NATASHA N SMITH

Renew & Grow

A 5-Day LOVE Challenge



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I am so excited that you have decided to join me for the next 5 days. The Renew & Grow 5-day LOVE Challenge will help us to pause, think, and evaluate our Love for God and our love for others.

In order to share the love of God and to make an impact in the world, we must have the love of God strong on the inside of us.

Included in this challenge is a short devotional, a prayer and an activity to apply each day.

At the end of this short 5 days, I pray that you sense a renewal and growth in LOVE.

In Him,
Natasha 

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DAY 1

Love Grows

"Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold," Matthew 24:12 NIV

"Evil will spread and cause many people to stop loving others." Matthew 24:12 CEV

Love growing cold. We are seeing this more and more of this these days. Enough to make us ask ourselves, where is the love? Even among Believers.

The verses above state that the spread of evil will cause many people to stop loving each other. It makes me think of another familiar verse that says the world we know that we are Christians by how we love one another.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."John 13:35 NIV

Here's the thing, we cannot be both. It's similar to being a lukewarm Christian. We can't love and hate at the same time. As Believers we must grow in love. No matter what.

And we can only do so with the love of Christ living strong on the inside of us. Because God is love.

PRAYER

Dear Father, your Word says that the world will know us by our love for one another. So help me to love like you. Help me to see others as you see them. Through the eyes of your everlasting and unfailing love. In Jesus name. Amen.

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Love Quiz

1. Do you love others who do not do life the way that you do?

2. Do you love others that do not attend the same church as you?

3. Do you love others who do not look like you?

4. Do you love others that did not grow up the same way that you did?

5. Do you love others well?

6. Are you non-judgmental of others?

7. Are you hard to offend?

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Love Quiz

8. Do you read the Bible consistently?

9. Do you pray consistently?

10. Are you serving in church or in your community?

11. Are you serving your family well?

12. Do you pray for the lost?

13. Are you praying for leaders?

If your "no" outweigh your "yes", your love may be growing cold.

DAY 2

First Love

"Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first." Rev 2:4 NIV

Natural love can be so fleeting. It is here today and gone tomorrow. And the verse above is written to the church of Ephesus in the book of Revelation. It was a letter telling them that they had forgotten their first love.

The story does not detail what captured their attention or affection but we can imagine based on what captures ours today.

So God is reminding us here...don't forget about me.
In your comings and your goings, do not forget about me.
When you are making decisions, whether big or small, don't forget about me.

When things are going right and when things are going wrong, don't forget about me.

Just the opposite, put me first.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33 KJV

PRAYER

Lord, help us to seek you first as the love of our life. Help us to come to you in the morning and draw us near to you at night. And remind us to chat with you throughout our day. Draw us close to your side. Help us to seek your Kingdom that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Help us to keep you as the apple of our affection and attention. In Jesus Name. Amen.

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Reflection

Is there a way that we can measure the love that we have for God?

When you met your spouse, how did you know that you loved them?

How did you know that they loved you in return?

What are ways that we can express our love to God?

In what way can you express your love for God today?

What can you do to prioritize Christ in your life?

DAY 3
Greatest Love of All

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him." 1 John 3:1 NIV

Remember the Whitney Houston song, "The Greatest Love of All"? I remember writing this song out word for word and giving it to my dad when he was in the hospital. I couldn't have been older than 9 or 10 years old at the time. But I loved my dad so much and I just wanted something to give him to let him know that.

And that is what we do when we love someone. We give, right?

We give of our time. We give of our gifts. We give of our talents and we give of ourselves. We sacrifice for that which we love.

So today, let us take some time to remember the true greatest love of all. And that is the love of Christ. His love for us. Laying down his life for us while we were yet sinners.

Additional Reading: John 3:16, Psalm 8:4, John 15:13

PRAYER

Dear Father, I thank you for your love for me. I'm thankful that I have found the greatest love of all in you. There is no comparison of your love for me with anything else. Help me to love you even more in return. Help me to give of my time, my gifts, my talents and of myself to you. To love you with all that is within me. For you are worthy of all of my love and affection. In Jesus Name. Amen.

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My Love Song

I mentioned that I wrote out the lyrics to "The Greatest Love of All" for my dad because I wanted to express my love for him in some way. Let's take time today to write a love song to the Lord.

Write 3 to 5 sentences expressing your love to God. No worries, you do not have to put it to music or sing it. But if you'd like, go for it!

DAY 4
Love Talk

"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." Colossians 4:6 NIV

As Believers what we say should align with what we believe. And that is, our words should be aligned with the Word of God and with His character.

You've heard the saying, "sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me".... Um yeah, we know this is not true. Because the truth is, the power of life and death is in what we say.

And I don't know about you but I can remember even now some of the hurtful things that were said to me and about me way back in middle school. And it is often those things that shape parts of ourselves, that we have to deal and heal from later. So, let this be our remember, to have our words and conversations seasoned with salt.

Let us be reminded to be slow to speak but quick to listen. As Christ Followers let us represent our Father well by sharing life giving words. Towards ourself and towards others. Knowing as well, that what we give out will come right back to us.

Additional reading: Proverbs 18:21, James 1:9, Ephesians 4:15

PRAYER

Lord, we thank you for Holy Spirit who leads and guides us into all truth. Help shape our words in which we speak to ourself and to others. May they be life giving words. Words of love, words that exemplify for kingdom and your character. In Jesus name. Amen.

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Love Filter

What are you saying?
This is an activity to help you remain cognizant of filtering everything that you say through the word of God. Adapted from Philippians 4:8

Is it true?

Is it honest?

Is it just?

Is it pure?

Is it lovely?

Is it of a good report?

Is it of any praise?

Does it build up?

DAY 5
Love Walk

"Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Ephesians 5:1-2

It's so easy to walk in love with those who love us in return. But I love what Jesus says as He is talking with his disciples, he says that if we only love those who love us then how really different are we than those in the world.

In order to be different, we must do life different. And I believe loving others well is key. Walking in love. Not being easily offended. Not engaging in things, whether in action, words or deeds, that would be contrary to the Word of God or His kingdom. Again from Day 4, bring all that we say and do, through the filter of God's Word.

To walk in love can also be translated to "continue in selfless love". It is the practice or making a habit of choosing others before ourself. Sacrificing for the good of others. Showing compassion and empathy for those who are hurting and having a heart for the loss.

Ultimately, walking in love helps to promote and to protect our witness for the Kingdom.

Additional Reading: Romans 13:9, I Corinthians 13:1

PRAYER

Father God, help us to walk in love. In the love that you have already freely given us. And help us to show compassion and empathy and to continue in practicing and making a habit of selfless love towards others. In Jesus name. Amen.

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Walk the Love Walk

Here are a few practical ways to walk in love. Which will you choose to do this week?

- Share Jesus with a friend.
- Serve your family in a special way.
- Pray for someone that you have never prayed for.
- Pray for someone that you may consider your enemy.
- Meditate on some of the love scriptures. Maybe some that are shared within this book.
- Serve your spouse in a special way.
- Do one thing that you have been asked to do but that you keep putting off.
- Take a walk and talk with God.
- Journal or write down the things that you love about God
- Send an encouraging note to someone.
- Send an unexpected gift to someone.

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