



## Lesson Overview

Week of August 15

*Suggested Material for As Your Students Arrive:*

- Chart paper or whiteboard, appropriate markers

### 1 Life Need:

Discuss examples of how encouragement helps us maintain a steadfast faith.

### 2 Bible Learning:

Explore what it means to have unswerving faith.

### 3 Bible Application:

Identify how and why we persevere in our faith.

### *Suggested Material:*

- *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit:* Reproducible sheet—A Treasured Possession

### 4 Life Response:

Commit to encouraging one another to remain steadfast in your faith.

**Church/Home Theme:**  
We are the Body of Christ.

**Lesson Focus:**  
Encourage each other in your shared faith and remain unswerving.

**Lesson Scripture:**  
Hebrews 10:23-36

# A Persevering Faith

**Don't Go Back**—The author of Hebrews encouraged God's children to hold fast to their beliefs. Some were going backward, starting to regress into old covenant thinking and behaviors. It's essential when believers meet together to encourage fellow Christians to keep their eyes on Christ. Focusing on Him will prevent you from wobbly and unstable thinking. The Bible urges Christians to look out for one another; the Body of Christ is designed that way. The illustration of one match is told repeatedly, but it's true. One lonely burning matchstick can easily be blown out. If you place several together and make a bonfire, that can't be blown out at all. Christians who isolate themselves, claiming they don't need the rest of the Body and the other gifts, are only fooling themselves. It's only a matter of time before their thinking and their Christian walk become unstable.

**Bad Choices**—Don't practice sin or, in other words, repeatedly disobey. Mistakes are made. Bad choices are decided. David is a perfect example in his sin with Bathsheba and murdering her husband. However, Psalm 51 allows us to listen in as David was deeply sorrowful over his actions and pleaded with God for forgiveness and total restoration. His only sacrifice to bring before the Lord was a broken heart.

If the believer refuses to repent and turn back to God, what can they expect? Chastening. The children of Israel who left Egypt are an example. Only two of the original group made it into the promised land. Why? They refused to take God at His Word. When you become casual when it comes to believing God's Word, take a suggestion from David. Fall into the hands of a merciful God, and let Him deal with you.

## As Your Students Arrive

Invite class members to draw cloud shapes on the top half of a sheet of chart paper or a whiteboard. Brainstorm ideas to answer the following questions: What causes discouragement in believers? How might life circumstances shake our faith? Ask them to write their answers in the cloud shapes. Draw a refuge, shelter, or other place of safety on the bottom part of the paper or whiteboard. Discuss the following question: In which situations might we retreat to a place of "safety" in our Christianity? Write ideas in the "place of safety" sketch.

## Link to Last Week

Let a few volunteers share how their faith helped them in the past week.

# 1 Life Need

Discuss examples of how encouragement helps us maintain a steadfast faith.

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## A Persevering Faith

I am so glad that you were able to make it," said Kiara to her friend Samara.

Kiara had run into her old friend at a mutual friend's wedding a few weeks ago. Both women were still living for Christ, though each was facing challenges. For the 34-year-old Kiara, it was still being single.

Then there was Samara, her divorced friend and mother of two. Samara was longing for a good, full-time job.

"Why is it that going to weddings can be like going to class reunions?" Kiara asked after the waitress had left their table.

"I know!" said Samara. "Where are you working now, Kiara? Are you still going to church all the time?"

"When are you ever going to get married, Kiara?" chimed in Samara. "Do you want to get married? Why don't you ask God for a husband?"

The two women started to laugh together. Throughout the lunch, Kiara and Samara broke bread, but shared the most important thing between them—Christ. The two women encouraged one another in the things of the Lord.

"This lunch has been such a blessing," said Samara.

"Yes. It was like deep calling to deep, and iron sharpening iron," added Kiara. "We don't know what tomorrow holds for us, sister. But we know Christ. He has control of our tomorrows, and we can trust Him."

"Amen," said Samara.

**1. How does discouragement affect our faith and relationship with God?**

**2. How can encouragement from fellow believers support and help us persevere in our faith?**

**3. What have you observed or contributed in a meeting of Christians in which group members were encouraged and supported in their faith?**

LESSON FOCUS: Encourage each other in your shared faith and remain unwavering.

