

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT? Jelani Lewis

Focus As our world is grappling with racism and division, the Church has a responsibility to provide heavenly perspective. Jesus showed us the way to love one another. We need to remember to engage with compassion like Jesus did.

Fun Pastor Jelani Lewis mentioned that “the Lewis nose” was a defining feature by which people could readily identify members of his family. What features, personality traits, or values run in your family?

Review Key Scripture: John 13

1. Jesus modeled what love looks like.

During Jesus' day, the feet of guests would be washed by the lowest servant when they entered the house. Though He was the King, Jesus washed the feet of all of His disciples, including Judas. In this way, He showed us that love serves others despite social standing and how they react to us.

2. Jesus commanded us to love one another.

Jesus didn't ask or suggest that we love another in His body; He ordered it. Love between believers is important to Him and is the way that the world sees Him in us.

Group Dynamics Idea Have group members pair up and ask them to read through Matthew 14:14, Matthew 9:36, and Luke 7:13. Then have them take turns discussing how Jesus showed compassion on those who were suffering, and how we could follow His example in the current atmosphere of racism and division. Ask partners to practice listening without interruption or judgment, and engage with compassion and understanding.

Discuss

1. Jesus said, “So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples” (John 13:34–35, NLT). What does loving one another really look like?
2. Pastor Jelani said, “Love looks like a commitment to serve.” Discuss the word *commitment*. What would it look like to be committed to serving? Give practical examples.
3. What is compassion? Describe a time you felt compassion. Did it motivate you to serve?
4. How is compassion different from sympathy and empathy?
5. Pastor Jelani said, “Love looks like a conversation.” Read John 13:6–9. In these verses, Peter asked a question, and Jesus responded with a kingdom perspective for an earthly problem. How did Jesus start this conversation with Peter? How can we as the Church start this conversation with the world?
6. Jesus washed Judas’s feet. What does this reveal about Jesus’ way to love?
7. Jesus didn’t say “change one another.” He said “love one another.” How can you apply this in your life? Think of a specific person or situation.

Take Home As we conclude, remember the following:

- Jesus said His Church will be known by our ability to love one another. It is our defining characteristic.
- Jesus modeled the way we are to love one another.
- Ask God to give you a heart of compassion specifically for those whom you may not understand or who have hurt you.

- Two tips for starting the conversation: be courageous and be understanding. Don't let fear steal your voice.
- Facts don't change minds, friendships do.
- Jesus gave us a commandment to love, not an option. Be courageous in loving others.

Prayer

Lord, we pray healing over our nation for the evils of racism, prejudice, and division. We pray specifically for the Church to heal and be a model of unity and love for the world. We pray that hurt, anger, bitterness, and ignorance will be healed in the name of Jesus and unity restored to the members of Your body. We ask for personal understanding for each one of us when we speak with someone from a different background. We pray for courage to start the conversation. Most of all, we ask for Your compassion to be alive in us through the Holy Spirit as we boldly pursue love with our brothers and sisters. We want to look more like Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.

New Leader Tip Racism is a difficult topic to discuss. Remember to keep the conversation focused on Jesus and His example of love as well as practical ways to gain understanding of one another. Be a model of courage and openheartedness for your group members.