**CROSS Missions** More than just a short term mission experience.

**1 Peter 4: 7-11**

7-11Everything in the world is about to be wrapped up, so take nothing for granted. Stay wide-awake in prayer. Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything. Be quick to give a meal to the hungry, a bed to the homeless—cheerfully. Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it: if words, let it be God’s words; if help, let it be God’s hearty help. That way, God’s bright presence will be evident in everything through Jesus, and *he’ll* get all the credit as the One mighty in everything—encores to the end of time. Oh, yes!

**CROSS 2017-2018 Urban Plunge Curriculum/Devotions:**

**“Living Out Love”**

**Theme Verse: 1 John 3:18**

**18** Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

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*Written in partnership with Claire Tomkinson of Waked Up Studio*



[*www.wakedupstudio.com*](http://www.wakedupstudio.com)

**Friday Night Devotion**

**“Love God”**

*Find a room in the building or a space outside that will serve of your youth group’s meeting place for devotions this weekend. Please speak with the other leaders and agree on your meeting places so that the youth will consistently know where they should go during your home group time.*

**Open in Prayer**

*At this time, invite a youth to open the group in prayer or consider leading the group in an opening prayer. If your group is full of energy, this might be a good time to help them center by quietly taking a few deep breaths and focus on a moment where they were truly grateful today.*

**Engage**

*Invite the youth to share in this discussion by guiding them through the questions and ideas below. Please use your own words and look the youth in the eye instead of reading the material. This will further engage the youth in an authentic conversation.*

* Why are you here? Take a moment to think about this question and then raise your hand. Did you come here because your mom made you? Are you here because your best friends are here? Are you interested in serving people in this city? Do you want to grow closer to God? Why are you here? *Please give the youth a chance to answer this question out loud if they would like to.*

*After the youth have shared their responses please share this information with them in your own words.*

However you ended up on the journey, you are here. We believe that you were called to this very moment in time. For whatever reason you were led here, you are here now and this is exactly where you are meant to be. In the moment, I want to invite you to commit to being present for this journey. You are living in a journey of faith. You are being led by the Holy Spirit who is your guide and your friend. For this weekend of mission, please choose to be present to this experience. Choose to be present to everyone in this group, present to the people we meet as we serve, present to your body, your mind, your spirit, and most of all, present to what God is doing in your life and the lives of those around you.

We are going to have the chance to do good things for people and for this city, but this trip is not only about doing good things. This experience is about being present to the goodness that God is making available for all of us. This means that we must let go of our expectations. If we expect to encounter God in a certain way then we might miss how God is actually showing up in a situation. If we expect a work day to turn out a certain way, then we are just disappointed if it doesn’t happen that way. This weekend, I want to ask each of you to make a promise to be open to the moment and seek God in each moment. I want you to commit to only expecting the unexpected so that you will open your heart up to the delight and abundance that God is going to provide.

We are on a journey together. Jesus sent his Disciples out into the world in pairs. We are going out in groups. We do not go alone and God is going with us. Let us choose to be present to the fullness that is available in this experience.

**Scripture: John 15: 5-16**

*Please read this scripture passage out loud to the group. Before you begin, ask the group to remember what stood out to them about this passage and prepare to share it with the group. The Holy Spirit allows certain things to stand out to certain people for a reason so it is important to hold on to these things and ponder them in your heart.*

15 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. 2He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunesto make it bear more fruit. 3You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. 4Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. 5I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. 6Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. 9As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. 10If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. 11I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

12“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. 14You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.”

*Please ask the youth these questions and give them time to answer them.*

* What do vines do? How do they grow? What do they need?
* Why do you think Jesus used the imagery of the vine to talk about his love for his disciples?
* When we focus on and accept God’s love for us, we can then pour out the love with which we have been filled. How would this truth change your perspective and mentality this weekend? How would that then translate to your actions?
* Why is difficult to accept God’s love for us at times?
* Jesus talked a great deal about bearing fruit – what “good fruit” have you seen in others this weekend already? In your group? In yourself?
* What would your youth group and The Church look like if we were truly rooted in God’s love, like a vine and its branch?

**Closing Discussion**

Often times, we have ideas about who God is – how God may judge us or be disappointed with us for not being our best self. God is not just a figment of our imagination, or an old man in the sky who sits around condemning the world. God came to us in the form of a person, Jesus, to love people, to spend time with us, and be in relationship with us every day. Jesus spent years developing real relationships, healing others, and sharing wisdom that brought new life to those seeking *truth*. Jesus’s truth brought about new *actions* and ways of loving others, which radically changed how people understood God. God loves you and desires for you to know who you are: truly accepted and beloved. This identity provides us with confidence and abundant joy as we build the kingdom of God here on earth. Being rooted in God means being rooted in love, but love is not just a feeling, it requires action.

