

Love in Action



“What’s up after church today?” Martin asked Marcus. “You wanna come by and play some video games? I got some new ones!”

“Naw, bruh, I’m going to visit the prison with my dad today.”

“Huh? Is he trying to scare you like ‘Scared Straight?’ You don’t cause trouble ...”

“No, you ever heard of Troy Davis?”

Martin gave him a blank stare.

Marcus continued. “Troy Davis was executed in 2011 for a crime that no one is sure he actually committed. In fact, the man that Davis and others said committed the crime actually bragged about it while Davis was still held in jail. Davis spent 20 years on death row and the whole time he said he was innocent.”

“I didn’t hear that, but I can’t believe he was innocent. People don’t go to jail for nothing.”

“I hear you, Martin. There are many folks in jail for poor decisions, but there are some people in prison—mainly black men that look like you, me, my daddy, and your brother—who are there for crimes they didn’t commit.”

“Why are you and your daddy going today?”

“Did you hear the Scripture we read today from Hebrews 13:3? We are supposed to care about prisoners like we are locked up with them. I’m getting my Ujima on today!”

“Okay, okay, making your brother’s problems your problems and working to solve them together? I’m down. Let me see if my brother wants to roll.”

In My Heart

*“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love”
(1 Corinthians 13:13, NIV).*

WORD!

Hebrews 13:1–3, 1 Corinthians 13, NIV—Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. **2** Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. **3** Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

1 Corinthians 13:1 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. **2** If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. **3** If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. **4** Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. **5** It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. **6** Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. **7** It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. **8** Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. **9** For we know in part and we prophesy in part, **10** but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. **11** When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. **12** For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know

fully, even as I am fully known. **13** And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

SIDEBAR

Faith Requires Mutual Love

It's hard to know how to love when movies, television, and even music videos only give a very lopsided view. Our verses in Hebrews and Corinthians let us know that love isn't just that warm, fuzzy, butterflies-in-your-stomach feeling, it's also the energy that allows us to put our faith into action. We are also reminded in Scripture to focus on faith, hope, and love, and that the greatest of those three is love. Faith is our trust in God. Hope is looking forward to the promises of God coming true. Love is working for the growth and well-being of others (and yourself). These three work together, and love is the beginning and end and foundation of all three.

How to Spread Love

1. Pray for ways to grow spiritually.
2. As you grow, pray for ways to bless others and help them grow.
3. Give without expecting anything in return.

GOT IT!

A. Show Some Love

Use Word! to help you determine whether each statement below is TRUE or FALSE.

- | | | |
|--|------|--------|
| 1. Love is impatient and cannot wait. | TRUE | FALSE |
| 2. Love is arrogant and boastful. | TRUE | FALSE |
| 3. If you speak with tongues of men or of angels and have love, you are only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. | TRUE | FALSE. |
| 4. Love is mean sometimes. | TRUE | FALSE |
| 5. Love, faith and hope. The greatest of these is hope. | TRUE | FALSE |

B. If It Isn't Love

1. Divide yourselves into two equal teams.
2. Students from each team will take turns acting out the adjectives on the cards your teacher provides without talking.
3. Once an adjective has been identified, have students on both teams discuss whether or not it is a characteristic of love.

JAM SESSION

Steadfast Love

People search for a workable and reliable definition of love. The writers of Hebrews and 1 Corinthians define love and tell us that it is greater than faith and hope. Everyone loves love. It seems so easy to do, especially when that love is directed toward family members and friends. Our Scripture verses call us to love as God loves us, selflessly and for the benefit of others. The love of God allows us to do what Marcus and his father will do at the jail. When we love as Christ loves us, we empathize with others and treat them as we want to be treated. This love is different from the love celebrated in movies and television shows because it inspires us to want to work for the betterment of ourselves and others. If it ever becomes difficult to tell true love apart from what isn't, 1 Corinthians 13 makes a great case for what God's love is.

JAM ON IT!

Get Your Ujima On

Ujima is the third principle of Kwanzaa. Even though Kwanzaa is celebrated the last week of December, the principles can be lived out all year long. Ujima is building and maintaining our community together, making our brothers' and sisters' problems our problems, and solving them together. Take some time this week to look up the story of Mumia Abu Jamal (on Twitter @MumiaAbuJamal). Share what you've learned with your class. Talk with your class about some things you can do to make Hebrews 13:3 come to life.

LAST JAM

"Love in your heart is not put there to stay; Love is not love until you give it away." — Oscar Hammerstein II

QUESTIONS FOR CLASS

Use this space to write down questions you have about this lesson.

