

his arms  are wider

Part 1

Name:

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

Spring 2020



wentzville
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4	HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE
5	WEEK 1 - HIS ARMS ARE WIDER FOR THE OUTCAST
11	WEEK 2 - HIS ARMS ARE WIDER FOR THE POOR
17	WEEK 3 - HIS ARMS ARE WIDER FOR THE DISHONEST
23	WEEK 4 - HIS ARMS ARE WIDER FOR THE INCONVENIENT
29	WEEK 5 - HIS ARMS ARE WIDER FOR THE BROKEN

LETTER FROM KEITH

Read the gospels and you will see Jesus open his arms to people. Story after story, he runs into men and women that everyone else tries to avoid, everyone else wants nothing to do with, everyone else closes their hearts to, but Jesus is different. He talks to them, engages them, and loves them. Simply put, we need to be more like Jesus because His arms are Wider.

Throughout this series, we are going to look at some of the stories that show us how loving and accepting Jesus is and how we should follow his example. We look at our culture and we find ourselves pulled in different directions. Some people preach a message of tolerance and acceptance that fails to share the truth of scripture and the type of living it calls us to. Others simply wall themselves off from those who are different or those who struggle with sin and will have nothing to do with them. The reality is that the culture in Jesus' time wasn't all that different. How do we love others while holding to the truth of God's Word?

I'm convinced there is a way and that way is found by watching Jesus. His approach, his words and actions, his genuine care and concern for every person he sees. I'm also convinced that the church has to grab hold of this "Jesus way" of loving others. That we need to open up our hearts and love those around us. Let's watch Jesus. Let's see how he does it. Let's follow his example. **His Arms are Wider.**

Blessings,

Keith Comp

Senior Minister

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

The purpose of this guide is to ignite a passion for the Church in your daily life. We are told that Jesus loved the Church so much that he gave his life for her. This guide will help you develop your love for the Church and lead you to ways that you can be a better member of the body.

SERMON NOTES:

Bring this workbook to church each Sunday. As you listen to the sermon, make a note when you hear something that surprises you, intrigues you, bothers you, challenges you, or encourages you.

CONNECT QUESTIONS:

These questions will help you and your group members become more comfortable with talking and sharing with each other. Not only will you learn more about one-another, the questions will help to steer the discussion in the direction of the topic.

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION:

These questions are the “meat” of the discussion and will point back to the sermon each week. Feel free to read and answer these questions before your group meets. They will also help you dig deeper into the Scriptures during your group discussions.

CHANGE QUESTIONS:

At the end of Jesus’ most famous sermon, he says that if you do not put his words into practice then you are a fool [Matthew 7:24-27]. Life transformation is the ultimate goal of a follower of Christ. Feel free to answer these questions out loud when your leader reads them or you can quietly reflect and write a response in your workbook.

PRAY FOR ONE-ANOTHER:

Please focus this time on *your own personal* praises and requests instead of listing all of the bad things that happened to someone you know. We challenge you to get “deep” with one-another relationally, which means becoming a little bit vulnerable as you are honest with one-another.

PRAY FOR THE MISSIONS OF THE WEEK:

WCC supports many wonderful missionaries and organizations all over the world. We are committed to support them with our finances as well as our prayers and encouragement. Ask God to work in their lives and through their ministries to ignite a passion for Jesus in others.

DAILY DEVOTION:

Be consistent, honest, and intentional with this time and you will not regret it. The whole point of this workbook is to make the sermons and Scriptures stick with you in your daily walk with Christ. Digging in to God’s Word and applying it to your daily life is perhaps the best way to solidify His truth into your heart and your life.



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Week 1 - for the outcast

WEEK 1 - HIS ARMS ARE WIDER FOR THE OUTCAST

CONNECT QUESTIONS

1. **Can you remember a time when you had a really strange or awkward conversation? What happened?**
2. **What makes a conversation good or bad? Who is your favorite person to sit down and talk with? Why?**

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

1. **What kind of rules do we have either in culture or in our churches about who is appropriate for us to talk with or not talk with?**
2. **Read John 4:1-6. Why do you think Jesus chose to travel through Samaria? What was strange about this?**
3. **Read John 4:7-15. What might the Samaritan woman have thought when she came to the well in the middle of the day and found a Jewish man sitting next to it?**

CHANGE QUESTIONS

1. **When have you felt like you are not good enough for Jesus? How does this story speak against this feeling?**
2. **How do we open our arms wider to those who are outcasts? What are ways we can express love to the outcast?**
3. **Who might be that person in your life today that needs to be loved and accepted?**

PRAY FOR ONE-ANOTHER

[Spend some time praying with your Life Group. When asking for requests, try to keep the focus on personal praises/requests that relate to people in the group.]

