

21. The Secret to Love

Daily Devotions

Day 1—Apply

1. Read John 5:19, 30, 6:38. 7:18, 28, 8:28, 12:49-50
2. Pick phrases out of several of these verses—especially ones that convict you of being not like that. Write them out on just one side of a 3 by 5 card that you take with you for the next three weeks. If you're driving, put it out on the dashboard, if you're in an office, prop it up on your desk, if you're at home, put it in a place where you'll see it several times a day.
3. As you look at the card during the day, pray and ask God to show you ways where you want your own way.

Day 2—Imagine

1. Keep reading your card!
2. Read John 7:1-9
3. Put yourself in Jesus' brothers' shoes and tell this story from their point of view. What were your concerns about Jesus? What did he seem oblivious to? Try to capture the pride of those of us who love to give free advice!

Day 3—Reflect on “Demanding”

1. Keep reading your card!
2. Read John 7:1-9
3. Why didn't the brothers see what they were like?

4. Why is it hard to see our self-will?

5. What do you notice about your self-will? What are its characteristics, its patterns?

Day 4—Reflect on ‘Motivation’

1. Keep reading your card!
2. Read John 5:41, 42, 44.
3. What motivates Jesus?

4. If we were to get more of this motivation in our hearts, how might that transform our relationships?

Day 5—Apply

1. Keep reading your card!
2. Read *Love Walked Among Us*, pp. 117-121a.
3. Write out an incident from your life in detail, similar to the incident mentioned in Point 3 “Our Self-Will”, that has your self-will in it. Ideally, it is with someone you know well or live with. In close relationships, our self-will comes out the most. The subtle examples are the best where we just add a word, a phrase or a comment that has some “push” in it, some demand for the other person to conform to our will.

Day 6—Little Victories

1. Keep reading your card!
2. Write out a little victory you had this week in the area of self-will. Remember, the first step of change is just seeing the need for change. Often, we become discouraged when we see ourselves in a new light, and we give up. But real change almost always feels discouraging in the beginning because we can’t change unless we see the bad. That is always the first step.

Day 7—Anticipate

1. Read Luke 5:15-16.
2. What might this aspect of Jesus have to do with the surrender of his will to his Father?

22: Getting Guidance from God

Daily Devotions

Day 1—Reading

1. Keep reading your card!
2. Read *Love Walked Among Us*, pp. 121b-125.
3. What convicts you as you read?

Day 2³/₄Apply

1. Keep reading your card! You're probably getting sick of this reminder to look at your card, but don't weary, we're just applying the Word to your life...which is the point of this lesson.
2. How has the scripture on this card and the effort to look at it daily affected your self-will?

Day 3—Reflect on the surrendered will.

1. Keep reading your card!
2. How does a surrendered self-will change the way you relate to other people? How are you different? Why are you different?

Day 4³/₄Reflect on Prayer

1. Keep reading your card!
2. Read Luke 15-16 and Matthew 7:7-12.
3. How is prayer a substitute for self-will?

4. What is hard about pursuing prayer instead of pursuing your own will? Which takes longer? Which involves a kind of a death? Why?

Day 5—Little Victories

1. Keep reading your card!
2. Describe a little victory you had this week in the area of self-will. This is likely to be an incident where you wanted to say something that had a little twist in it but you didn't. Ideally, describe how God's Word and/or prayer helped re-shape your own will.

Day 6—Anticipate

1. Keep reading your card!
2. Read Luke 2:41-52.
3. What strikes you about Jesus' will in this incident?

Day 7—Anticipate

1. Keep reading your card!
2. Read John 2:1-11
3. What strikes you about Jesus' will in this incident?

23. Saying “No” to Someone You Love

Daily Devotions

Day 1—Read

1. Keep reading your card! (Hang in there! This is the last week we’ll have this reminder!)
2. Read *Love Walked Among Us*, pp. 127-131a.
3. What strikes or convicts you as you read?

