

**Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
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Detroit, Michigan 48208
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***“The Never Alone Church”¹*
Lesson 10: God’s Priority for Ministry**

Goal: *To become the “The Never Alone Church” by practicing the Great Commandment of Love with our community of believers, this will enable us to fulfill the mandate given in the Great Commission.*

Objective: **To understand and experience the Great Commandment love as Jesus taught and modeled for us pertaining to ourselves and those close to us.**

Introduction:

Many Christians, inspired by the Word of God and what Christ has done for us on the cross, desire to serve in the church and to do all they can to further the kingdom of God. We are pleased when ministries flourish, new members come to Christ, and when others grow strong in the Word and renew their commitment to serving God. These are worthy and noble causes for service. However, “it is fairly common for Christians serving in ministries to exercise self-reliance when dealing with their own deep relational and emotional needs”.² This self-reliance leads us to equate self-reliance with spiritual maturity. In error, we begin to believe that God is all that we need, and therefore deny our own need for others. This attitude keeps us from receiving God’s love through the very people God sends to meet our needs.

It is essential that we hold God’s perspective in regards to the pattern and purpose for the relationships in our lives. God’s has placed in each of us our need for close relationships with our spouses, family, and friends. He also has a plan to meet those needs. *Our dearest disciples and our Jerusalem may be in our own home.*³ In our fervor to serve God and feel needed, we must constantly be mindful of and attentive to the needs of our family members and close relationships so that they are not left in a state of aloneness. If this pattern continues, one can become busy and barren unnecessarily because God has surrounded us with the love of family and close friends. Breaking this unhealthy pattern requires God’s work of humility and faith⁴ and a loving commitment and attentiveness to the needs of those in close relationship to us which God has granted.

¹ Ferguson, David, *The Never Alone Church*, Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1998

² Ibid, 134

³ Ibid, 130, 137

⁴ Ibid, 134

Discussion Point #1:

We often think that we only need God, and no one else. This kind of thinking creates unbiblical self-reliance. What are a few real life examples of situations where a believer feels that they only need God and no one else?

We all have relational needs and God intends for us to minister to each other by sharing His love for us with others. God often fulfills our needs as a result of our prayers and frequently through our relating with others. Real life situations, especially when orchestrated by God, often create a good reason to open your heart and share your trouble and heartache with a spouse, family member, son, daughter, or another believer. Just as houseplants need water, fertilizer, and attention to grow, our close relationships need our time, attention, nurture, love, prayers, and God's Word to grow, flourish, and mature.

*"Each if us is called to fully participate in God's provision for ministry to others around us."*⁵

.....the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort...comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any afflictions." [II Corinthians 1:3-4]

"You have no doubt received God's provisions for sin and fallenness by placing your trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. But have you experienced the fullness of God's provisions for your aloneness?"⁶ We know from Scripture that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. (Romans 8:35) As we grow in our relationship with the Lord, we have opportunity to fully participate in God's provisions, and experience the spiritual blessings of His Living Word. "...in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Romans 8:37) At one time or another, we might have been hurt by the insensitivity of a spouse, family member, friend or church member. Has the hurt you may have experienced made you hesitant and less willing to expose the heart of God to others, as you minister to them in their states of aloneness? During these times, we must cling to the Word of God and draw strength from Him to continue demonstrating His love.

"Therefore since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy we do not lose heart."
[II Corinthians 4:1]

Discussion Point #2:

Christians often quote, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!"* This scripture was not meant to justify a lack of need for personal relationships. Do you feel

⁵ Ibid, 142

⁶ Ibid, 141

that this scripture is sometimes misapplied and fails to consider God's plan to strengthen us as we allow our relational needs to be met by others?

God is faithful and able to do for us more than we can even imagine. If we obey God, He is able to take care of what we cannot. It is essential for us to be prayerful and humble before Him. We are His children and our loving Father knows us better than we know ourselves. There is a joy and comfort God gives that both strengthens and reinforces our faith. We can continue to do good things in ministry and for others if we maintain a focus on the God's priority. We must maintain a careful balance between our relational needs of family, friends, ministry, ourselves, and our personal fellowship with God. God is glorified when we live in balance and when we exercise our spiritual gifts, and share His love by reaching out to others.

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God were pleading through us we employ you on Christ behalf be reconciled to God." [II Corinthians 5:20]

Discussion Point #3:

Families provide a lifetime of opportunities to share and minister to relational needs in a sincere and heartfelt way.

Sometimes people feel that their most difficult experiences are so unique that no one can relate to their situation. In reality God has placed people who have experienced greater trials and tribulations just so they can give a testimony of how they experienced God's provision of help, peace and comfort during their storms. Moreover, they are willing to pray for others and to give sound godly counsel to help them through their circumstances. Their testimonies and counsel cannot serve God's purpose for us if we hold an attitude of self-reliance and pride.

If we counsel others with an attitude of criticism and judgment, those *who come to us looking for love and support will walk away with an acute awareness of their failures and they will also walk away alone untouched by the fullness of God's love.*⁷ We must ask God to reveal any offensive ways within us and then we must be willing to change. God wants to express His love in and through us, to a needy world, beginning with those close to us, but we cannot do it effectively without prayer, His power, and His leading.⁸

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. [Psalm 139:23, 24]

If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant.

[1 Cor. 1: 3-4 ESV]

⁷ Ibid, 143

⁸ Ibid, 144

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]

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]

Monthly Biblical Exercises

December, 09 Monthly Biblical Exercise: *Forgiveness*

January, 2010 Monthly Biblical Exercise: *Relevance for ‘The Never Alone Church*

February, 2010 Monthly Biblical Exercise: *People Need God and One Another*

March, 2010 Monthly Biblical Exercise: *Responding to Vital Relational Needs*

April, 2010 Monthly Biblical Exercise: *Meeting Needs of Others with Scripture*

May, 2010 Monthly Biblical Exercise: *Ministering to Fallenness and Aloneness*

June, 2010 Monthly Biblical Exercise: *Ministering by Knowing God Intimately*

October, 2010 Monthly Biblical Exercise: *Ministering by Knowing God Intimately #2*

November, 2010 Monthly Biblical Exercise: *Where Great Commandment Love Begins*

December, 2010 Monthly Biblical Exercise: *God’s Priority for Ministry*