

Icebreaker

What is your favorite pop / rock song about love? Can you sing a few lines of it?

Read 1 John 4:7-21 and discuss:

1. From 1 John 4:7-21, what do we learn about the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
2. Is the love described in this passage an action or a feeling? What does that tell you about love?
3. Who are the toughest people for you to love - family, coworkers, or strangers? What can you learn from 1 John 4 that it might help you to love those people more easily?
4. 1 John 4 verse 12 is a surprising verse for many of us when it says God's love is perfected or made complete in us if we love one another. How do you react to that?
5. John Stott says God reveals himself "in his people if and when they love one another." Does that encourage you or discourage you and why?
6. Love is easy to talk about but difficult to practice. What are ways we cultivate love?
7. In scripture, love is described as an identifying quality that proves we belong to God. What is one tangible action you can do this week to show love in your workplace or neighborhood?

Prayer

As you close in prayer, remember requests from our church family:

- > Prayers of healing for Wanda Baker, Lisa Jones, and Barbara Sloop.
- > Prayers of celebration and support for all of ZPC's 2017 graduates.

Reminders for your group:

> Habitat for Humanity of Boone County is asking for people to help with building a home. Some tasks include: building, preparing and delivering lunch; and sharing a morning devotional. Volunteers must be 16 or older. Sign up at habitatboonecounty.org.

Leader's Notes:

Love is a many splendored thing. Love is a battlefield. Love is all you need. We can talk about love and sing about love. In our culture, people think that love is God. But the real truth is that God is love. This is what John teaches us about God as Father, Son, and Spirit in this profound passage in 1 John 4. We know what love is because God shows us in so many ways, but mainly through the sacrificial love of Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah. We also know from this passage that love is more action than feeling. If we love God and love others, we are called to show it by loving our sisters and brothers. God's love is perfected in us when we love one another. Knowing that God loves us and that we can love him in response by loving others is one of the most amazing and exciting truths in all of our faith. May this week's sermon and home group discussion inspire you to both receive God's love again and to show it to others.

[Question 1] Look at verse 13-16. John says that God the Father sent Jesus (his one and only son – verse 9) the Son to be the Savior of the world. God has given us his Spirit – verse 13. God lives in us even now through the Spirit. The Father loved us so much to send his Son to die that we might live. We are helped by the Spirit – to be able to respond to God's love with love through the Spirit living in us.

[Question 2] Love is active. Some point out that love is a verb, more than a feeling. John goes so far to say we MUST love one another if God lives in us. If you don't love sister or brother, you don't love God – verse 20. Love is active and must be lived out.

[Question 3] Let your group members answer honestly from their experience. As leader, ask them the follow up question, what would help them to love those people more easily? You might say that depending on God's love daily in prayer and meditation and study will help them to love others.

[Question 4] It seems that we could be complete or perfected in God just by receiving his love. But John says that receiving God's love is not an end point, but a beginning to share that love with others – then God's love is perfected in you. When you share God's love with others, you begin to understand more the sacrificial love that God has for you.

[Question 5] One Bible commentator said "Jesus is the complete expression of God in human form and he has revealed God to us." We should not have fear having to love others (John says perfect love drives out fear) but instead be encouraged that we can know God better when we love others – especially when it costs us something. This is why it feels good to serve others, even if it costs us time, money or sweat.

[Question 6] We can cultivate loving God and loving others by learning more about love. We suggest you read carefully and meditate on 1 Corinthians 13. This "wedding chapter" speaks eloquently about what love is – and gives guidance on how to cultivate love. You can reflect and mediate on God's love for you and finally, pray for God's Spirit (who John says lives in you) to help grow your love for others.

[Question 7] They will know we are Christians by our love. Jesus calls his disciples to love one another and by this love, others will know we belong to God. Homework for this week is to look for one tangible way to show love at work or to a neighbor. Love because God first loved you!