Day 2—Reflect on strong-willed people

1. Keep reading your card!
2. Read Luke 2:41-52.
3. Do you have anyone in your life who is the way Mary is (in this incident)? Write their initials down. _____
4. Describe an incident where this person was aggressive or passing on guilt.

5. What is it like to be around them when they do this? What does it do to you?

Day 3—Reflect on honesty

1. Keep reading your card!
2. Read Luke 2:41-52.
3. Think of the person mention in Day 2. What are your instinctive responses—surrender, attack, or retreat? Describe in detail a time when you did one of those things.
4. How is Jesus different from you in this incident?

5. Why is Jesus able to both obey his mother and yet not be intimidated by her?

6. What is freeing about the way Jesus relates with his mother?

7. Think of the person mentioned in Day 2. What would be freeing for you to be honest like Jesus?

8. Think of an incident where you reacted badly to the self-willed person in your life. Re-live that incident but change your response by writing out a short response to the willful person that reflects a Jesus-like honesty.

Day 4—Reflect on living with a strong willed person.

1. Keep reading your card!
2. Read John 2:1-11
3. How does Jesus' surrender to his heavenly Father, free him to love his mother?

4. How does Jesus love her with honesty? How does Jesus love her with compassion?

5. Why is it hard to be both honest and compassionate in the same incident?

6. How might Jesus' honesty appear to his mother (negatively)?

7. How might Jesus' compassion appear to his mother (negatively)?

Day 5—More reflections on living with a strong-willed person

1. Keep reading your card!

2. Read John 2:1-11

3. How does submitting to God's will free you to be honest?

4. Explain how this third part of love we are learning (a surrendered will to God) shapes honesty?

5. How does a surrendered will to God (the subject of this unit) balance out compassion?

Day 6—Little Victory

1. Keep reading your card!
2. Describe a little victory in the area of love. Ideally (but not necessarily) describe an area where you were freed to be honest with someone who is strong willed.

Day 7—Anticipate

1. Keep reading your card! (You can now retire it, if you want!)
2. Read Mark 3:20-35
3. How do you see Jesus relating with his mother here? What is driving the way Jesus is relating with her?

24. Learning to Give Up Control

Daily Devotions

Day 1—Reading

1. Read Love Walked Among Us, pp. 131b-135
2. What convicts you as you read?

Day 2—Application

1. Re-read the story of Jeff and Lois in Love Walked Among Us or in your notes to Point 1.
2. At times, do you have trouble saying “no” when you should be more honest? Look at the three reasons it is hard for us to say “no”, mentioned in the last question of Point 1.
3. Why is that?
4. Read John 5:41,42, 44.
5. How might “having the love of God in your heart” change your ability to say “no”?

Day 3—Use Your Imagination

1. Read Mark 3:20-35.
2. Use your imagination to describe this incident from either Mary’s perspective. Try to capture her self-assurance, her concern for Jesus, and her satisfaction when she tries to take control.
3. Is there any area or person in your life that you are trying to control when you should be surrendering? Often, it is something where someone is hurting us.

Day 4—Use Your Imagination

1. Read John 19:25-27 and Luke 2:35.
2. Describe this incident as well from Mary's perspective. Use your imagination to capture what is going on in her heart.

Day 5—Use Your Imagination

1. Read Acts 1:12-14.
2. How is Mary different in this incident than in the first three incidents (boy Jesus at the Temple, wedding at Cana, thinking Jesus is crazy)?
3. When you surrender control why is praying the logical thing to do?
4. Use your imagination and have Mary reflect on her life with Jesus. What process has she gone through? What has happened to her heart? Our hearts are no different from Mary's so you can reflect on your own hearts.

Day 6—Little Victories

1. Describe a Little Victory you've had in the past week in the area of seeing your self-will. Maybe it was just a word or a phrase you added in a conversation where you went into a "sell" mode (or a "retreat" mode) instead of a Spirit-led pray and waiting. The victory might be just in realizing that you slipped over the line into manipulating, pushing, or retreating.

