SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

For the week of February 2-8, 2020

As y	ERMON QUICK REVIEW rou recall this week's sermon entitled "Loving in the Singular," what was the most compelling or norable point that stood out or confused or challenged you?
Or	
Brie <u>last</u>	fly share (1) a spiritual LESSON that you learned from the sermon, (2) an application from your week's NEXT STEPS or (3) a PRAISE report from the past week.
Thir	DNNECTING ak of one or two persons in your life who loved you with no expectations in return. Share to the up how this person(s) expressed their love for you.
	ROUP DISCUSSION d John 13:34-35. 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)?

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?

	3.	NEXT	STEPS]
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This	week, pray to ask God to reveal areas in your life where you can apply Jesus' call for us
to lo	ve 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 <u>pray for one another</u>. 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."

DAY 4. FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER

Read: Ephesians 4:31-32.

Isn't it interesting that young children generally don't hold grudges? They may cry and throw tantrums, but once their anger has been vented, they let it go. Adults, however, have a tendency to hang on to offenses. When people wrong us or our loved ones, we want them to pay for what they've done, to suffer as we have. It only seems fair to expect restitution of some kind, and unless that occurs, we withhold forgiveness.

As Christians, however, we are called to a different standard and way of thinking—one that's consistent with God's character. He is a merciful Father who wants His children to show mercy to others (Luke 6:36). His Son's life on earth demonstrated this. As Jesus hung on the cross, He prayed for those who crucified Him, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). God expects us to forgive as Jesus did, regardless of circumstances.

This command seems impossible to carry out until we start to grasp the enormity of what took place on the cross. Christ's death made us recipients of a mercy so great it defies comprehension. The Savior took all our sin upon Himself and died in our place. He experienced the outpouring of God's wrath so we might be forgiven and reconciled to the Father. Although we deserve condemnation, through Jesus Christ we have instead received God's mercy.

Now as new creations in Christ who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we have His power to truly let go of the wrongs done to us and extend mercy to others, just as God has given mercy to us.

Reflect & Apply.

- 1. When someone does something wrong to you, what is your most natural response? Read Romans 12:17-21. What does it mean when God says, "It is mine to avenge"?
- 2. What were some obstacles in your life that prevent you from forgiving someone? Does forgiveness cost anything?

DAY 5. SEEING JESUS THROUGH THE CROWD

Read: Mark 2:1-12.

This is one of several gospel stories in which we see people approach Jesus in order to help a friend or loved one. So many people had gathered that the house was full. Some were -curious; some were suspicious; some may even have come to stir up trouble. It was "standing room only," and the friends of the paralyzed man could find no way in. Did no one see their need and offer to let them pass through? Perhaps we have all been guilty of that—so focused on our own interests that we can't see the needs around us.

The four friends refused to let their friend be overlooked. They decided to lower him through the roof of the house to see Jesus. It had to be an incredible group effort. Jesus saw it too, and he recognized the depth of their faith in going so far to bring their friend to him.

Christians have had many oppor-tunities to help others. When natural disasters strike, for example, churches and Chris-tian organizations have mobilized teams to go out and build or repair homes, donate food and clothes, and provide funds where needed. Perhaps you have helped in such -efforts, or with community development or medical clinics. There are needs everywhere!

Let's keep our eyes open to see people around us today who need help and may also need to meet Jesus. They are precious to the Lord and well worth our efforts.

Reflect & Apply.

- 1. What quality impresses you the most about these four friends? Have you ever seen this demonstrated in your church?
- 2. Think of a time in which God gave you what you needed rather than what you wanted. How did you come to view the grace and blessing of God over time?

3. This story is also a story about expressing love in the context of

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LOVING IN THE SINGULAR

"The Main Thing" (Series) February 2, 2020

Questions for Personal Study & Reflection

This 5-day devotional includes readings with brief commentaries that builds upon the weekend sermon.

You are encouraged to take the time to read the Bible passages and meditate on them. On average,

you will need 20-30 minutes to complete them.

Reflection questions and applications are intended to invite you to slow down and mediate on the truth that God is teaching you. Daily application steps are also given to help drive the message in practical ways.

DAY 1. AS I HAVE LOVED YOU

Read: John 13:1-14; 34-35.

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.

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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."

Reflect & Apply.

- 1. Who are the people who are easy for you to love?
- 2. When Jesus washed the disciples feet, what do you think was the significance? Why was this an example? How do you think Jesus' words in 13:34-35 connect to the washing of feet?

DAY 2. Love one another

Read: 1 Peter 4:7-11.

It is a sad fact that one does not have to look at the Christian church very long before discovering that believers often do not love each other as they ought. ... How many of us dislike others in our own church simply because they have certain quirks or have not progressed as far in their sanctification as we might like?

As today's passage shows us, this is not as things should be. Peter tells us that more than anything else, believers must love one another earnestly (1 Peter 4:8). He has encouraged us to do this before as a means of standing firm in the faith (1:22). Today he tells us to do this because "love covers a multitude of sins" (4:8).

We must note here that Peter is not telling us that our love for one another provides atonement for sin. Rather, he recognizes that we will experience a host of problems from other people, real or imagined, and that we will not be able to forgive and help them to grow if we are not loving them earnestly. And if we cannot love earnestly, God's people will not be strengthened to stand firm in the midst of the trials Peter had in mind as he wrote this letter.

God does initiate and guarantee our final salvation (1:3–5). However, he makes us persevere in it through the use of secondary causes. He uses the love of fellow Christians to keep us firm in the faith. Therefore, we must eagerly love even the "unlovable" in our churches. In 4:9, he tells us that one way we can do this is to show hospitality without grumbling. We should be eager to be God's means of strengthening others, and we can do this through fellowship with one another in our homes and by sharing our lives with them.

Reflect & Apply.

- 1. What are some of the commands Peter gives in these verses about relating to one another? List them below.
- What did Jesus say about hospitality (see Matthew 25:34-40)? How
 does this change your attitude towards others, especially those in the
 hody of Christ?
- 3. In what concrete way can the idea that "love covers a multitude of sins" be shown in your relationship with others? Is there a relationship in your life right now that would benefit from you practicing this command?

DAY 3. GOD IN THE DETAILS

Read: Matthew 6:25-34: 10:29-31.

When my "chocolate" Labrador retriever puppy was three months old, I took him to the veterinarian's office for his shots and checkup. As our vet carefully looked him over, she noticed a small white marking in his fur on his left hind paw. She smiled and said to him, "That's where God held you when He dipped you in chocolate."

I couldn't help but laugh. But she had unintentionally made a meaningful point about the deep and personal interest God takes in His creation.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 10:30 that "even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." God is so great that He is able to take infinite interest in the most intimate details of our lives. There is nothing so small that it escapes His notice, and there is no concern too trivial to bring before Him. He simply cares that much.

God not only created us; He sustains and keeps us through every moment. It's sometimes said that "the devil is in the details." But it's better by far to understand that God is in them, watching over even the things that escape our notice. How comforting it is to know that our perfectly wise and caring heavenly Father holds us—along with all of creation—in His strong and loving hands.

Reflect & Apply.

- 1. What are you worried about *today*? Why? What do you do when you worry?
- Reflect for a moment on Matthew 10:29-31. What strikes you most about these verses? What encouragement does it bring? In what way is your view of the Father strengthened?
 What is God speaking to you through today's readings? What

specific area(s) do you need to trust God today?							