



**MAIN IDEA:** To commit to a ‘shared life’ through worship, learning, praying, confessing, sharing and serving with other disciples.

## **CONNECT - HOW DOES THIS TOPIC RELATE TO US?**

Choose 1 or 2 questions to get your discussion started.

1. Where is one place that you feel like you belong? What makes you feel that way?
2. If you were going to move to a new community or form a new group of friends, what would be some key characteristics that you would want to find?
3. When have you experienced God’s love through another person? What did the person do that made you feel loved?
4. What Bible verses have most helped you remember to love and help others?

## **ENGAGE - WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH US?**

Read the following two passages in light of the idea of community.

*If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. - 1 Corinthians 13:1-8*

*Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. - Romans 12:9-10*

1. What is the significance of love as compared to spiritual gifts such as prophecy and faith?
2. We can assume that if Paul had to explain the qualities of love to the Corinthian church that their attitudes and behaviors must have reflected unloving traits. What would the counter-qualities of love that Paul describes reveal about the state of community in the Corinthian church?
3. When you reflect on the community around you (group, church, neighborhood, city) what is the state of love there?

4. Both of these passages about love appear in conjunction with teaching on spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1-31; 14:1-40; Romans 12:3-8). Why do you think Paul placed these words about love in this part of his letter? How can spiritual gifts be used in unloving ways?

*"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." - Mark 12:29-31*

1. Out of 613 commandments in Scripture, why did Jesus declare these commandments to be the greatest?
2. Jesus calls us to love God with all of our hearts, souls, minds, and strength. Define what these four aspects of are. How do you love God with all of these?
3. What does it mean to love yourself? What does it look like when someone is well loved?

## APPLY - HOW CAN THIS CHANGE OUR LIVES?

1. How can you show love to the people around you – your family, your neighbors, your group, and others?
2. What are some barriers to loving people well? What steps do you need to take to overcome them?
3. Augustine, a Christian theologian from the 5th century, wrote, *"What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like."* Consider the senses mentioned in this quote: touch, see and hear. Which of these senses do you best express love through? How can you elevate that sense to demonstrate love to someone this week?
4. How can you show love to one person in a practical way this week? Write his/her name here:  
  
\_\_\_\_\_

## ACTION STEP

Ask someone to pray for you and offer to pray for them in turn.

## PRAYER

Invite each person in the group to pray for the person sitting on his/her right. Have the person who goes last include a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of community that you have as a Life Group.

## GOING DEEPER - FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know*

*that you are my disciples, if you love one another. - John 13:34-35*

- Why is loving one another the distinguishing identifier of being Jesus's disciple?
- Based on this criteria, how easily could someone identify you as Jesus's disciple?

*Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. - Romans 13:8*

- The idea of debts on a ledger conjures up thoughts of keeping records of wrongs. Who are you indebted to for anything other than love – unforgiveness, resentment, wrongdoing, hatred, bitterness, revenge? How can you reconcile those accounts?

*And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. - Colossians 3:14*

- What is the state of unity in your relationships? What does this say about the level of love expressed in those relationships?

**Recommended Resources** **A.** Read *The Five Love Languages* or *Love as a Way of Life* by Gary Chapman to learn how to express love more effectively to others. **B.** Read *Love Does* by Bob Goff to be inspired on how to live a life of love.