

Spiritual Preparation at Friday staff meeting for January 2018 weekend:

“You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:37-40)

“In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us” (1 John 4:10), because “God is love” (1 John 4:8).

What if loving God with all my heart, soul, and mind means that I allow God to love me?

What if loving God means receiving from God?

What can I give to God? Nothing but myself, the self that God has given me.

My right hand – the gifts I receive from God. My left hand – the sins and faults and best efforts that fall flat.

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What has it been like for you these two weeks to meditate on the love of God, the Love that the scripture tells us IS God?

Have you experienced, or at least wondered, what it is or might be like to allow God to love you, really love you?

To give yourself fully and freely to that love?

Have you prayed for your Prayer Partner, not knowing who she is? What has that been like?

Colossians 1:15 says, “He [that is, Christ] is the image of the invisible God.” In Christ we can see God. We Christians continue Christ’s vocation to make God visible in the world. That’s what living in mission is all about. And when we do that, when we live the truth and the fullness of who we are in Christ, what will the world see? That “God is love.”

I invited you to create a message of love for your Prayer Partner prior to the weekend.

How do you understand or experience the Love who is God?
Have you embraced that?
Have you made an attempt, however small or extravagant, to express that Love for your Prayer Partner?

Because you and only you, from the beginning of creation until the end of time, only you can manifest the particular aspect of the Love of God that reveals itself through you. This particular radiance of the Love that is God is manifested only in and through you. Without you, this facet of the Love that is God cannot and does not make its way into the world.

“In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us.”

God loves Christ, the beloved. God loves you, the beloved. When I see my neighbor, really see her, I see Christ, the beloved. When my neighbor sees me, she sees Christ, the beloved. Do you believe that?

When your neighbor, when I, see you, I see Christ.

Your face is the face of Christ. When you gaze into the eyes of your neighbor, your sister, you are gazing on the face of Christ, the image of the invisible God, who is Love. And when your neighbor gazes on your face, she is gazing on the face of Christ, of God, of Love. You looking at your neighbor, your neighbor looking at you – Christ seeing Christ. Christ seeing Himself in your neighbor. Christ seeing Christ in you.

You reflect Christ to Christ, as in a mirror. Love reflecting love.

You can see it in your neighbor, can't you? Look at her? Look at me? Can you see it? Do you feel it, that love? Will you see it in the face of your Prayer Partner?

As we listen to our song, please open your envelopes so that you can see who you've been praying for.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ik8qbAyg5lg>

Give Yourself to Love,

By Kate Wolf

Kind friends all gathered 'round, there's something I would say:

That what brings us together here has blessed us all today.

Love has made a circle that holds us all inside;

Where strangers are as family, loneliness can't hide.

You must give yourself to love if love is what you're after;

Open up your hearts to the tears and laughter,

And give yourself to love, give yourself to love.

I've walked these mountains in the rain and learned to love the wind;

I've been up before the sunrise to watch the day begin.
I always knew I'd find you, though I never did know how;
Like sunshine on a cloudy day, you stand before me now.

So give yourself to love if love is what you're after;
Open up your hearts to the tears and laughter,
And give yourself to love, give yourself to love.

Love is born in fire; it's planted like a seed.
Love can't give you everything, but it gives you what you need.
And love comes when you're ready, love comes when you're afraid;
It'll be your greatest teacher, the best friend you have made.

So give yourself to if love is what you're after;
Open up your hearts to the tears and laughter,
And give yourself to love, give yourself to love.

Give yourself to love, if love is what you're after;
Open up your hearts to the tears and laughter,
And give yourself to love, give yourself to love.

The woman you've been praying for is *you*.

What if you'd known you were your own Prayer Partner?
Would you have prayed for yourself the way you prayed when you thought you were praying for someone else?
Would you have felt the same way about yourself that you felt about your Prayer Partner, not knowing who she was?
Would you have taken the time to create the message of love that you brought with you today?
Would the message have been the same?
Will you see Christ when you look into the eyes of your Prayer Partner now?
Will you allow God to love you, really love you?
Will give yourself fully and freely to that love?

Look at the message of love that you brought with you today. That message is for you. That message has always been for you.

Please pair up with another woman. Share with one another what this experience has been like for you. If you choose to, you can show her the message of love that you brought with you today.