

LOVE LIKE YOU'VE NEVER BEEN HURT PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

HOPE, HEALING
AND THE
POWER OF AN OPEN HEART

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WITH **CHERISE FRANKLIN**
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CONTENTS

A Note from Pastor Jentezen 7

How to Use This Guide 9

Session 1: Love Always Wins 11

Session 2: Engage the Power of Forgiveness 23

Session 3: Love Well 35

Session 4: Build Up and Fight for Your Marriage
and Family 47

Session 5: Love God Even When It Hurts 57

Session 6: Restart Your Heart 67

A NOTE FROM PASTOR JENTEZEN

I will never forget the day I sat in my study and read the words legendary pitcher Satchel Paige is reported to have said: “Work like you don’t need the money. Love like you’ve never been hurt. Dance like nobody’s watching.”

The part that struck me, of course, was “love like you’ve never been hurt.” To me, that is a profound statement. If you’re human, you’re going to get hurt. As sure as you are holding this book in your hand, someone has offended you (or will). Someone has rejected you (or will). Someone has lied to you (or will). Someone has disappointed you (or will). Someone has let you down (or will). As you read these words, you might be nursing a wound or staring at a scar. You might be thinking of a relationship you cut off because someone you loved hurt you deeply. Maybe you had a terrible injustice done to you that you cannot get past.

Here’s the thing: Jesus warned us offenses would come. He said, “It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!” (Luke 17:1). While getting hurt is part of life, the more important thing is how we deal with it. See, some of us hold on for dear life to the pain that comes from getting hurt. Choosing not to forgive hinders our walk with God and our relationships with others. It keeps us stuck. It can even make us physically sick.

If you allow the wounds and hurts and cuts of others to trap you in the place where you become bitter, you will lose the wonder of Christianity. You will lose your joy. You will not have peace. Unforgiveness that is not addressed leads to great bitterness, which will drain you

of mental, emotional, spiritual and physical power. When you use up all your energy thinking about negative situations—the person who always gossips about you, getting let go from your job—you sabotage your success in life. And when your world is overwhelmed by heartbreak or unwarranted pain, if you do not allow God to heal you, you will not become who He has called you to be.

Let me be clear: I am not denying your wounds are real. If you have been abused, let down or abandoned, it hurts, I know. And it is hard, sometimes painfully hard, to work through. But listen carefully. While your pain is real, we serve a God who will never allow our wounds to get deadly.

Forgiveness is the cure. Without forgiveness, you will not have peace. You will live in a constant state of unease and tension. It matters more what happens in us than what happens to us. God is saying to you right now, “Let go so you can take hold.”

I want to invite you on an adventure of loving like you’ve never been hurt. Healing awaits. Freedom awaits. Great peace awaits. But it depends on you.

I am very excited that you are holding this book in your hand. My prayer is that God reveals the areas in your life you need to reset through the power of forgiveness, and that you invite Him to begin to heal you. A fruitful life is not an accident. It is a result of right choices. If you choose to forgive, forgiveness can rewrite your future!

Whether you are a seasoned Christian or brand-new to the faith, this guide will help you let go of the past to lay hold of the future. It’s time to restart your heart.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This participant's guide is designed for you to work through in a group setting or on your own. It is also formatted to work in conjunction with my book *Love Like You've Never Been Hurt* and the video teaching that accompanies it. But don't worry if you have not read the book or won't get a chance to watch the video sessions. You will find plenty of content here that will help you begin, today, to make great change happen in your life and in your relationships.

This participant's guide is divided into six sessions that each include the following:

- A big idea to introduce the overall message of the session
- A start-up segment that sets the stage for the video session and the discussion to follow
- Notes and a set of in-depth group discussion questions drawn from the video session
- A set of in-depth group discussion questions drawn from the Bible, my book and real-life matters
- A closing prayer
- A reflection and action segment to be completed on your own time

If you want to dive deeper and maximize your experience outside of your small group, spend time in the “Personal Reflection” and “Personal Action” portions at the end of each session. There may be things you

are not ready to share with others in your small group, so you can use this segment in a more private manner as well as a more practical way. I encourage you to use this opportunity to reflect on what you have learned and on what God has been speaking to you about.

What You'll Need

Unless otherwise marked, all the Scriptures in this guide are offered in the New King James Version (NKJV). If you prefer a different version, have a Bible or Bible app handy to look up the verses in the translation of your choice. While not required (as space is provided in this guide), consider using a journal or digital device to jot down notes or anything that speaks to you. Finally, while you do not have to do this, you will get the most out of this guide if you read *Love Like You've Never Been Hurt*.

