

**Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
2080 West Grand Blvd.
Detroit, Michigan 48208
Nathan Johnson, D.D., Senior Pastor**

“The Never Alone Church”

Goal: To become “The Never Alone Church” by practicing the Great Commandment of Love with our community of believers to fulfill Christ’s mandate given to us in the Great Commission.

Objective: To be a church that is relevant to the needs of the body of Christ through our study and understanding of God’s Word by actively applying the Living Word of God and biblical exercises based upon it.

Overview for Lesson 2: Relevance for ‘The Never Alone Church’

We have been challenged to become a church, regardless of size, where no one feels alone or to become what is referred to as “The Never Alone Church”. As that kind of a church, we wish to impact lives around us in a relevant way by demonstrating and applying the message of God’s Word. Given this changing world and these times of hardship on families, friends, and the world, there is a greater need for relevance in the church than ever before. We are often called to come alongside someone who is in need. Do you feel that your understanding of the Living Word of God and your obedience to it increases your faith in God and brings you closer to the relationship Jesus wants you to have with Him and others in such a way that you are able to help someone else? Since we have been made new creations in Christ, are you able to share with members of your deacon’s group, family, neighbors, and others what it means to “walk with *relevance* in the newness of life?” (Romans 6:4)

“The body of Christ frequently fails at being relevant to others and the needy world around us. ... Often, it is a real failure to understand the meaning of Scripture and its relevance and application to our lives. Something is relevant when it has a ‘significant and demonstrable bearing on the matter at hand.’ A relevant solution is practical, clearly applicable and pertinent while significantly impacting the need of a person or the current situation. A solution that does not meet the obvious need is deemed irrelevant or extraneous.”¹ ‘When we tell people to love and obey God but fail to obey God or love them ourselves, then our message becomes lifeless and irrelevant to them.’²

Our growth toward Christian maturity ought to not only enable us to feel God’s love but also demonstrate that love to strengthen one another and draw non-believers to

¹ Ferguson, David, *The Never Alone Church*, Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1998, 3

² Ibid, 13

Christ. It takes continued study of God's Word, self-monitoring of our behavior and faith in God to live out His love and the Word so that others are helped and do not feel alone within the church. Sometimes, it may be as simple as presenting your life's testimony to others within the context of the Word of God to benefit a person. God is faithful to His Word so we must be obedient to it and consciously make an effort to apply the Word to our lives and experiences of others.

Everyone has experienced life's joys and sorrows. We bring relevance within "The Never Alone Church" in an exemplary way when we *"Rejoice with them that do rejoice; weep with them that weep."* [Romans 12:15] It is heartwarming to celebrate in another's joys. Weeping with someone is more healing than having to weep alone *"Therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved put on the tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with one another..."* [Colossian 3:12-13]

"If we are going to reach a hurting world with biblical, Christ-centered solutions, we must be a showcase of God's relevance."³ As we conform to the image of Jesus, we become Christ conscious as we grow in our ability to share our testimonies of God's love, but more important we are obligated to demonstrate His love and the teachings of the Word so that others are helped! Patience, kindness, humility, and unselfishness toward one another reflect God's love. Visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, and giving a word of comfort to the bereaved make for a relevant and servicing church so that others will not feel alone within the church. As we serve others, we should always be careful to point people to Christ. For He said in His Word; *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."* Matthew 11:28-30.

This lesson provides a Biblical exercise for you to experience the meaning of *relevance* by applying God's Word and demonstrating your relationship with Jesus within context of His Word. Some hearts may have open wounds and some have been conditioned to guard against assaults and emotional pain, but as we trust God's Word and our relationship with Christ we can confidently reach out to hurting souls with a word of comfort and encouragement. God's *love* for us and for them ought to secure everyone in knowing that He is *loyal* to His promises. As we practice the Word of God we will reinforce each other's ability to move beyond our present state and to overcome the counter culture in the way that Jesus modeled for us.

God is love and everyone who loves is born of God and He calls us to be self-sacrificing and giving. God also calls us as the community of believers to that same standard of love for one another as He has for us. "Supernatural love poured into the hearts of believers is the adhesive of the church."⁴ *"But above all these things*

³ Ibid, 4

⁴ MacArthur, John, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997, footnote - Col. 3:14

put on love which is the bond of peace.” Colossians 3:14. This helps us to move closer to living the Christian life with relevance.

Biblical Exercise:

From December’s lesson, did you share or experience a heartfelt testimony with your group from the biblical exercise concerning forgiveness?

For the month of January, find many ways as often you can to demonstrate the following Scripture:

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforted us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” [II Corinth. 1: 3-4]

You are challenged to comfort someone else with the same kind of comfort that you received from God during your time of trouble. Perhaps you can call someone on the sick list or a person in bereavement to offer words of encouragement or to let them know that you think of them and that they are in your prayers. Perhaps this person sits on the same pew with you. Maybe, you can recall an experience or crisis where you realized only God was able to get you through.

Are you willing to share your experiences with family or members of your deacon group?

This biblical exercise is for you to provide relevant Christian service and to share the love of Christ which may result in a testimony of love when we comfort others through their hurts, disappointments, and discouragements so that they may receive God’s comfort from another as the Bible instructs.⁵

Our church and our world need a relevant, vibrant body of believers who will serve as a shelter in the storm, refuge from the pressures of life, a sanctuary of hope where hurts can be healed and spiritual needs can be met.⁶

⁵ Ferguson, David, 1

⁶ Ferguson, David, 17

The Great Commission:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

[Matthew 28:19-20, NKJV]

The Great Commandment of Love:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

[Matthew 22:37-40]