Begin your lesson reading the opening anecdote from the student book, then have your students form small groups to answer **Questions 1, 2, and 3**.

Question 1 encourages class members to discuss how discouragement affects our faith in God. In the same way dark clouds block the sun's light, discouragement can dim our view of God and His light, causing us to doubt His love and care for us. When we believe we can no longer see Him—or evidence of His work in our life—we stumble in our faith.

Question 2 prompts us to consider how we can strengthen our faith in the face of doubt and discouragement. The word "encourage" means "to give someone confidence by supporting the person." When we walk alongside someone in their struggles, this gives them confidence and strengthens their faith as they realize they are not alone; God is with them as we serve as the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-14, 26-27).

Question 3 provides students the opportunity to talk about their personal experiences meeting together with fellow believers to encourage one another. When we strengthen and support one another in tangible ways, this helps us remain steadfast in our faith, not wavering, even in difficult circumstances.

# 2 Bible Learning

Explore what it means to have unswerving faith.

Our faith is what keeps us going through all situations, and we know that God is always on our side.

## UNWAVERING FAITH

Read Hebrews 10:23-25 then discuss the following key points:

- We can hold unswervingly to our faith because God is faithful to His promises.

- The Lord has faithfully kept promises in the past, and He will keep His promises in the future.
- We cling to our faith because of our hope in the resurrection.
- We keep a firm grip on our faith because a day of reckoning will come in the future.
- We look forward to our Lord's return.
- While we wait, we hold steadfastly to our faith in Him.
- Meeting together with fellow believers can give

## BIBLE EXTRA

### Godly Provocation

While the NIV translates Hebrews 10:24 "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds," the KJV translates the verse "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." When we consider "provoking" someone, we usually think of it in a negative sense because it often produces negative emotions, such as irritation or even anger, in the one being provoked. However, our lesson's Scripture passage casts provocation in a very positive light. The Greek word for "provoke" or "spur" in Hebrews 10:24 is *paroxysmos*, which also carries with it the idea of incitement or contention. This helps us understand that *paroxysmos* incites us to do something that we might not otherwise do except for the provocation. We naturally contend against what we are being provoked to do. Such is the case when it comes to love and good works.

Since right attitudes and godly activities often go against our natural inclinations, a little godly provocation can help incite us to do what is right: "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another" (Prov. 27:17). This well-known proverb is a great picture of godly provocation. If a knife could feel pain, sharpening would be a painful process, indeed. With sparks flying as the blade is turned from a dull to a well-honed edge, so too does godly provocation sharpen God's people to serve Him more effectively. The crust and corrosion are scraped away, leaving a tool that is clean and useful in the Master's hand, prepared for every good work (see 2 Tim. 2:21).

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## Unwavering Faith

*Hebrews 10:23-25, KJV*

23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

*Hebrews 10:23-25, NIV*

<sup>23</sup>Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

<sup>24</sup>And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup>not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

God's people can hold unswervingly to our faith because we know that our God is faithful to His promises. Consider the resurrection hope that God's children have, a compelling reason to cling tenaciously to our faith in Him. Because Jesus lives, we can have unwavering faith that God will one day raise us from the grave as well.

The second reason for keeping a firm grip on our faith is that there is a day of reckoning coming sometime in the future. Even now, we can see the approaching "Day" (vs. 25), a reference to the day of Christ's return. We still look forward to His return, holding firmly to our faith in Him.

Our preparation for this "Day" must include God-honoring living, but we need God's strength to live in a manner that glorifies Him. He has given us our brothers and sisters in Christ to exhort and encourage us to do so. This is why we must meet with fellow believers and "spur" (vs. 24) one another to love and to do good deeds.

**4. How are God's people to hold fast to their faith in Him?**

**5. What two compelling reasons do we have to**

FOCUS: Encourage each other in your shared faith and remain unswerving.



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on pp. 832-834 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*.

us strength to live a life that glorifies God.

- We assemble together to sharpen one another to serve God more effectively.
- When we gather together, we can encourage one another to let God's light shine in our lives.

#### SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

God's people are to hold fast to their faith steadfastly and unswervingly. This means we will resolutely trust Him in all areas of life no matter what circumstances we are facing.

#### SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 5

Our Scripture passage gives us two very compelling reasons to persevere in faith. The first is that our God is faithful to us, so we can trust that He will keep all His promises. The second is that we know the day of God's judgment is coming, perhaps soon. And considering the severity of it, we are encouraged to cling resolutely to our faith in Him, living in a manner that glorifies and points others to Him.

*persevere in our faith in God?*

#### 6. Why should God's people meet together?

### Uncompromising Faith

*Hebrews 10:26-31, KJV*

26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

*Hebrews 10:26-31, NIV*

<sup>26</sup>If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, <sup>27</sup>but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. <sup>28</sup>Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. <sup>29</sup>How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

<sup>30</sup>For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." <sup>31</sup>It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The importance of God's people meeting and encouraging one another to righteous living is now underscored in these verses. Bible scholars have various understandings of what these verses mean for Christ's followers, but all agree

#### SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 6

By meeting with one another, God's people spur one another to love and good works. They exhort and encourage each other, which is especially important when we consider the coming day of judgment.

### UNCOMPROMISING FAITH

Read Hebrews 10:26-31 and highlight these key points:

- Willful, continual sin against God deserves His righteous judgment.
- Those who rebelliously continue in their sin trample underfoot Jesus and His sacrificial work.
- Such people insult the Spirit of grace and live as if Jesus' blood is unclean and unholy.
- God condemns such behavior and He will have vengeance.
- Therefore, it is important to persevere in our faith in times of trial and temptation.
- Meeting together with fellow believers helps us stand strong and unswervingly in our faith.
- We desire to be found faithful to Him because His precious blood has redeemed us.

#### SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 7

Willful, deliberate, persistent sin

tramples underfoot the Son of God and treats His precious blood as something vile and unclean. It also insults and treats the Spirit of grace spitefully.

### SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 8

Since violation of the law of Moses brought with it the death penalty, those who trample the Son of God underfoot and spitefully treat the Holy Spirit deserve only wrath and vengeance at the hands of the living God.

### SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 9

The seriousness of such sinful behavior underscores the need for God's people to be faithful in coming together, because we cannot stand against the trials and temptations of life alone. There are times when we do fall, but when we are with our fellow believers, help is available to get back on our feet.

### UNRELENTING FAITH

After reading Hebrews 10:32-36, discuss these important points with your class:

- God's faithfulness to us in the past encourages us to persevere in current trials and tribulations.
- The believers addressed in this letter

walked faithfully through dark times of affliction and persecution.

- They endured earthly loss with an unrelenting faith because they trusted in their eternal future.
- Jesus promised heavenly reward for those who suffer persecution for His name's sake.
- God rewards our steadfast faith and confidence in Him.
- Faithfully doing God's will increases our assurance in our heavenly reward.
- The hope we have in our future with God helps us stand sure in our faith.

### SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 10

When times get rough, and they will, it is

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that willful, continual sin against God is worthy of His righteous judgment. From God's perspective, those who willfully continue in their sin, shaking their spiritual fists in His face, are in fact trampling underfoot His dear Son. In so doing, they treat the precious blood that He shed for their sins as something unclean and unholy.

Furthermore, this willful sinning tramples underfoot the Son of God, vilifies His precious blood, and treats the Holy Spirit spitefully. Considering all this, it is small wonder that such behavior is absolutely condemned by God. Vengeance is the Lord's, and He will repay.

Knowing the seriousness of such sin, we can see why it is so important to persevere in faith, no matter what trials or temptations we have. Because perseverance in our faith is so important, so too is gathering to encourage and admonish one another to persevere.

**7.** *What does willful, deliberate persistent sin do to the Son of God, as well as to the Spirit of grace?*

**8.** *Considering the seriousness of such sin, what do these sinners deserve?*

**9.** *Considering the seriousness of such sin, what should God's people do?*

### Unrelenting Faith

Hebrews 10:32-36, KJV

32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

33 Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

34 For ye had compassion of

Hebrews 10:32-36, NIV

<sup>32</sup>Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering. <sup>33</sup>Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. <sup>34</sup>You suffered along

### BIBLE EXTRA

#### Knowing God's Will

Our lesson passage ends with a call to do God's will (Heb. 10:36). Jesus also placed great emphasis on doing the will of God. Those who do God's will have the glorious promise of entering His kingdom, as well as becoming part of His true family (Matt. 7:21; 12:50). And by doing God's will, we gain insight into the true doctrine and teachings of our Lord (John 7:17). Furthermore, as our lesson's Scripture teaches, faithfulness to God's will today brings greater assurance of future reward. With these truths in mind, we can see the importance of doing the will of God. And, of course, we also understand that to do the will of God, we must first know what His will is.

important to remember earlier days when we stood unswervingly in similar trials. Remembering God's faithfulness in those past trials will help us persevere in faith in present trials.

### SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 11

It is important to realize that hope in people, earthly treasure, etc. is sorely misplaced. That realization then frees God's people to look to the real source of hope, namely heaven where we will spend eternity with our Lord and Savior.

### SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 12

The more we faithfully fulfill God's will now, the surer, more real that hope of heaven becomes.

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me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

<sup>35</sup>So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.

<sup>36</sup>You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

Our lesson closes with more hope to persevere unswervingly in our faith. When we recall past trials, tribulations, even persecutions, and how God faithfully saw us through them, we are encouraged to persevere in current or future tests of our faith. This is why these believers were to recall earlier days when they faithfully walked in God's light through the dark times of persecution and humiliation for their faith in Christ. They not only faithfully stood for the Lord during those dark days, but they also stood unswervingly with others who suffered like afflictions. Because they stood with fellow imprisoned believers, the persecuting authorities confiscated the property of these believers.

Even so, they joyfully stood in faith as they endured the loss of their earthly possessions, knowing that in heaven they had better, eternal possessions. Jesus Himself promised "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:11-12).

**10.** *What are God's people to remember that will help them stand in unswerving faith?*

**11.** *Where should God's people place their confidence?*

**12.** *How can we gain greater assurance of future reward?*

The closer we walk with Him, the more we can see with eyes of faith the great reward that awaits those whose faith is placed in Him.

## BIBLE EXTRA

### The Precious Blood

As our Scripture passage makes abundantly clear, willful and continual sin is horrible because, among other things, it treats the precious blood of our Savior as something vile and unclean. Nothing this earth can offer compares to His precious blood. As Peter reminded his readers, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

Unlike perishable things, even silver or gold, the cleansing power of our dear Savior's shed blood is without end. Considering what the precious blood of Jesus has done for us, may we ever be found faithful to Him. And if we do sin, and there will be times when we stumble, may we confess it and be reconciled to Him quickly.

## WINDOW ON THE WORD

### A Fellow Pilgrim

*John Bunyan survived his time in the British army during the Civil War of 1644, which led him to believe God had spared his life for a purpose. He sought forgiveness for his sins and later became an effective lay preacher to tell others how they could also find faith in God. During his ministry, he encouraged his fellow believers in their shared faith. Arrested for holding church at a friend's house, John Bunyan experienced trials and temptations while in prison, which led him to write his spiritual autobiography and later, Pilgrim's Progress. Bunyan was willing to undergo the hardships of prison to stand for what he believed and remain unswerving in his faith. We might not write a book as Bunyan did, but our Scripture passage certainly calls us to follow this pilgrim's example, to celebrate our faith as we encourage other believers and to stand firm in times of trouble.*

# 3 Bible Application

Identify how and why we persevere in our faith.

Photocopy this page and give instructions to each group. Make copies of the handout from the Resource Kit for the group using it and provide colored markers and scissors. Put up the poster from the Kit for those discussing it.

## GROUP ACTIVITIES

### Discussion Group

Read “Standing Firm in Our Faith” from the student book and respond to **Questions 13, 14, and 15**. You may have attended a small group and discussed how people in the Bible remained steadfast in their faith. You may have met with one or more fellow believers specifically for prayer and encouragement. When we face temptation, it is important to stay in contact with one or more trusted Christian friends. We can ask for specific prayer, as well as encourage our friend(s) to stand strong in their daily struggles. We strengthen our faith when we seek to do God’s will and walk closely with Him through personal Bible reading and prayer.

### Write a Letter

Write a letter to someone who is in a different place in their journey of faith than you. Include in your letter two compelling reasons to persevere in faith. Then suggest at least one way the recipient can remain steadfast in his or her own faith.