**Guardian Angels**

*At this time, pass around a bag/hat that is holding all the names of the participants in your group written on pieces of paper. Ask each person to draw one name. They should look at the name, but they should not share with anyone who they have drawn. When the hat has gone all the way around the room, ask everyone to put those names back in the hat to be used tomorrow. Please let them know that the goal of this exercise is to take care of the person whose name you have drawn. Throughout the day tomorrow, you should find ways to make this person’s day better, get to know them, throw away their trash, fill up their water bottles, write them an encouraging note, etc. The goal is not to tell anyone who you have and be discreet enough for that person not to realize that you are their guardian angel. The hope is that by the end of the day no one will know who their angel is because everyone is being so kind to one another. For devotions tomorrow night, we will go around the room and share who we had and how we cared for them throughout the day.*

**Close in Prayer**

*Invite the group to hold hands and stand in a circle. Please invite everyone to just talk to God. They can share something they are grateful for, something they hope will happen this weekend or specific prayers, but everyone should say something even if it is simply, “Thank you.”*

**Saturday Night Devotion**

**“Love Others”**

*Return to your meeting place for devotion with your home group.*

**Open in prayer**

*At this time, invite a youth to open the group in prayer or consider leading the group in an opening prayer. If your group is full of energy, this might be a good time to help them center by quietly taking a few deep breaths and focus on a moment where they were truly grateful today.*

**Engage**

*Invite the youth to share in this discussion by guiding them through the questions and ideas below. Please use your own words and look the youth in the eye instead of reading the material. This will further engage the youth in an authentic conversation.*

* Was there anything that stood out to you today?
* What challenged you today?
* Was there a moment you realized you had an expectation? What happened when you chose not to have that expectation?
* How did you encounter the love of Jesus today?

*After the youth have shared their responses please share this information with them in your own words.*

Last night, we looked at the imagery of a vine and branches to remind us of our identity in Christ, and how God fills us with God’s love so that we can share that love with others. We experience God’s love through the people around us, in nature, by spending time alone with God, etc, and can turn that love into action as we care for other people. In Matthew 28:19 when Jesus commissions his disciples, he tells them to go and love when he says “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” By saying “all nations,” who does Jesus include and who does he exclude? As a church and as a society, who do we include and exclude?

*Please give the youth time to share their responses.*

**Scripture: John 13:1-17, 34-35**

*Please read this scripture passage out loud to the group. Before you begin, ask the group to remember what stood out to them about this passage and prepare to share it with the group. The Holy Spirit allows certain things to stand out to certain people for a reason so it is important to hold on to these things and ponder them in your heart.*

“Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. **2**The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper **3**Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, **4**got up from the table,  took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. **5**Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. **6**He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” **7**Jesus answered, “You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” **8**Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.” **9**Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” **10**Jesus said to him, “One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And youare clean, though not all of you.” **11**For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

**12**After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? **13**You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. **14**So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. **15**For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. **16**Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. **17**If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

**34**I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. **35**By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

*Please ask the youth these questions and give them time to answer them.*

* According to the first verse of this scripture, who does Jesus love and how long will he love them?
* In this scripture, how does Jesus show his disciples that he loves them?
* Why did Jesus choose to wash his disciples’ feet in this particular moment when they were sharing a meal and when he was about to die? Why not do something else?
* What is Jesus saying when he tells Simon Peter “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me?”
* What does Jesus call us, his followers, to do? According to Jesus, how will people know we follow him?
* What does this scripture say about how we should love others? What are some tangible ways we can love people in the same way Jesus loves his disciples?
* Jesus doesn’t just love the people who live right next to him – he even goes out of his way to choose his disciples. How can we go out of our way to love people who might feel excluded?
* When might loving others like this scripture calls us to do be difficult?

**Closing Discussion**

Jesus loved his people in this world and loved them until the end. He didn’t just tell them he loved them and go on his way; he chose to show them his love by washing their feet – perhaps the dirtiest, smelliest part of their bodies. Jesus puts his love into action in this intimate moment with his disciples. Living out love for others isn’t always easy and we can’t love each other perfectly, but Jesus calls us to intentionally share the love with which we have been filled. We likely won’t wash the feet of everyone we love all the time, and we aren’t called to, but God does call us to live out love in our everyday actions and moments. Fortunately, we don’t necessarily have to travel around the world to love people of “all nations.” We have opportunities to love our neighbors who are similar to and different from us here in Charlotte and in our own communities back home. Take advantage of this experience with CROSS to practice showing the people around you that you love them through your actions.

