**Experiential for 1 John 4:7 – 5:1 on March 11th**

**Donnie’s Discussion Idea**

**(prior to doing one or more of the experientials below)**

***Read the following biblical command.***

*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient,* ***bear****ing* ***with******one******another*** *in love. Ephesians 4:2*

* Ask people to share ways that they are sometimes difficult to love.
* Ask them if there are certain environments where their weaknesses tend to come to the surface. Ex working on a project, doing something competitive, addressing a certain topic
* Ask them if they are trying to grow so they are more bearable
* Ask them to identify someone who has done a good job of bearing with them

**MAKE IT CLEAR** – Focus on you not others!

*No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.* 1 John 4:12

The greatest evidence of God's presence and work in our lives is **love**. If we look closely we’ll clearly see evidence of God as He demonstrates His love – often through other people. Reflect on the ways you have been loved by others. When have you seen evidence of God’s love, perfected or matured in another person and they demonstrated that love to you? Have they:

Accepted you? Given you a second chance?

Forgiven you? Cared about your struggles?

Encouraged you? Spent time getting to know you?

Supported you? Loved you in spite of differences or flaws?

Comforted you? Shared hope for the future?

Finish this sentence with your group: *I’m grateful that God loved me through another person when…*

*We love Him because He first loved us.* 1 John 4:19

Our love for God is always in *response* to His love for us; He initiates, and we respond. Reflect again on the story you shared above and then declare your love for God. Because he loved you first, take a moment now to express your love for Him.

*When I think about God loving me in this special way, my love for Him…* (is strengthened, is confirmed, grows, seems more real, etc.)

*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God.* 1 John 4:7

John’s message is clear: Because we are those who are loved, let us love. Spend a few moments in silent prayer, asking God to speak to your heart about how He has first loved you. Ask Him to first remind you of a time when He loved you by demonstrating His: forgiveness, patience, grace, acceptance, unconditional love, restoration, attentiveness, comfort, encouragement or peace. Feel the gratitude of that love, and then ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind a specific person who might need to receive this same kind of love, demonstrated through you. Ask him to give you a specific name and the kind of love that person needs. Share this with your group.

*Because God has loved me first, I sense the Lord wants me to demonstrate more \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.*