

## A Verse to Live by

*"We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing."*

**2 Thessalonians 1:3 (NIV)**

### March Prayer Focus

Let's continue to pray for God to increase our love for each other and for anyone He brings to our church. Pray that He brings people to us so we can share the love of Jesus and the reason for our hope. And please continue to pray for our move to Faircrest, that God opens doors and provides what we need to accomplish this long awaited goal.

### Life Application Challenge

This month I'd like you to reach out to someone in our congregation to show love and compassion. Invite them to lunch, give them a small gift, maybe just a phone call to let them know you remember them. Take the risk, and show someone genuine love.

### Recommended Scripture Reading

Romans 12 - This chapter teaches us what a true Christian lives like.  
Hebrews 13 - a great chapter to remind us how to live lives pleasing to God.

# Church On Fire!

Eleventh Street Church of God | March 2023 Prayer Newsletter

## We Are All One in Christ Jesus

March is always my reminder that Spring is just around the corner. I get a little excited with the thought of budding trees, blooming flowers, and warmer weather. I love the winter, but around March, I am ready for warmer weather. This is also the month I start to think about Easter and all the preparations to make it another meaningful Holiday for my family. Usually, I would write about Lent and fasting, but this month I felt God pulling me to write about something different.

Something exciting is happening at 11th Street. New members have joined our family, new and meaningful ministries have started, and there is a real feeling of community happening. I love seeing this happen to our little church! It is a sign we are truly loving others. The greatness of our impact is not only measured by the size of our congregation, but by the size of our hearts. Love is a great multiplier; as our love grows so does our impact, and as our impact grows so does the church, and as the church grows, the community around it grows healthier. Love is a beautiful thing! "And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." (Col. 3:14 ESV) This is a good time to tell you, I love you, and am glad you are part of our church.

With the addition of new members comes the addition of differing opinions, ideas, beliefs, and questions that might make us squirm. Each person brings with them a unique experience; everyone has a story. Some may be new Christians, some may come from other congregations, some may have no idea about this Jesus business and are just checking it out. Although seeing new people come is exciting, it comes with some challenges too. The differences can easily cause conflicts and misunderstandings. New members may come with different ideas and ways of doing things that can make us uncomfortable. Humans get into routines and habits quickly; we get very comfortable with the familiar. When things start changing, we tend to grow uneasy. We must be so careful not to push others away because they don't believe exactly like we do, talk the way we do, or look the way we do. There is nothing wrong with comfort, unless your comfort trumps community. That's when members get hurt or pushed away.

We want a church known for its love. As new people come, we need to be ready to love them. They are coming seeking something from the Almighty God. We need to welcome the

broken, the lost, the dirty, the complicated, the difficult, the poor, the bitter. If someone comes into our church "tore up from the floor up" they should be welcomed with the same love as we welcome the rich saint that tithes faithfully. There is no place for favoritism in a church full of love. Jesus loved some rough characters. He showed compassion on the demon possessed, liars, thieves, cheaters, prostitutes, tax collectors. Besides, it wasn't that long ago Jesus saved many of us from some pretty awful things. So we must remember to, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." (Eph. 4:32 ESV)

This does NOT mean we compromise preaching what is right and true. We do NOT omit, change or dumb down the Word of God out of fear of offending someone. We have a duty to share the truth, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2:15 NIV) We must speak the truth to lead them to the Truth and their salvation, "Jesus told him, 'I am the Way—yes, and the Truth and the Life. No one can get to the Father except by means of me.'" (John 14:6 TLB) Being tenderhearted means we speak the truth with compassion, love, and tenderness. "God's people must not be quarrelsome; they must be gentle, patient teachers of those who are wrong. Be humble when you are trying to teach those who are mixed up concerning the truth. For if you talk meekly and courteously to them, they are more likely, with God's help, to turn away from their wrong ideas and believe what is true. Then they will come to their senses and escape from Satan's trap of slavery to sin, which he uses to catch them whenever he likes, and then they can begin doing the will of God." (2 Tim. 2:24-26 NIV)

How is it humanly possible to love everyone that comes to our church like this? People are messy, complicated and often very different from the type we are used to being around. Well first, "We love because he first loved us." (1 Jn. 4:19 NIV) It takes the transforming power of Jesus to love like Jesus. We must make sure we keep the first things first, "'...Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment." (Matt. 22:37-38 NIV) Only after we have given ourselves completely to God, can we truly "'...Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matt. 22:39 NIV)

Watching God Work,

Carolyn Abel