PRAY FOR MISSIONS OF THE WEEK

Jireh India Missions

This ministry in India shares the good news of Jesus with those who have never heard His name. They provide homes and education for orphans at House of Peace, teach widows to sew so they can provide for their children, provide bread for much of their community through Five Loaves Bakery, and work with a leper colony. They strive to fulfill Psalm 82:3 — *Defend the poor and orphans; do justice to the afflicted and needy.*

Show-Me Christian Youth Home

This faith-based organization seeks to improve the lives of children struggling because of circumstances in their current home environment. showmehelpingkids.com

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 1-3]

DAY 1:

“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.”

[Romans 15:7, NIV]

- ▶ Jesus has accepted you! What emotions does that bring to you? How should you respond?

- ▶ How does your acceptance of someone else bring praise to God? Who do you need to accept in order to bring praise to God?

DAY 2:

“⁵And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. ⁶You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.”

[Romans 5:5-6, NIV]

- ▶ Hope does not put us to shame, so what does it do? When have you felt and known God’s love?

- ▶ If we know that Jesus died for the ungodly, why do we struggle to love them? Who in your life needs that kind of love? Pray for them now, and pray for a chance to show them love.

DAY 3:

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

[Romans 5:8, NIV]

- ▶ How does Jesus’ death demonstrate God’s love for us? Why was that death so important and difficult for Jesus?

- ▶ Since we have all sinned and fallen short of God’s Glory [Rom. 3:23], how do we avoid looking at others as being more sinful than us?

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 4-6]

DAY 4:

“Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. ²Don’t forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!”

[Hebrews 13:1-2, NLT]

- ▶ What do you think brotherly love has to do with showing hospitality to strangers?

- ▶ Do you think you have ever entertained or snubbed an angel looking for help? Who can you show hospitality to this week?

DAY 5:

“He said to them: “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean.”

[Acts 10:28, NIV]

- ▶ What are some groups or types of people that others may not want to associate with or visit with?

- ▶ Have you ever thought of someone as impure, unclean, or not worthy of your time? Who is God leading you to reach out to today?

DAY 6:

“And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.”

[Deuteronomy 10:19, NIV]

- ▶ Did you get picked on when you were younger? How did you act toward those younger than you while growing up?

- ▶ When have you been an outsider who was forgotten about or mistreated? How should that experience impact the way you treat others today?



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Week 2 - for the poor

WEEK 2 - HIS ARMS ARE WIDER FOR THE POOR

CONNECT QUESTIONS

1. What are some circumstances that might create poverty in someone's life?
2. Have you ever needed help from someone? Who helped you?
3. When have you helped others in need? Why did you do it?

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

1. If you read Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, there is no denying that God has a heart for those who are poor and those who are oppressed. What keeps people from having a heart for those who are poor or in need?
2. Read Mark 10:46-48. Why do you suppose Bartimaeus had to beg? What does referring to Jesus as the "Son of David" mean?
3. Why did the crowd rebuke Bartimaeus? What would you have done?

CHANGE QUESTIONS

1. How can you have a different approach in the way you think, the things you say, and the things you do when it comes to those who are poor?
2. What would be a practical way you could open your arms to the poor? (Do not just throw money at them...think overall care for someone).
3. Someone once said, "There but for the grace of God go I." When you see someone who is struggling...what does that phrase mean? (Use the internet to search the phrase if you need to).

PRAY FOR ONE-ANOTHER

[Spend some time praying with your Life Group. When asking for requests, try to keep the focus on personal praises/requests that relate to people in the group.]

PRAY FOR MISSIONS OF THE WEEK

LOVetheLOU

LOVetheLOU is a community development initiative that connects resources to the needs of St. Louis. During the constant process of growth and development, they strive to see St. Louis restored through transforming actions. LTL is proud of the progress in St. Louis and are excited about what will continue to happen as they grow and develop. lovethelou.org

St. Louis Christian College

SLCC seeks to educate Christians and to graduate leaders who are equipped for service to God. They seek learners who are committed to Christ and highly motivated to serve God and the church; students who are capable of completing the academic rigors of a college education; adults who are willing to acquire both knowledge and skills through service and off-campus learning experiences; and men and women who are drawn from a diversity of geographic, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. stlchristian.edu

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 1-3]

DAY 1:

“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”
[Acts 4:13, NIV]

- ▶ Has someone ever underestimated your value or worth? How did that make you feel?

