustomed to saying affirming and appreciative words to others, or hearing them yourself, this will be good practice. If your group is very large, you may want to break into two groups to do this.*

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

Jesus said in the Book of Revelation, “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.” (Revelation 3:15–16)

Do you want to follow Jesus a little bit or do you want to follow him completely? Because if you want to follow him completely, you’ll follow him in your behavior and live a life of gratefulness to God and to others.

Action Point: Where would you place yourself on the spiritual thermometer (hot ... cold ... lukewarm)? What more do you need to say or do to complete your “thank you” to Jesus and to others? Take action right away.

—Written by John Ciesniewski. Edited by Steve Brewer, Bill Barton, and JoHannah Reardon.



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Getting Along with People

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE FOR STUDY 5

Learn to Say *Thank You*

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Lesson #5

Scripture:

Luke 17:11–19; Acts 2:38; Romans 5:6–8; 10:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:11–18



PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

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PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: We need to get into the habit of expressing our thankfulness to God.

Teaching point two: We need to be thankful to God for everyone he has put in our lives.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

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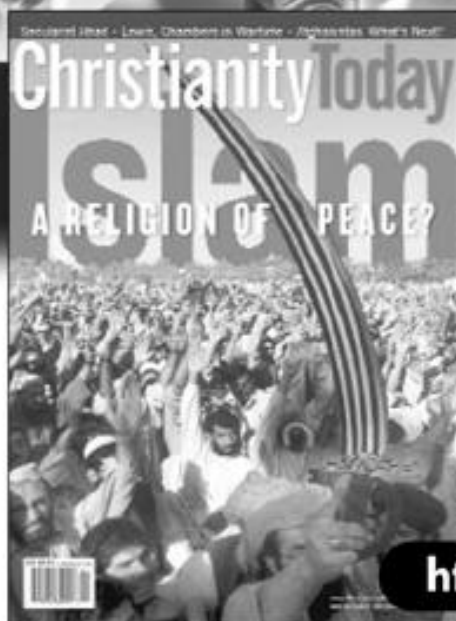
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UNDERSTAND THE WORLD



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