Day 7—Anticipate

1. Read Matthew 4:1-11
2. What temptations do you struggle with?

25. Saying No to Yourself

Daily Devotions

Day 1 ³/₄ Reading

1. Read Love Walked Among Us, pp.137-142.
2. Which of the three temptations is strongest for you?

Day 2 ³/₄ Application of 1st Temptation

1. Read Matthew 4:4
2. Read your notes for Point 1. Read the story at the end of Paul “making bread” with his co-worker by subtly putting down his boss.

Definition: “Making bread” is using human power to get false life.

3. How is Paul “making bread” when he tells his co-worker “I don’t care about that”?
4. How might gossip be a way of “making bread”?
5. What are some of the ways that you “make bread”?
6. How does Satan try to use Jesus’ weakness against him in this temptation?

Day 3^{3/4} Application of 2nd Temptation

1. Read Matthew 4:5-7
2. How does Satan customize this temptation to what Jesus is like as a person? That is, given the way Jesus answered the first temptation, how does Satan shift his strategy to match Jesus' response to the first temptation?
3. How does Satan try to use Jesus' strength against him?
4. What makes the second temptation so powerful? How would jumping off the temple seemingly "boost" Jesus' ministry?
5. When do you face this temptation of self-promotion? Describe a specific time when you face this temptation. Remember, it is in the little incidents that we live most of our life. And remember that most temptations don't come from other people but just from your own heart.

Day 4^{3/4} Application of 3rd Temptation

1. Read Matthew 4:8-11
2. Review your notes to Point 3. How does this temptation to power and glory and wealth affect you? (Jealousy is one of the best windows to your heart to understand the power of this temptation. When we are jealous or envious of someone and what they have, then we are building our own earthly kingdom. So to answer this question, think of people you, at times, struggle with jealousy with. Jealousy is a hard sin to detect. One way of detecting it is asking yourself, "What people—other than family—do I tend to be quick to criticize?" Criticism is often the public face of jealousy.)

3. What awaits Jesus if he doesn't take Satan's quick solution? What is the only other path open to Jesus?

Day 5³/₄Modern Culture

1. Review your notes for Point 4.
2. What does the Bible teach about evil and its existence?

3. What are some of the ideas in our modern culture about evil?

4. How are these two world-views (the Bible and our modern cultural elites) different in their view of evil?

Day 6³/₄Little Victories

1. Describe a little victory you had in with one of these three temptations in the last week.

Day 7³/₄Anticipate

1. Read John 2:13-22, Mark 8:31-38, Matthew 27:39-43.
2. How do you see Satan's activity in these passages (just one or all three)?

26. Satan Attacks

Daily Devotions

Day 1 ³/₄ Reading

1. Read *Love Walked Among Us* pp. 141b-146.
2. What strikes you or convicts you as you read?

Day 2 ³/₄ Application

1. Read John 2:13-22.
2. Why would it be wrong for Jesus to do a sign?

3. “Doing a sign” means using human power to make yourself look good. It separates love and power. Give a specific example of when are you tempted to say or do something to make yourself look good in front of other people?

4. How is gossip a sign? (That is how, in gossip are you making yourself look good through human words?)

Day 3 ³/₄ Imagination

1. Read Mark 8:31-38

- 2 Use your imagination and tell this story from Peter's point of view by writing a monologue that conveys how strange Peter finds Jesus' view of himself as a suffering Messiah.

Day 4^{3/4}Reflection

1. How did Jesus saying "no" to self lead to suffering in his life?
2. Give a specific example in your life of how saying "no" to self has led to suffering.
3. Why is the idea of suffering particularly difficult for Americans?
4. Why does love lead to suffering? (Hint: p. 143 in LWAU)

Day 5^{3/4}Reflection

1. Read Matthew 27:39-43
2. How is Satan attacking Jesus through other people?

3. When are you are tempted, as Jesus was at the cross, to be ruled by your feelings? Explain or give a specific example.