### Poster: ‘Let Us Hold Unswervingly’

Read the verse, then discuss these questions: When have you been “unswerving” in your faith? How are you, or how could you be, spurring fellow believers on to good deeds?



### Handout: ‘A Treasured Possession’

Follow the directions on the handout to reflect on and describe the value of your faith. Share your completed graphic with class members and create a bulletin board display of your shared faith. When we encourage one another in our faith, it helps us remain unswerving in our daily walk with God, trials, and temptations.

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## Standing Firm in Our Faith

We are not called to hold fast to our faith without good reason. Our Scripture passage reminds us that God faithfully keeps His promises—in the past as well as in the future. We are encouraged to hold steadfastly to our faith in Him because a day of reckoning will come; Jesus lives and will return for His faithful followers. While we wait in faith for our future resurrection with Jesus, our goal is to live holy lives before the Lord. We cannot do this in our own strength without meeting together with fellow believers.

It is possible for those who are part of a Christian community to commit horrible, continual sin even “after [they] have received the knowledge of the truth” (Heb. 10:26). Those who live this way in essence trample the Son of God under foot, living as if His sacrifice was unnecessary. God will punish those who insult the Spirit of grace in this way. When we are tempted to fall into willful disobedience, it is important to meet with fellow believers to stand strong in our faith. Their encouragement can help us withstand trials and temptations so our faith will not be compromised.

God’s past faithfulness encourages us to persevere in our own faith. We have the examples of biblical saints who walked steadfastly through persecution, meeting together with others to stand firm in their faith. They endured earthly loss because they trusted and believed God for their eternal future. In the same way, God will reward our steadfast faith and confidence in Him. Our hope in an eternal future with God helps us walk closely with Him now and strengthens our faith to persevere.

**13.** *What have you done this week to hold fast to your faith in God?*

**14.** *How can you guard and protect your faith when you face trials or temptations?*

**15.** *How does fellowship and encouragement from fellow believers help you remain firm in your faith?*

# 4 Life Response

Commit to encouraging one another to remain steadfast in your faith.

Your class has studied what it means to hold fast to faith, along with specific ways we can learn to persevere in our faith. Ask students to read “Encouraging One Another in Steadfast Faith.” Invite them to consider how they might plan and implement a mentoring program in which older and younger adults encourage each other to persevere and grow in their faith. Ask them to return to the small group they had in Step 1 to create a plan for mentoring between generations. What are

some specific ways older adults could encourage younger believers to persevere in their faith with unswerving commitment? In which situations or circumstances are you tempted to retreat to a safe and sound Christianity? How might a mentoring relationship encourage each generation to grow in their faith? Discuss practical ways to implement the plan within your class, small groups, or your church community.

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## Encouraging One Another in Steadfast Faith

One important way to develop an unswerving faith is to meet with fellow believers for encouragement and support as we seek to live in a way that glorifies God.

Imagine how you might encourage fellow Christians who are older or younger to keep going and not withdraw from fellowship from the Lord and fellow believers.

► *How could older adults encourage younger adults to keep going in the faith? In what areas could younger adults support older adults to keep going in their faith?*

### KEY VERSE

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised. —Hebrews 10:23, KJV

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. —Hebrews 10:23, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of August 16 through August 22

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** Deuteronomy 13:1-4—Testing Our Love for God.
- Tues.** John 14:15-24—Love God by Keeping His Commandments.
- Wed.** 1 John 4:1, 4-6—Discerning the Spirit of Truth and Error.
- Thurs.** 1 John 4:7-12—Knowing God, We Can Love Others.
- Fri.** 1 John 5:1-3—Faith Is the Victory.
- Sat.** 1 John 5:6-12—Believers in Jesus Have Life.
- Sun.** 1 John 4:2-3, 13-17; 5:4-5—Faith that Loves Overcomes Obstacles.

Close in prayer, asking God to provide opportunities for your students to meet with fellow believers to encourage one another to share their faith and live in ways that glorify God and draw others to Him. Pray that God will help them support each other as they develop a strong, unwavering faith.



As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week's *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn't be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

## Before Teaching Next Week's Lesson

Before next week, read 1 John 4:2-3, 13-17; 5:4-5. Ask your students to think about what it means to love like Jesus.