- ▶ The followers of Jesus were ordinary men who did extraordinary things. How should that affect the way you treat people around you today?

DAY 2:

“Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward them for what they have done.”
[Proverbs 19:17, NIV]

- ▶ How does this proverb connect our earthly actions with our heavenly consequences?

- ▶ Why do you think God cares so much about how we treat the poor? What do you think this reward looks like?

DAY 3:

“³³Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
[Luke 12:33-34, NIV]

- ▶ How often do you give to those who are less fortunate than you? What do you spend money on that is frivolous or unnecessary?

- ▶ Where do you place your real treasure in life? If someone were to look at your life from the outside, how would they answer that question about you?

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 4-6]

DAY 4:

“Jesus answered, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’”

[Matthew 19:21, NIV]

- ▶ Why would Jesus say to the rich, young ruler that he would need to sell his possessions and give to the poor? What was getting in the way of his salvation?

- ▶ What is getting in the way of your salvation? What is keeping you from fully following Jesus?

DAY 5:

“And don’t forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God.”

[Hebrews 13:16, NLT]

- ▶ What have you done in the past week which you think God would be pleased about? What sacrifices have you made?

- ▶ How can you do good to others and share with those who are in need today?

DAY 6:

“If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God’s love be in that person?”

[John 10:16, NLT]

- ▶ How does compassion for the poor indicate how much a person loves God? Have you ever thought about this before?

- ▶ Do you live well? Who do you see that is need? Do you have compassion? What should your compassion and your love for God lead you to do today?



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Week 3 - for the dishonest

WEEK 3 - HIS ARMS ARE WIDER FOR THE DISHONEST

CONNECT QUESTIONS

1. What are some jobs today that get very little respect and some might even question one's integrity for having said job?
2. While someone can be falsely accused of abusing their power, when it is actually the truth, what do we think of that person?
3. What events or spectacles draw a crowd? Would draw you? You would not care to see?

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

1. The story of Zacchaeus may be familiar to some of you, why? What do you remember from childhood?
2. Read Luke 19:1-6. Why is it important for Luke to mention that Zacchaeus was a tax collector? What stories can you recall of Jesus and his interactions with other tax collectors? How did the people of that time feel about tax collectors?
3. Why do you think Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus?

CHANGE QUESTIONS

1. How do we fall into the trap of judging others instead of loving others? What excuses do we make for this?
2. Jesus knew everything about this man, yet still chose to meet with him and go to his house. What practical ways could we show the same kind of friendship and love?
3. If we are honest and others knew everything about us, would they think differently about us or 'mutter' about our sins? How should this change how we think about others?

PRAY FOR ONE-ANOTHER

[Spend some time praying with your Life Group. When asking for requests, try to keep the focus on personal praises/requests that relate to people in the group.]

PRAY FOR MISSIONS OF THE WEEK

Christian Prison Ministry of Mid-America

Missouri is home to 29 prisons and 2 county jails in 5 states. CPMM's goal is to evangelize, encourage, and equip the believers in all of these prisons. To date, over 400 inmates have been baptized!

christianprisonministryofmissouri.org

High Hill Christian Camp

High Hill Christian Camp and Retreat Center's goal is to offer a fun, Christian atmosphere in a modern camp setting surrounded by God's wilderness — all designed so that children will leave with a closer relationship with Jesus. If you have children, make sure to get them registered for camp. Early bird prices end April 1. For a list of camps WCC is attending, visit our website (wentzvillecc.org) and register at highhillcamp.org

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 1-3]

DAY 1:

“Sensible people control their temper; they earn respect by overlooking wrongs.”

[Proverbs 19:11, NLT]

- ▶ What kind of things or people set off your temper? What do you usually do when you lose your temper?

- ▶ Is it tough for you to overlook someone’s wrongs, or do you hang on to them? How can you control your temper and be sensible with others today?

DAY 2:

“Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.”

[Colossians 3:13, NLT]

- ▶ Has someone ever given you a list of your faults? How long would that list be if someone were completely honest?

