"The New Community People"

John 13:34-35

STRENGTH for the Journey with Joe Stowell

Part of the RBC family of Ministries

Individual Study Introduction

After listening to the audio segment, use the following questions as your time allows. You may want to record your answers or jot down thoughts and notes in a personal journal. You may also want to use your journal as a record of your prayer time with God. Write out your prayer or simply record your requests and the areas of your life you are releasing to God. This written record will help you to watch God's movement in your life. You'll see more clearly the ways God is giving you "strength for the journey"!

Getting Started:

In this segment Joe Stowell points out that Jesus' disciples demonstrated a wide range of temperaments, from impetuous Peter to his quiet brother, Andrew.

- Is your temperament more like Peter's or Andrew's?
- Does your family consist of a wide range of temperaments, or are you all pretty much alike?
- What temperament characteristics do you find easy to get along with in friends, family, and work associates, and which do you find challenging?

Strength through Scripture:

Read John 13:34–35.

1. Joe states that, as a pastor, there are often a few people in the church whom he wonders how he could love. But then Joe remembers that Jesus died for them. If they are precious to God, they can be precious to Joe. If they were a target of His love, then they can be a target of Joe's love. Is there someone you need to view in that way? What will make your love for them challenging?

Notes:

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

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2. Joe shares six ways that Jesus loved the disciples. The first was with His time and talents. Joe speculates that when Jesus told the disciples to love one another "as I have loved you" that they would have "hit the replay button" to recall how He had loved them. If you had been one of the disciples, what incidents do you think you would have recalled?

3. Jesus loved the disciples regardless of their culture. How excited would you be to welcome someone who couldn't speak your language to be a part of your church?

4. Jesus also loved the disciples regardless of their failures. Peter denied Christ, but a few days later Jesus met Peter on the beach and called Peter back to Himself. Aren't you glad Jesus keeps showing up on the beach of your heart after you've failed? Have you told Him so lately? Is there anyone in your life that you could "show up" for again?

5. What could you do among your Christian friends to enable people to say about your church what was said about the New Testament church: "My, how they love one another"?

Digging Deeper:

If you have enough time, answer one or more of these optional questions. But be sure to save time for the final two sections.

1. Joe points out that Jesus loved the disciples regardless of class, from fishermen who probably weren't rich to deep-pockets Matthew who made a lot of money ripping everybody off. Do you have class lines in your church? What acts of love could you do to erase the lines?

2. Jesus also loved the disciples regardless of temperaments, from impetuous Peter to his quiet brother Andrew. How do you feel about Joe's statement: "Here's a liberating thought: I don't think Jesus liked everything about these disciples. You don't have to like somebody to love them, because love transcends temperament problems and temperament differences"?

3. How much do you think we Christians are guilty of thinking and acting as if the world will know we are Christ's disciples by keeping external rules—rather than by our love for each other?

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Strength through Reflection:

1. The central issue of transformation is whether or not we are loving like Christ loved more today than we were in the past. Is your love for the "one-anothers" in God's family around you more evident today than it was at the beginning of this four-part series?

2. Joe closed this message by saying that you build a new community one act of love at a time. How committed are you to doing your part? Think of one way to kick-start the process this week.

Strength through Prayer:

Spend a few moments in prayer. Use the prayer below as a guide.

Joe's Closing Prayer:

Dear Lord, thank You for putting me into Your new community with one spectacular act of love. And, Lord, I pray on behalf of all of us who have been involved in this Bible study today: Help us to always remember and to rejoice and live with a depth of gratitude for that one act of love at the cross that You committed to bring us into Your family.

And now, Lord, it is my prayer that, having learned all that we have learned over the last four weeks, our love for one another would be expressive of Your love. You died in history that we might love in the present. So, Lord, it's my prayer now that You will lead each one of us—before the day is over—to somebody to whom we can show the spectacular love that You have loved us with in a concrete act of love, one act at a time. May Your Spirit teach us and guide us for Your glory. In Christ's name, Amen.

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