



## God's True Desire for His Children

Bible Study  
Leader's Guide

**[Please provide:** copies of this study for attendees, Bibles, copies of the LWML Pledge (found in the last section of *reSOURCES*), and hymnals]

It can be said that God's true desire for us, His children, is more in our recognition of Whose we are rather than in what we do. As His servants here on earth, God desires that *through love* [we] *serve one another* (Galatians 5:13b). In this study, we will focus on Whose we are and on what God desires for us, so that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we may serve others with the love of God in Christ Jesus.

**Opening Prayer:** Lord God, send Your Holy Spirit to work in us so that we might better understand who we are in You and how we might better reflect You as we serve others through Your love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### Who We Were

Read Psalm 51:5, Romans 5:12, and Ephesians 2:1–3. Based on these verses, describe what you were like before faith in Jesus. We are born sinful. We faced eternal death because of sin. We were dead in [our] trespasses and sins, we lived in the passions of our flesh ... and were by nature children of wrath (Ephesians 2:1–3).

Separated from God by both the sin we inherit and by the sins we commit, we are in need of rescue. Without faith in Jesus, we are God's enemies who justly deserve eternal suffering and death.

Read John 3:16. Why did God rescue us? God rescued us because of His great love for us.

How did He do so? See also 1 Peter 2:24. God rescued us through the suffering and death of His Son, Jesus. Jesus bore our sins on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed (1 Peter 2:24).

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, thank You for having rescued us from eternal death through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### Whose We Are Now

Jesus died so that we "might live with Him and for Him in peace and joy, now and forever" (*Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*, CPH ©2017, Question 176, p. 189).

Through the faith given to us through God's Word and the water of Holy Baptism, we no longer belong to the world and to our sinful flesh. Instead, we are united with Christ by faith. Jesus is ours and we are His.

What do each of the following verses say concerning what it means to belong to Jesus?

Romans 14:8: No matter what, we are the Lord's.

Galatians 2:20: Jesus lives in us and we live by faith in Him.

Titus 2:14: Jesus has redeemed us from sin. He has purified us. We belong to Him. He gives us the desire to do good things to glorify Him.

1 Peter 2:9: We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

God desires that as His children we live by faith for Him. By the power of the Holy Spirit as His redeemed people, we are to proclaim Him and to do good works in His name.

**Prayer:** Dear God, thank You for making us Yours through faith in Jesus our Savior. As Your children, help us to live for You as we serve You and others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### **Serving As Jesus' Servants**

As we remember that we belong to God, how does God desire us to be as we live for Him? How does knowing who He desires us to be empower us as we serve Him and others?

To begin thinking about how God desires us to be, read Ephesians 4:32 out loud with the others in your group. According to this verse, what are three things God desires us to be?

1. kind to one another,
2. tenderhearted,
3. forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.

What does it mean to *be kind* to one another? To be kind means to be "loving, affectionate, sympathetic, friendly, and gentle" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary).

Why is being kind an important attribute? When we are kind to others, it shows that we care about them and that we love them. Kindness shows that we are concerned about a person's needs. The Holy Spirit works kindness in us and works through the kindness we show to draw people to Jesus, their best and kindest Friend.

Name some specific ways you can show kindness as you serve the Lord by serving others. Specific ways we can show kindness include greeting church visitors with friendly and welcoming comments, listening to and showing genuine interest in the needs of others, taking a meal to an individual following surgery, offering to sit in a pew with a young mother to help out with her little ones, giving a smile and a hug (if appropriate) to brighten the day of another person.

**Prayer:** Lord God, daily You show amazing kindness to us as You love and forgive us. May You work in us so that we daily show this same kindness to all. Amen.

God also desires us to be *tenderhearted*. What does this mean? To be *tenderhearted* means to show compassion, care, and concern for another person.

Another word for tenderhearted is compassionate. Compassion can be defined as “two hearts pulling at one load.” How is Jesus the perfect example of being tenderhearted? (See also Matthew 11:28.) As true God, Jesus immediately knows all our needs. His love for us knows no end. In Matthew 11:28, Jesus tenderly invites us to lay our burdens on Him. We can trust that He can help us with our every need because He took care of our greatest need: our need to be rescued from sin. On the cross, He bore our sins upon Himself and He powerfully defeated sin, death, and the devil when He rose from the dead.

What special element does being tenderhearted bring to the serving opportunities God places before us? Our sinful nature and the callousness of the world can make our hearts hard and blind us to the needs of others. God works in us to make our hearts tender and receptive to the needs of others. God touches our hearts so that we are genuinely concerned and interested in serving others. He gives us the strength and the wisdom to help those in need and to show them the love and tenderheartedness He has for them. This is the same tenderness He daily shows to us when He loves and forgives us.

**Prayer:** Lord God, inspire our hearts to be tenderhearted towards all with whom we come in contact today, just as You are tenderhearted to us. Amen.

Read Colossians 3:13. When we *bear(ing) with one another*, we understand the struggles of others because of our own struggles with temptation and sin (*The Lutheran Study Bible*, CPH ©2009, study note for Colossians 3:13, p. 2047). How does having such an understanding help us serve others? We all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Not one of us is perfect. We all need Jesus. The Holy Spirit leads us to recognize this. “Forgiving others shows that we truly believe God has forgiven us” (*The Lutheran Study Bible*, CPH ©2009, study note for Colossians 3:13, p. 2047).

