

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

For the week of February 2-8, 2020



SERMON QUICK REVIEW

As you recall this week's sermon entitled "Loving in the Singular," what was the most compelling or memorable point that stood out or confused or challenged you?

Or

Briefly share (1) a spiritual LESSON that you learned from the sermon, (2) an application from your last week's NEXT STEPS or (3) a PRAISE report from the past week.

CONNECTING

Think of one or two persons in your life who loved you with no expectations in return. Share to the group how this person(s) expressed their love for you.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Read John 13:34-35.

1. How do you think would an unbeliever answer the question, "How can you tell if a person is a Christian?" What do you think would be the possible and various answers?
2. In what way is Jesus' commandment "a new commandment" in comparison to the Old Testament commandment found in Leviticus 19:18? What are some other possible reasons why Jesus calls this a "new" commandment?
3. Jesus commands us, "Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another" (John 13:34). What kind of love did Jesus exhibit for his disciples? Someone said, "We cannot do for others what hasn't already been done for us." Why is it important for the Christian to live this out?
4. Read any of the following encounters in the gospels: John 5:1-9; John 8:1-11; Luke 19:1-10. How do these stories portray Jesus loving in the singular? What implications does this have when it comes to us applying this command to love one another?
5. What happens when Christians carry out Christ's commandment to love one another (see John 13:35)? In what way is this also connected to Jesus call for us to be salt and light to the non-Christians (see Matthew 5:13-16)?
6. *Discuss.* What does it mean, in practical terms, to love one another just as Jesus has loved us? (See John 13:1-17 and Philippians 2:3-8 to get the ball rolling.)

7. *Share.* Think about someone in your sphere of influence who is difficult to love. What is it about that person that makes him or her difficult to love? As you think about it, what is one thing you can do (or start to do) to show that person love?
8. **[NEXT STEPS]**
This week, pray to ask God to reveal areas in your life where you can apply Jesus' call for us to love one another.
 - I will commit to go through the devotionals everyday this week.
 - I will carve out time with God in the meditation of his Word and prayer and will intentionally find the time to listen to him speak to my heart.
 - I will love _____ (name of one person who is difficult to love) by praying for him/her and showing acts of kindness.
 - In what ways would you like to see God's love demonstrated for you? Ask him to show you his love in that way.
 - I will express my love to _____ (name of a brother/sister in Christ) by _____ . [Note: Not a romantic love please]
 - Other ways you can apply this lesson _____ .

CLOSING THE SESSION.

(Group facilitators: Before closing, read through the "Personal Reflections & Action.")

Close the session by taking the time to pray for one another. Consider the following as you pray:

- Pray for sensitivity to be able to see the love of the Father in your life this week.
- Pray for grace and courage to love an "unlovable" person this week.
- Pray for those who are going through personal struggles..
- Pray for your unsaved family, friends and loved ones.

REFLECTION (Taken from our 5-Day Devotional).

What made this command new? The "newness" is found not in the command to love one another, but in the description of what that love looks like. Jesus disciples were to love one another just as he loved them.

Their love was to mirror his love. This is how the world would know who actually belonged to Jesus as one of his followers... they would see their love and say, "Their love looks just like the love that we saw from Jesus himself."

Well what kind of love has Jesus shown us? Cruciform love. Sacrificial love. Humble love that gives itself so that the one loved might now joy in Jesus forever. Jesus had just shown this love through the washing of his disciples' feet, and in just a little while this love would literally be poured out of his veins upon the cross. Christ looks at the community of his followers and tells them to display the love of the cross before the world! He tells them to be a cruciform community!

Where do you get your definition of love from? As you think about what it means to love God and love your brothers and sisters in Christ... how are you defining what that love looks like? Does your idea of love come from Hollywood? Or Friends? Or your own experiences? Jesus is calling to us to have our concept of love shaped by his cross.

Look upon the cross of Christ and hear his new command... "Love one another: JUST AS I have loved you."