- ▶ What are some faults in others that really bug you in which you do the same thing to others? How can you make allowance for the faults of others today?

DAY 3:

“For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.”

[Matthew 6:14, NIV]

- ▶ When has someone directly sinned against you? When have you directly sinned against someone else?

- ▶ How does our forgiveness of others [or lack thereof] impact our relationship with them? How does it impact our relationship with God?

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 4-6]

DAY 4:

“But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too.”
[Mark 11:25, NLT]

- ▶ Have you ever been so angry or upset that it was difficult to pray? How do you work through those times?

- ▶ Why would God want us to make amends with other people before we come to him in prayer? Who do you need to forgive today?

DAY 5:

“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.”
[1 Peter 2:8, NIV]

- ▶ What do you think Peter means when he says, “above all”? What do you think it means to love each other deeply...even those who have wronged us?

- ▶ How does love cover over a multitude of sin? How has that worked in your own life?

DAY 6:

“²¹Then Peter came to him and asked, “Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?” ²²“No, not seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven!”
[Matthew 18:21-22, NLT]

- ▶ How many times do you think someone has wronged you? How many times do you think you have wronged a specific person?

- ▶ If we are unforgiving with others, how does that affect our heart? Our relationship with God?



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Week 4 - for the inconvenient

WEEK 4 - HIS ARMS ARE WIDER FOR THE INCONVENIENT

CONNECT QUESTIONS

1. **What's it like when all the kids are in bed? (If you do not have kids at home, use your imagination!)**
2. **If you have ever been in charge of a class full of children, when is it easy? When does it become difficult?**
3. **When you have a task to do or a tight schedule, how do you respond to interruptions?**

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

1. **What do you think a day of ministry in the life of Jesus and his disciples looked like?**
2. **Read Mark 10:13-16. Why do you think people were bringing their children to Jesus? Why do you think the disciples rebuked these parents?**
3. **How were children often viewed in ancient culture?**

CHANGE QUESTIONS

1. Consider the person with whom you have a difficult time. How could you show love to them this week?
2. Identify the things you struggle with the most in dealing with others (patience, annoyance, judgements, humility, etc). Spend time praying for transformation.
3. Set a time or look for an opportunity to reach out to someone God has placed on your heart. When can you seize an opportunity this week and trust that God can use you and your arms wide open to be Jesus to someone?

PRAY FOR ONE-ANOTHER

[Spend some time praying with your Life Group. When asking for requests, try to keep the focus on personal praises/requests that relate to people in the group.]

PRAY FOR MISSIONS OF THE WEEK

Team Expansion: Tim & Amy Maxson

The Maxsons work at Fellowship Dubai church in the Middle East and are making disciples of migrant workers. The Maxson family has five children. teamexpansion.org

Show-Me Christian Youth Home

This faith-based organization seeks to improve the lives of children struggling because of circumstances in their current home environment. showmehelpingkids.com

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 1-3]

DAY 1:

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”
[Ephesians 4:2, NIV]

- ▶ Who specifically gets on your nerves? What type of people annoy you? How do you respond to them?

- ▶ What do you think it means to bear with someone in love? Who do you need to be patient and gentle with today?

DAY 2:

“Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from him.”
[Psalm 127:3, NLT]

- ▶ Is the presence of children a blessing or a hindrance to you? How do you respond when you are interrupted or distracted by children?

- ▶ Why do you think God says children as a gift and a reward? How can you be more patient and understanding with your own children and others today?

DAY 3:

“That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”
[2 Corinthians 12:10, NIV]

- ▶ What do you think about the phrase “expect the best, but prepare for the worst”? How does that relate to being inconvenienced by those in need?

- ▶ Why would we want to take delight in hardships and difficulties? What does it mean to be strong in the midst of weakness?

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 4-6]

DAY 4:

“Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.”

[2 Timothy 4:2, NIV]

- ▶ What is the biggest thing you have prepared for? [Test, wedding, etc.] What did that preparation look like?

- ▶ In order to not be inconvenienced later, what preparations do you need to make so you can be ready to preach, correct, rebuke, and encourage people when the time comes

DAY 5:

“When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns.”

[Matthew 14:13, NIV]

- ▶ Have you ever wanted to get away? Have you ever wanted to be alone? How does it feel to know faced this feeling too?

- ▶ Jesus was continually inconvenienced by crowds wanting things from him, and most of the time he healed them. How can you help people when you do not feel like it

DAY 6:

“When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.”