Day 6—Little Victories

1. Take a minute and relate a “little victory” of love that you’ve had in your life. Ideally try to tie it in with the lesson by using an example where you said “no” to what your feelings were pushing you towards.

Day 7—Anticipate

1. Read Luke 19:1-10
2. What patterns of Jesus’ loving do you see in this incident with Zaccheus?

27. Love Moves Towards People

Daily Devotions

Day 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ Reading

1. Read *Love Walked Among Us* pp. 147-150.
2. What strikes you or convicts you as you read?

Day 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ Imagination

1. Read Luke 19:1-10
2. Use your imagination and tell this story from Zaccheus' point of view. Try to capture his feelings at each point (when he's trying to see Jesus, when Jesus sees him, when Jesus is a guest at his house, and when he decides to give away his money).

Day 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ Application on Intrusion

1. Why is intrusive love strange in our modern culture?
2. When is it hard to love someone with intrusive love? Why do we tend to shy away from this kind of love?
3. Can you think of a person in your life that God is calling you to love with an intrusive love? Why do you think God is nudging you to lovingly intrude into that person's life? That is, what needs to they have?

4. How might you be able to help them?

5. What would the risks be of loving intruding? That is, what could go wrong?

Day 4 ¾ The Gospel

1. How does Jesus love for Zaccheus an exchange or substitution? Who gets what in this exchange?

2. How does Zaccheus' loving response to Jesus involve an exchange? What is being exchanged?

3. Can you relate a specific example of someone you are loving now that involves an exchange?

4. Read II Corinthians 5:21. How is Jesus' death on the cross an exchange? What is being exchanged?

Day 5 ¾ Obedience

1. Explain in detail what you'd have to do or say to loving intrude in the person's life that you were thinking about in Day 3.

2. Take the time to pray and reflect on when you can actually go to this person and lovingly intrude. Then, by the grace of God, intrude. Remember, because God has intruded into your life to save you, you can lovingly intrude into the lives of people around you. It is not your will against their will, but God's saving love working through you. So if they reject your intrusion, that is not your problem.
3. When you went to that person, what happened? (It might take weeks to be able to answer this question, since you need wisdom and prayer as to when the best time to gently intrude is.)

Day 6—Little Victories

1. Describe a little victory in the area of love, possibly, an incident where you lovingly intruded into someone else's life. But it can be any incident.

Day 7 ³/₄ Anticipate

1. Read Mark 1:31,41; 7:33; 8:22-23; 9:27
2. What common pattern do you see in what Jesus does in each of these healings?
3. Why do you think so?

28. Touching

Daily Devotions

Day 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ Reading

1. Read *Love Walked Among Us* pp. 141b-146.
2. What encourages or convicts you as you read?

Day 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ Imagination

1. Pick one of the stories of Jesus touching people in Point 3 and do a short version of what Max Lucado did with the story of the leper and tell a first person account of what it was like to be touched by Jesus.

Day 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ Faith

1. How do you see God “touching” you in your life now? Try to come up with a couple of specific ways you saw God do that yesterday or in the last week.

Day 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ Application

1. Name one person in your life who is like a modern leper? This is someone that you tend to recoil from.
2. Why is this person hard to “touch”?

Day 5³/₄Obedience

1. Take time now to pray about a specific way that you can touch the person mentioned in Day 3.
2. What is one way that you can touch this person? Write out specifically what you might be able to do?

3. Pick one of those ways and, by God's grace, do it.

4. What happened? (Again, you may need to leave this blank for weeks or permanently. Our desire is just to encourage follow-through in your life. The more you obey Jesus, the more you'll come to understand him.)