Follow the schedule below to coordinate with this participant's guide:

Read	Watch	Discuss
Introduction and chapters 1, 2 and 3 of <i>Love Like You've Never Been Hurt</i>	Video session 1	Session 1, "Love Always Wins"
Chapter 4	Video session 2	Session 2, "Engage the Power of Forgiveness"
Chapters 5, 6 and 7	Video session 3	Session 3, "Love Well"
Chapters 8, 9, 10 and 11	Video session 4	Session 4, "Build Up and Fight for Your Marriage and Family"
Chapter 12	Video session 5	Session 5, "Love God Even When It Hurts"
Chapters 13 and 14	Video session 6	Session 6, "Restart Your Heart"

I am excited to see how God is going to open wide your heart to love like you've never been hurt.

SESSION 1

LOVE ALWAYS WINS

Big Idea for This Session

The ones you love the most can hurt you the most. Love them anyway. Love people who have messed up, too. You do not compromise when you choose to love. Love never fails.

Session Start-Up

A story is told about Muhammad Ali on an airplane flight. Before taking off, the flight attendant noticed his seat belt was unbuckled. “Please fasten your seat belt, Mr. Ali,” she told him. Ali looked at her and smiled. “Superman don’t need no seat belt,” he said. Without even blinking, the flight attendant retorted, “Superman don’t need no airplane. Now, please fasten your seat belt.”

None of us are Superman or Wonder Woman. We are vulnerable. We have weaknesses. We all go through tough times. Many of our difficulties and trials revolve around relationships. You might be married and are having trouble in paradise. You might be a parent struggling with a wayward child. You might be caught in a sibling rivalry that cut you off from your sister, so that you haven’t spoken

in twenty years. Maybe you severed your relationship with your best friend because she said some horrible things about you. Maybe you were abandoned by someone entrusted to care for you.

It is hard to love in these instances, but that is what God has called us to do—love, at all times and in all circumstances. Jesus said, “Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples” (John 13:35). Jesus did not say we would be recognized as His followers by what we wear or don't wear, how much education we have, how much theology we know or how many rules we follow. The standard is love.

There are only two subjects in the Bible that God thinks are important enough to ascribe an entire chapter to: one, faith (see Hebrews 11), and two, love (see 1 Corinthians 13). In the latter chapter, Paul writes, “Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away” (1 Corinthians 13:8).

In this chapter, we see that love even trumps the power gifts of the Spirit. It's not that they are unnecessary but that the priority is love. Love never fails. It is the greatest gift.

God looked at a world held captive by Satan and demonic powers, and He said, “I know how I can combat that!” He then unleashed His greatest weapon, love. If God could save the world with His Son, Jesus Christ, then we need to get a revelation. If we want change in our lives, in our hearts and in our relationships, we need to begin to love on a new level.

When we choose to love even though we've been hurt, even though others have made mistakes, even though we feel someone does not deserve it, we begin to love the way God loves. Without condition. Without expectation. No strings attached.

Talk about It

There are countless definitions of the word *love*. In what way or by what measure do you define it?

Video Session 1

Watch video session 1. While viewing the video, use the space below to record key ideas or any thoughts you want to remember.

Video Teaching Notes

If you are going to hold your relationships together, it is going to require forgiveness. God requires of us what He does for us. He loves us like we've never hurt Him.

You don't just need a good memory. You need a good forgettery.

All of us have been shot. Get in the truck and drive.

Have you gone through something that offends you and hurts you badly? If you will let God heal you of your wound, your darkest night will be like daytime, and the sun will shine seven times brighter (see Isaiah 30:26).

Love never fails.

It's never wrong to love.

Video Discussion

1. Think about the story I told of President James Garfield. Do you have a wound that you keep reopening and reliving? Is it making you stuck in life?
2. Do we ever have the right *not* to love someone?
3. What does it mean to be a minister of reconciliation?

Small-Group Discussion

1. God's love for us is universal. It is unchanging. It is not based on our performance. It is not based on how many times we go to church. It is not based on how much we tithe—or if we do at all. It is not based on how faithful we are to Him. God loves us because He is love.

We read in Ephesians 5:1–2, “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” Give an example of how you can put this scriptural command into action daily.

2. It is easy to love people when we share the same ideologies, the same politics, the same lifestyle, the same theology, the same values. It is harder to love those with whom we differ. Share about a time when you were challenged to love someone who was different from you in opinions, beliefs or values. How did you put love into action despite these differences? If this was a challenge for you, how can you handle a similar relationship in the future?
3. Talk about a time in which God comforted you when someone betrayed you, offended you, lied to you, rejected you or broke your heart. Can you offer Scripture you took to heart during this time?
4. Love involves trust. But what happens when someone we know or love has repeatedly broken our trust? In what ways can we practice loving from a distance?
5. Has your idea of loving others who hurt you changed over the years? Why or why not?
6. Isaiah 30:26 gives those of us who need healing from hurtful situations hope: “Moreover the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD binds up the bruise of His people and heals the stroke of their wound.” How does this Scripture encourage you to pursue healing, release the past and move into a future of wholeness?