**Guardian Angels**

*At this time, invite the youth to go around in a circle and share who they were watching over and how they showed them Christ’s love today. When everyone has revealed their Angel, send the hat back around to draw again for another day.*

**Close in Prayer**

*Invite the group to hold hands and stand in a circle. Please invite everyone to just talk to God. They can share something they are grateful for, something they hope will happen this weekend or specific prayers but everyone should say something even if it is simply, “Thank you.”*

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**Sunday Morning Devotion**

**“Love Yourself”**

*Return to your meeting place for devotion with your home group.*

**Open in prayer**

*At this time, invite a youth to open the group in prayer or consider leading the group in an opening prayer. If your group is full of energy, this might be a good time to help them center by quietly taking a few deep breaths and focus on a moment where they were truly grateful today.*

**Engage**

*Invite the youth to share in this discussion by guiding them through the questions and ideas below. Please use your own words and look the youth in the eye instead of reading the material. This will further engage the youth in an authentic conversation.*

* Was there anything that stood out to you today?
* What challenged you today?
* Was there a moment you realized you had an expectation? What happened when you chose not to have that expectation?
* How did you encounter the love of Jesus today?

*After the youth have shared their responses please share this information with them in your own words.*

Last night, we talked about how God calls us to love others – this practice takes intentionality and being tuned in to the many ways we experience God’s love in this world. To love someone well, we must often listen to their personal stories and narratives in order to understand their journey and perspective. Naturally, we keep our interactions with one another surface-level, which is not how God intends for us to live in fellowship or community. God calls us to be vulnerable in the right moments, know others and be known ourselves, confess our sins to one another, and practice forgiveness daily. How do you feel when you open up to others and truly trust them? It’s hard, isn’t it? Have you ever experienced trust and peace with someone or a group of people?

*Please give the youth time to share their responses.*

**Scripture: Galatians 5: 13-15, 22-26**

*Please read this scripture passage out loud to the group. Before you begin, ask the group to remember what stood out to them about this passage and prepare to share it with the group. The Holy Spirit allows certain things to stand out to certain people for a reason so it is important to hold on to these things and ponder them in your heart.*

**13 “**You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. **14**For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” **15**If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

**22**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23**gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. **24**Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25**Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. **26**Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”

*Please ask the youth these questions and give them time to answer them.*

* In this scripture, Paul tells us that the entire “law” is fulfilled by keeping one command. What is that command?
* If we really believed that God’s spirit is within us, wouldn’t we want to love ourselves at a higher capacity? What would that look like for you?
* If we loved our own selves better, how might we grow closer to God?
* How might practicing the fruit of the spirit help us love ourselves better?
* How will you practice the fruit of the spirit to love God?
* How will you practice the fruit of the spirit to love others?
* What practices/disciplines do you hope to begin as you love yourself?

**Closing Discussion**

Jesus showed us how to love others. In this letter from Paul to the new roman church (us!), he describes the gifts of spirit which are *TRUTHS* and *ACTIONS* that provide a way for us to love others as Jesus loved others during his ministry (healing the sick, loving the outcast, including the rich and poor). These verses can be viewed as an instructional guide for us as a church to love others, embrace diversity, and practice a way of life rooted in faith, hope, and love. It is also important to remember that we must love our neighbor *as we love our self*. If we have no love for our own self or the creation God has made in who we are, it is difficult to love others. We cannot love on empty. So, how do we get filled up? Remember, loving yourself requires intentionality, time, practice, and is an *action*. The gifts of the spirit are tools and practices for the people of God – be patient with yourself! Be gentle with yourself! God’s word tells us that we are good, that we are fearfully and wonderfully made, and that God’s spirit dwells within us (Genesis 1, Psalm 139, Ephesians 3:14-20). Hold onto this truth and believe what God thinks about you. These promises will fill you to a place where you may be able to *live out love.*

**Guardian Angels**

*At this time, invite the youth to go around in a circle and share who they were watching over and how they showed them Christ’s love today. When everyone has revealed their Angel, send the hat back around to draw again for another day.*

**Close in Prayer**

*Invite the group to hold hands and stand in a circle. Please invite everyone to just talk to God. They can share something they are grateful for, something they hope will happen this weekend or specific prayers but everyone should say something even if it is simply, “Thank you.”*