Day 6³/₄Little Victories

1. If you've had of a small victory in any area of love this week, relate that story below.

Day 7³/₄Anticipate

1. Read Luke 8:40-56; Mark 5:30,32,40
2. How do you see Jesus loving in these two incidents?

29. Selfless Openness

Daily Devotions

Day 1 ³/₄ Reading

1. Read *Love Walked Among Us* pp. 153-155.
2. What encourages, challenges, or interests you in the reading?

Day 2 ³/₄ Reflection on Intrusions

1. Read Luke 8:40-56 (with additional insights in Mark 5:30,32,40).
2. How do we see Jesus' openness to intrusion in this story?

3. What do you find personally hard about selfless openness, that is, a love that is open to other people's intrusion? You'll likely have a number of reasons!

4. Do you have people in your life who intrude? Write their initials out or give them a different first name.

5. Describe what it is like and how they intrude. Give at least one specific example.

6. Describe a scenario where you've become more like Jesus in this area of your life. How would you react to this intrusion?

7. What if the President were to intrude in your schedule and ask himself over for dinner? Would that intrusion bother you?

8. What does our lack of being bothered by the President tell us about why some intrusions bother us and others don't? (Hint: what does the relative importance or position of the person have to do with whether we are bothered or not?)

Day 3^{3/4}Application

1. Read Luke 7:36-50.
2. How do you see Jesus' openness to intrusion in this story?

3. How do others react to Jesus' openness?

4. Describe what you usually do when people intrude. That is, what strategies do you use to get them out of your life or brush them off? (Think of the people you mentioned in Day 4 above.)

5. What might God be calling you to give up or surrender when this person intrudes?

6. Now, wait for God to send you an intrusion this week. Pray that God would give you his heart that is open to the needs of the lost, the lonely, and the modern day lepers.
7. What happened with the intrusion?

Day 4^{3/4}Faith

1. Read Mark 14:3-9.
2. How do you see Jesus' openness to intrusion in this story?
3. How do others react to this intrusion?
4. How has God intruded into your life? List some of the ways that has happened.
5. Are his intrusions all comfortable? Give an example of a difficult intrusion that was difficult in the beginning.
6. How do you see God's love in his intrusions into your life?

Day 5^{3/4}Gospel

1. Read Mark 10:13-16.
2. How do you see Jesus' openness to intrusion in this story?
3. How do others react to this intrusion?

4. How do we see this side of Jesus' love (letting other people intrude into his space) in his trial and death?
5. When Jesus is bearing our sins on the cross, what is intruding into his life?
6. What is wrong with a love that is not open to intrusions?

Day 6^{3/4} Little Victories

1. Describe a little victory in this area or any other area of love that we have studied.

Day 7^{3/4} Anticipate

1. Read Mark 1:29-39
2. What patterns of love do you see in Jesus in this day?

30. The Balance of Love

Daily Devotions

Day 1 ³/₄ Reflections of our will.

1. Re-read the “will busters” in John 5:19,30; 6:38; 7:18,28; 8:28; 12:49,50.
2. Read the 4 charts in Point 1. Which of these ways of loving do you think is most foreign to modern American culture? Why?
3. Which of these ways of loving is hardest for you? Why?
4. Give a specific example of when this way of loving was hard for you.

Day 2 ³/₄ Imagine

1. Read Mark 1:21-39
2. This is the first full day of Jesus’ public ministry of miracles. It is like Aslan coming to Narnia or the invasion of Normandy. It is the beginning of the turning of the tide of evil. If you were there, how would you have reacted? Who would you have brought to be healed?
3. Tell the story of an incident except make yourself just like Jesus (except for the power to do miracles!). In other words, intrude to do good, retreat to be with God, or let others intrude. Describe what you would be like if Jesus completely possessed you, if the Jesus’ mind and reactions had become your own?

Day 5¾Application

1. Re-read the “will busters” in John 5:19,30; 6:38; 7:18,28; 8:28; 12:49,50 and the four ways of loving chart. Then read this story and look at where each of them failed or succeeded in the area of self-will. That is analyze the story in the same way that Paul analyzed his own story with Jill. It is written by the husband. You can write your reflections as notes in the story with arrows pointing out different kinds of self-will. (This is a good exercise to do together as a class.)

