

Theme Introduction

Love One Another

I've noticed a pattern in the exercise facility at my apartment complex. Everyone wears earbuds for music, and they're all completely focused on their own routines. There's no conversation, and they hardly acknowledge each other.

But if I make it a point to smile and say hello when I walk in, everyone returns the smile and engages with me at least a little. A friendly smile is contagious.

And so is love. People respond to genuine acts of love and compassion.

One man who frequents the exercise room is a bit annoying. He tends to spread out and take over the room, placing personal items on various equipment that he's not using. For a long time, he irked me.

But then I realized I was the one who needed a change of heart. I begrudgingly started to pray for him and asked God to give me a Christlike love for him.

I finally asked his name. Suddenly, Mike and I are exercise buddies. I know that he doesn't care to have the television on or the fan blowing on him. In return, he knows I like to finish the HGTV show that I'm watching, and then I'll turn the TV off for his sake. We greet each other and ask about our weekends. And he doesn't spread his towels and warm-up clothing out across the room anymore.

A simple prayer for a change of heart, an intentional effort, and a demonstration of compassion on my part changed everything.

Power of Love

Imagine the impact of the Church if we, right now, would determine to fully live out the answer to Jesus' prayer in John 17:25–26: “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them” (italics added).

Jesus says that He operates by the overwhelming love of His Father. And He can, in turn, fully manifest that love in us because Christ Jesus Himself is in us. What an astounding, powerful promise!

This issue of PRAY is based on the 2019 theme of the National Day of Prayer: “Love One Another.” In his lead article, Dr. Ronnie Floyd fleshes out the hope of transforming America by obeying Jesus' command to love. Dr. J. Kie Bowman links the words love and prayer together and makes the case that more prayer leads to greater love. And Matt Lockett and Will Ford tell the remarkable story of reconciliation between their families based on forgiveness for a generations-past atrocity. Kim Butts wraps up our theme with biblical ways to pray toward greater love.

I believe Jesus continues to intercede right now for us, His beloved, to bring about a revival of love. If a smile can change the self-focused atmosphere of an exercise room, imagine how our contagious love can touch a divided nation that desperately needs Jesus.

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