**Prayer:** Lord God, thank you for sending your Son, Jesus, to die for our sins so that we might be forgiven. Help us to forgive others as You forgive us. Amen.

Read Ephesians 5:1–2. According to verse 1, how does God desire us to be? *Be imitators of God, as beloved children*.

According to verse 2, in what specific way does God want us to imitate Him? God desires that we walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.

Why is sacrificial love at the heart of serving God? Out of gratitude for all that God has done and continues to do for us, especially Christ’s sacrifice of His life to save us from our sins, we give ourselves in service to Him.

What can make sacrificial service in love so difficult? Sacrificial service in love requires that we give up something when we serve. Our selfish natures tell us not to give away our time, our skills, or our riches. Through faith, as we recognize the painful choice Jesus made to give His life to save ours, the Holy Spirit works gratitude in our hearts and leads us to show that gratitude in loving service. We are motivated by Jesus’ own example to set aside our own needs and to put the needs of others first.

Read Ephesians 4:24. How is it possible for us to serve others in the way that Jesus serves us? In Holy Baptism, God recreates us. He gives us faith in Him and a new eternal life. In faith, we look to Jesus and His strength so that we may serve others in the way that He serves us.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank You for giving Your life to save ours. Please work Your sacrificial love in our hearts so that we may imitate You by unselfishly serving others. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Read Ephesians 5:18b-21. With Whom are we to be filled? We are to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

How is this possible? When we are baptized, the Holy Spirit enters our hearts and gives us faith in the Triune God.

What is possible when the Holy Spirit works in us? The Holy Spirit leads us, together with other believers, to worship God with *psalms and hymns and spiritual songs* (v. 19). He leads us to thank Him for all that He has done and continues to do in our lives. He leads us to submit to one another (v. 21).

Name some specific situations where you can serve others with *psalms and hymns and spiritual songs* (v. 19). God leads us to share His Word with one another as we speak His Word to one another and as we sing hymns based on the truths found in His Word. God's Word comforts, uplifts, strengthens, and gives life. God leads us to share His Word in worship, in Bible study, and in everyday life.

What does it mean to submit to another person? To submit to someone means to put aside our own interests and to put that individual's needs first.

Read Philippians 2:3–8. Jesus set aside the glory of heaven to submit to His Father's will when He came to earth to serve us and to save us. How does knowing this help us to look to the needs of others as Jesus' servants today? Jesus was the perfect humble servant. He willingly died to save all people from sin. He gave up everything for us. The Holy Spirit works humility in us so that we can set aside our own desires and agendas and instead submit to God's will for us. When we read His Word and partake of the Lord's Supper, we receive the strength and will to do the work that God desires us to do.

**Prayer:** Dearest Jesus, You set aside Your glory to come to earth to humbly serve and to give Your life for us. Fill us with the Holy Spirit so that we may submit to Your will and submit to the needs of others. Put Your Word and Your song in our hearts so that we may serve others with the joy that comes from trusting You. Amen.

Read Colossians 3:15–17. While these verses are similar to those you previously read from Ephesians 5, some additional elements for serving others through love are added. What are we to let rule our hearts (v. 15)? We are to let the peace of Christ rule our hearts.

How does God desire us to be? God desires us to be thankful.

What is to  *dwell in us richly* (v. 16)? The word of Christ is to dwell in us richly.

How are we to  *do everything* (v. 17)? We are to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

How might knowing that this is what God desires change the way in which you currently serve Him? Encourage participants to share their thoughts. As the Holy Spirit works through the Word of God

that we hear and read, instead of serving half-heartedly or grudgingly, we are enabled to serve God thankfully. Through faith, we can serve with peaceful hearts assured that we have forgiveness of sins and eternal life because of Jesus' death and resurrection.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord God, give us the desire to be of the same mind and having the same love so that others will want to know You. Replace our grumbling and complaining with an attitude of gratitude. Let us not be anxious but come to You in prayer with all our needs as You work in us so that we might peacefully and confidently serve others through Your love. Amen.

Read Romans 12:2. God desires that we *do not be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewal of your mind*. When does God begin this transformation process in us? God's transformation of us begins when we are baptized.

When we study God's Word, the Holy Spirit works in us to transform our thinking so that we will no longer be conformed to our own passions or to this world. How is this evident in your own life? Encourage participants to share truths from the Bible that have transformed their thinking.

How does the transformation God is working in you allow you to be a servant for Him? It is only through this transformation that we can truly serve God with all that we are and have.

In a sentence or two, describe what God's true desire is for you as His child? As participants formulate their statements, encourage them to look back at the "be" verses they've examined in this study to review God's desires for them.

Read Luke 1:37 and Philippians 4:13. What comfort and strength do these verses give you as serve others as Jesus' servants? Holy Scripture reminds us that nothing is impossible for God and that through His strength, we can follow His will and do His work.

**Closing Prayer:** Lord God, Heavenly Father, in Your Word you tell us what Your true desire is for us. Help us, gracious Lord, to be all that You want us to be so that others will see Jesus in our acts of service and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, be drawn to faith in You, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. In Jesus' saving name we pray. Amen.

Hand out copies of the LWML Pledge and say it together.

**Sing:** "May We Thy Precepts, Lord, Fulfill," LSB 698, TLH 412, LW 389.

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