Courage Has No Age Limit



Two of the most influential and significant groups in African-American history were led by and comprised of young leaders. The SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) and the Black Panther Party inspired many people to work to make the changes necessary for society to become a better place.

The SNCC was formed in 1960 when a group of college students refused to move from a Woolworth's lunch counter where segregation, under Jim Crow laws, prohibited them from being served as whites were served. Their powerful actions were noticed across the country, and spawned many more protests and the forming of organizations and work against segregation.

The Black Panther Party, formed in 1966, sought economic, social, and political equality. One of the Party's most powerful programs, started in January 1969, was the first Free Breakfast for School Children Program, started in Oakland, California. By the end of the year, the Panthers had set up programs across the U.S., feeding over 10,000 children every day before school. Their free breakfast program became the model for the U.S. government's free breakfast program. This program built community, and allowed children and families to begin to look within for the power to make change.

People of all ages were affected by watching these young people live courageous lives, where they weren't afraid to "walk the talk." The vast amounts of courage, wisdom, and foresight of these young people helped to fuel the fire to fight social inequality even more.

There is no age requirement for a person to speak truth to power. Youth who are courageous not only make change, but also inspire and lead others to change by their example.

In My Heart

"Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people"
(Acts 6:8, NIV).

WORD!

Acts 6:8-7:2a, NIV—Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. **9** Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen. **10** But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke. **11** Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God."

12 So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. **13** They produced false witnesses, who testified, "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. **14** For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us." **15** All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

7:1 Then the high priest asked Stephen, "Are these charges true?" **2a** To this he replied: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me!

SIDEBAR

Stephen's Arrest and Speech

Stephen captured attention among God's people because of his determination to serve the people of God with his whole heart and mind. When Stephen is introduced in Acts 6, he is introduced as "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit." Stephen was a Christian when being one was unpopular and dangerous. Other religious leaders, who didn't like the message that Stephen and other believers were spreading, challenged him. They felt that the teachings of Jewish prophets were complete, and believers like Stephen taught that Jesus Christ fulfilled prophecy. Stephen spoke truth to those who opposed him and lost his life for it. His faithfulness inspired many because he was an example of a faithful man who demonstrated the power and love of God to the people.

How to Speak Truth to Power

1. Look for ways to change unfair and unequal situations.
2. Pray for the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.
3. Make a plan with the help of others.
4. Put your plan into action.

GOT IT!

A. Speak Up!

Use Word! to help you match the description from Scripture with the person or group it describes.

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Man full of God's grace and power
_____ | a. High Priest |
| 2. They produced false witnesses
_____ | b. members of Synagogue of Freedmen |
| 3. Had the wisdom of the Spirit _____ | c. Stephen |
| 4. Said Stephen spoke against holy place and law _____ | d. those sitting in Sanhedrin |
| 5. Asked Stephen, "Are these charges true?"
_____ | e. false witnesses |

B. 20 Questions

- Get a piece of paper from your teacher.
- Write down the name of a public figure making a difference. Do NOT share this name with other Jammers yet.
- Your teacher will collect your paper, attach it to another student's back, and attach another Jammer's paper to your back.
- Walk around the room and ask other students 20 questions that can only be answered "yes" or "no" until you discover the identity written on your back.
- When the game is over, discuss each name, why it was chosen, and learn who each person is.

JAM SESSION

Courage to Speak

People need a bold and perceptive leader to articulate truth in uncertain times. Stephen, in the face of opposition, demonstrated the power and wisdom of the Spirit to speak the truth of Christ. There are often people who misuse power to intimidate those who want to make a change. It is important that each person stand up as God has called them to, because not only do they make a difference, they empower and embolden others. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense were both organizations that inspired many people to commit to making a change. Those who were working with these groups didn't do it to be heroes or to garner attention; they did it because they believed in the cause for which they were fighting. Stephen served meals to widows and shared the goodness of Christ in his actions and words. His influence was felt long after his death. Paul, who stood by and watched him be stoned, became a passionate follower of Christ and remembered Stephen's wisdom and fearlessness. Whom do you admire for being fearless in making a change, even when it isn't easy?

JAM ON IT!

Everyone Counts

It may seem like making a change in society is a big job, but change comes from a lot of people doing their part. Where can you put your hands to work? Ask about volunteering at a polling station for the next election or volunteer at a food kitchen. If your church doesn't have a clothes closet where members can donate gently used clothes, help start one. The sky is the limit, and if you determine how high you want to fly, God will help you reach the clouds.

LAST JAM

The next time you see something that needs to be done to make the world better think, "If not me, then who?"