



## C3 Devotionals

*“Loving from the Indoors”*  
A Devotional by Justin Talbert,  
Student Pastor

The harsh winters of Scandinavia kept the Vikings locked up in their great halls for months at a time. One can imagine the restlessness, the ache to get out on the waters, the frustration of constant darkness, snow, and that inevitable cabin fever.

And yet, these colder months forged them into fiercely loyal families – a true band of brothers and sisters. Day after day, they shared meals and tales, taught the children trade skills and war theory, and everyone shared what they knew about their gods.

And somewhere along the way, their love for each other heightened. It was the closeness of the winter months that paved way for the effectiveness of the summer months. When that ice thawed, the Vikings took to the seas – as a single unit, knit together by love.

### A Different Sort of Love

I admit, 2020 Arkansas is a bit different than 9<sup>th</sup> century Norway! But, in a matter of days, we’ve stumbled into strange times, haven’t we? Fear has engulfed our land. Uncertainty blurs out the foreseeable future. Social distancing forces us into a mild isolation. And the memes...they’re everywhere...

So, here’s my question: how do Christians live differently when forced indoors? The answer, however simple, is incredibly countercultural – we are *to love*.

When our world turns inward in anxiety, we look outward with love. This is the call of our Captain, which the COVID-19 hasn’t changed: “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

Here are practical ways we can be loving those around us, even while inside our homes:

*First, we love by fortifying our homes.*

Much like the Vikings, these “cold” weeks (or months?) will provide for us ample time to invest in our homes. If you live alone, keep the company of Jesus with his Word, and fortify your spiritual muscles. If you live with others, fortify the culture, the relationships, the closeness. With 4 kiddos at home, I’ve been pretty whiny about this. But Jesus is slowly adjusting my perspective.

*Second, we love by praying to our sovereign God.*

Jonah had it worse than us, y’all. God socially distanced him inside a *fish*. What did he do down there? He prayed. Not only did he admit his sin and make a vow, he declared that God is sovereign. We, too, must prioritize prayer in this time. A chief privilege of the Christian is to pray for others. As J.C. Ryle said, “He loves me best who loves me in his prayer.”

*Third, we love by writing to our brothers and sisters.*

When locked up in jail, Paul didn’t wallow in shame. He didn’t complain about the close-quarters. He *wrote*. Thinking deeply about the triune God and His redemptive work for us, thinking deeply about the people he loved dearly, Paul wrote some of the greatest literature of all time, including Ephesians! We, too, can write. Let’s use social media to bolster people, not divide them. Let’s take time to hand-write letters of gratitude or encouragement, perhaps dropping them in people’s (physical) mailboxes.

*Fourth, we love by trusting the gospel.*

With nails in his wrists and feet, abandoned by his disciples, suspended between heaven and earth, and by ultimately *dying*, Jesus experienced a social distancing like no other. He endured the pit of death so that we might *never* suffer eternal distance from the Father. Let’s walk in that truth. This is a terribly difficult time. I don’t mean any of this lightly. But the gospel is our power, our hope. We spread love furthest by trusting the gospel deepest.

*Fifth, we love by following through.*

By the time this season ends (whether it’s days or weeks or months from now), let’s be a people – a church *family* – that didn’t waste our time indoors. When society reopens, let’s explode outwardly. Like the Vikings, let’s “raid” the unsuspecting world – not with axes, but with open hands, fortified homes, and soft hearts.

## Deeper Study

### *Further Reading*

Bible: 1 Corinthians 13

Quote: “Our post-Christian neighbors need to hear and see and taste and feel authentic Christianity, hospitality spreading from every Christian home that includes neighbors in prayer, food, friendship, childcare, dog walking, and all the daily matters upon which friendships are built.” - *The Gospel Comes with a House Key* by Rosaria Butterfield

Article: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/rosaria-butterfield-radically-ordinary-hospitality/>

### *Conversation*

- 1) Which emotions have you personally experienced over the past two weeks? Which have you sensed from those around you? *Why* those emotions? Really try to surface what's behind them.
- 2) In what practical ways have people loved you during this time? How have you loved those around you? Where are you struggling to love?
- 3) From the examples given in the devotional, which form of love will you choose to focus most on today?

### *Prayer*

- 1) Praise God for His undeserved love, that He has secured our eternity in Christ, which reinforces our present.
- 2) Confess those moments where you haven't trusted, you haven't loved, you haven't wielded a healthy perspective.
- 3) Pray specifically for 3 people (or groups of people).