Husband-Wife Argument over Scheduling

Husband: “I forgot to tell you about the church dinner this Saturday.” (We are baby-sitting for the grandchildren this Friday until next Tuesday. I also knew that she liked the missionary speaker and knew he would be disappointed if I didn’t come.)

Wife: “You have known we were baby-sitting for months.”

Husband: “But you wouldn’t want me to disappoint Joe, would you?”

Wife: “You have never been to one of Sammy’s roller-hockey games and he plays on Saturday night.”

Husband: “I didn’t know that—these kids are over-programmed.”

Wife: “What is more important – your grandchildren or your precious church dinner?”

Husband: (to himself) “She knows I can’t hurt Joe but I better call Joe and cancel.” (to wife) “I will call Joe and cancel.”

The Next day

Husband: “It turns out the meeting was cancelled, but Joe forgot to tell me. I should be home in time from class to take Sammy to the game.”

Wife: “What class? – You never told me you had school this Saturday. You are going to leave me alone with the grandchildren all day?”

Husband: “You knew it – you are the one who wrote it on the calendar.”

Day 6¾Little Victories

1. Describe a little victory you had this week in any area of love.

Day 7¾Anticipate

1. Read John 5:1-66
2. What strikes you about Jesus here?

31. Faith Empowers Love

Daily Devotions

Day 1³/₄ Overwhelming Situations

1. Read *Love Walked Among Us* pp. 161-167.
2. Describe briefly an overwhelming situation like the incident described on p. 161 of *Love Walked Among Us*?
3. What is your typical reaction to overwhelming situations, when you are cornered, outnumbered, or exhausted?

Day 2³/₄ Overwhelming Situations

1. Read I Samuel 30:1-6. The context is David has been chased by Saul out of Israel and he is living with the Philistines in the city of Ziklag. What does David do when he is overwhelmed?
2. Read John 6:5-13. Is Jesus shy about putting his disciples in an overwhelming situation?
3. What does that tell you about Jesus?
4. What do the disciples do when Jesus deliberately faces them with an overwhelming circumstance?
5. What does Jesus want them to do?

Day 3¾ Understanding Faith

1. Explain “Love begins not with loving, but with being loved” (p. 164)
2. What happens if we try to begin with our love?
3. Is faith a spiritual energy or a realizing that you don’t have spiritual energy? Explain.

Day 4¾ The Cosmic Bellhop

1. Read John 6:14-15. What kind of Jesus did the crowd want?
2. What are your “if only” thoughts? Complete each sentence...

“If only my spouse (parents, friends, neighbors) was _____”
“If only I had a _____”
“If only my _____ would _____”

4. What do your “if only” thoughts tell you about yourself?
5. What kind of God do we *really* want? Do we want Jesus to our absolute ruler who can do anything he wants with your life or do you want a puppet king, a Santa Claus who will make your life pain-free? Do you want a king or a therapist/cosmic bellhop? What do you really want? Speak honestly.
6. At first glance, do we think that our biggest problems are outside (spouse, kids, work, health) or inside (pride, jealousy, lust, anger)? How does this answer show a similarity between how the crowd views the world and we do?

Day 5³/₄A Model for Love

1. Read John 6:25-37. Give one specific example of a way that you tend to be like the crowd by pursuing instant gratification?
2. Why doesn't a model of love, by itself, work?
3. After reading Paul's story (p. 169), think of a similar example in your life of a way that you "work for the food that spoils".

Day 6³/₄

1. Read John 6:38-59. What kind of commitment is Jesus calling his disciples to?
2. Coming from a Jewish background, what would be hard for them in what Jesus says? (Read Genesis 9:4)
3. What is hard or strange for you in what Jesus says in 6:53?
4. What kind of commitment does Jesus want?

Day 7³/₄Anticipate

1. Read Luke 5:6-11, Mark 4:39-41, Matthew 14:25-32.
2. What common patterns do you see in these three passages about Jesus and the disciples?