[1 Corinthians 13:4, NIV]

- ▶ When has your heart broken for someone in need? What was it about them that made you want to help?

- ▶ Jesus was tired, but still continued to heal people after a long day. How do you balance your times of rest and times of serving those in need?



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Week 5 - for the broken

WEEK 5 - HIS ARMS ARE WIDER FOR THE BROKEN

CONNECT QUESTIONS

1. Share a time when something got so messy, so dirty, or so broken that you just threw it away.
2. Have you ever gotten so dirty or smelly that people would avoid you? How did you remedy the situation?
3. Have you ever held or hugged someone and loved them so much you did not care about the mess?

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever said or thought something like, "I'm not perfect, but I'm not as bad as _____"?
2. Read Luke 7:36-39. How would you describe this woman's reaction to Jesus? What was the Pharisee's reaction to Jesus? To the woman?

CHANGE QUESTIONS

1. When have you considered yourself better or less sinful than others? What has changed in your heart after this lesson?
2. How do you react to sinful people? Condemn them? Love them? How do you need to be more like Jesus to them?
3. How can you be more contrite in your sin? How can you be more loving to others who are struggling in sin?

PRAY FOR ONE-ANOTHER

[Spend some time praying with your Life Group. When asking for requests, try to keep the focus on personal praises/requests that relate to people in the group.]

PRAY FOR MISSIONS OF THE WEEK

Jireh India Missions

This ministry in India shares the good news of Jesus with those who have never heard His name. They provide homes and education for orphans at House of Peace, teach widows to sew so they can provide for their children, provide bread for much of their community through Five Loaves Bakery, and work with a leper colony. They strive to fulfill Psalm 82:3 — *Defend the poor and orphans; do justice to the afflicted and needy.*

Shiloh Christian Children's Ranch

Located in Kahoka and Clarence, MO, Shiloh is a safe haven for abused and neglected children, and includes six homes for children, two relief homes, and an onsite school. shilohranch.org

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 1-3]

DAY 1:

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”
[Ephesians 4:32, NIV]

- ▶ Do you think it is easier to show compassion for those who are suffering from a physical affliction or those who are suffering from sinful choices? Why?

- ▶ Who is struggling that you need to show kindness and compassion to? How can you reach out to help someone caught in sinfulness?

DAY 2:

“The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: ‘I thank you, God, that I am not like other people—cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I’m certainly not like that tax collector!’
[Luke 18:11, NLT]

- ▶ Why do you think the Pharisee wanted to point out the sins of others in his public prayer? Who are some sinners you may want to point out in a similar prayer?

- ▶ Jesus says this Pharisee will not be exalted or justified by God. Does your attitude to others glorify God? What needs to change?

DAY 3:

“So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.”
[Romans 8:1, NLT]

- ▶ Have you ever felt condemned and defeated because of sin in your life? What helped to get you through this time?

- ▶ If there is no condemnation from God, why do some people feel like it is their job to condemn others? How can you be encouraging instead of condemning the sins of others?

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 4-6]

DAY 4:

“But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.”

[1 John 1:9, NLT]

- ▶ Why is confession such an important part of healing from brokenness? Who do you need to confess to?

- ▶ What do you need to confess to God? Take some time to do this today so you can be cleansed from all wickedness.

DAY 5:

“When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.”

[Luke 7:39, NIV]

- ▶ Why do you think the Pharisee was so unwelcoming to the sinful woman? Why do you think Jesus was so welcoming?

- ▶ The woman showed remorse for her sin and praise for Jesus. What do you need to be forgiven for? How will you praise Jesus unashamedly?

DAY 6:

“⁴⁷Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.” ⁴⁸Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

[Luke 7:47-48, NIV]

- ▶ What do you think of Jesus’ statement “whoever has been forgiven little loves little.” When have you seen this take place?

- ▶ This woman was forgiven by Jesus because she was remorseful, contrite, and worshipful. How can you do each of these things today?



BE KIND
and compassionate
to each other,
FORGIVING
each other, just as
in Christ
God forgave you.

Ephesians 4:32



**ALWAYS BE HUMBLE
AND GENTLE.
BE PATIENT WITH
EACH OTHER,
MAKING ALLOWANCE FOR EACH
OTHER'S FAULTS BECAUSE OF
YOUR LOVE.**

— *Ephesians 4:2* —