7. On pages 43–45 of *Love Like You've Never Been Hurt*, the story is told about a father, Mac, and his teenage son, Malcolm. As a Christian, Mac is shocked to learn that his son is homosexual. After having time to process the revelation, Mac said, “I knew I couldn’t push him away or push my beliefs on him. All I needed to do was to give my son to God, pray for him and love him. I don’t condemn him for his lifestyle. It’s not my place. I simply love him.”

Talk about a situation in which someone close to you was not living the way he or she ought to be living. What did your relationship with that person look like? How did you love the person despite his or her lifestyle choices? What boundaries, if any, did you set?

Bonus Questions

8. Is it difficult for you to share or be vulnerable with others because of the hurt you have experienced? Maybe you have opened up in the past and someone betrayed that confidence. What holds you back from sharing with others?

9. In Matthew 5:44 Jesus told us, “Love your enemies.” Talk about setting the bar high! You might be wondering if this is even possible, especially if you have been hurt on a deep level. Or maybe you have experienced true forgiveness and God has healed your heart in such a transformative way that you have lived this mandate out. Give an example of how we can love our enemies.

10. Lamentations 3:22–23 promises, “Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.” Meditate on this verse for a moment.

This should encourage you to show mercy, kindness and love to those who have failed, who have made mistakes, who are not living right. While setting healthy boundaries may be necessary in certain situations, we must learn to reflect in others the kind of love God has for us. When you are tempted to judge, criticize or cut people down for falling short in their faith or in their relationships with you, how can this Scripture help you to extend mercy?

Wrap-Up

Today we have learned how powerful love is. It can shatter division and rebuild what has been broken. Let’s take a deep breath and close our time in prayer. Here are some ideas from this session that can guide our conversation with God:

- Thank God for His amazing love that knows no bounds, that is limitless, unchanging and pure.
- Pray for God to reveal areas in your life where you need healing because of something someone has done to you. Ask Him to begin to change your heart and your mind.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to soften your heart and teach you how to love others instead of judge them. Pray for opportunities to imitate God's love.
- Offer to God the relationship(s) that have been broken because of offenses. Ask Him to begin the process of healing and, wherever possible, reconciliation.

Prepare for the Next Session

Before the group meets again, read chapter 4 in *Love Like You've Never Been Hurt*.

BETWEEN SESSIONS

Personal Reflection

1. I have said that family provides us with our greatest joys and at times our deepest sorrows. If you are married, think about the greatest joys you have experienced with your spouse and/or your children. The spontaneous moments of romance. The family vacations filled with play and fun. The powerful times you prayed together and witnessed the answers. The moment your teenager asked you for advice. Write them down in the space below.

If you are not married or don't have children, think about the ones you love most. Consider your siblings, your parents, your best friends. Write down heartwarming memories with these individuals.

It may be more painful to think about the tough times. You may not want to admit to your scars or even your open wounds. Maybe you don't want anyone to find out your son struggles with depression or a daughter struggles with an addiction. Maybe you are ashamed because you had an affair or heart-broken because you just found out your spouse has. Spend time in prayer today and admit the challenge(s) you face in your relationships. In the space below, write down what you want God to accomplish in your life and the life of your loved ones as you read through this participant's guide.

2. Paul writes in Philippians 3:13–14,

I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

In other words, to move forward, you have to let go of the past. You have to release what is behind you and reach for what is before you. Take time and reflect on what you need to let go of so you can move forward in your life.

3. Read 1 Corinthians 13:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Highlight the phrases or statements that move you. Write down why.

Personal Action

Martin Luther King Jr. wrote, “Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.”^{*} That’s powerful! Think about someone in your family with whom you have had a disagreement or an intense confrontation that led to a separation of sorts. Maybe you have not talked for months. Maybe you slid off the radar because you did not approve of the way that person is living. Maybe the person is ashamed of something that happened and has been avoiding your calls.

Take time today to pray for that person and that relationship. Seek God’s direction on how to show love. Think of ways you can make this happen. Knock on his door. Invite her out to dinner. Pick up the phone and say, “I’m sorry.” Send an email wishing that person well.

You’ve got nothing to lose. After all, love never fails.

^{*}Martin Luther King Jr., “Martin Luther King, Jr. on Loving Your Enemies,” *OnFaith*, accessed November 8, 2017, <https://www.onfaith.co/onfaith/2015/01/19/martin-luther-king-jr-on-loving-your-enemies/35907>.

