

KEY PASSAGE: John 13:34-35

GROUP DISCUSSION:

- Read the key verse. Write your initial reaction to this verse here. The next four questions are based on this verse.
- What is a disciple? How does one become a disciple?
- A recurring theme in the Gospel of John is "so that the world may know". How do you love in a way that the world will know you are a disciple (not just a church go-er) of Jesus Christ?
- Jesus *commands* us to love. Shouldn't this flow from us naturally as a result of Jesus' love flowing into us? What are some barriers preventing you from loving in this way? Why do *you* need to be commanded?
- If you were to explain to a friend (non-believer), what it means to be loved by Jesus personally, what would you say?

THE DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS:

Spiritual Infant – The language/behaviors of a spiritual infant are characterized by lack of understanding. Infant's primary medium for learning about love is likely popular culture. Cultural bias for loving as a feeling one gets at the expense of another negates the message of the Bible that love is sacrificial, an action, not a subjective feeling. Infants need to experience love to be able to reflect it. One of the characteristics of being young in the faith is fear; fear of what others may expect of them. Since perfect love casts out all fear, infants will need to experience this love in an environment that is safe and allows for mistakes.

Spiritual Child - The language/behaviors of a spiritual child are characterized by self-centeredness. Children may believe the cultural paradigm that love is about what they can obtain personally from the relationship. Or that it's all about feelings. They may say "I'm not in love with my spouse any more". Love is an action as seen in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Children also need to experience real love as modeled by spiritual parents who express love as tangibles (patience, kindness, perseverance, etc.). Love means that children will need to be corrected and disciplined in order to produce fruit, but not to punish. Children may behave foolishly in-group or during group activities. They need to be corrected, but believe and experience that the relationship with the parent or leader is not in danger.

Spiritual Adolescent - The language/behaviors of a spiritual adolescent are characterized by a search for identity. In the process of learning to accept God's unconditional love, they may ask questions such as "Is God still out there? Is he real? Does he love me?" Adolescents are going to make mistakes in receiving God's love and in giving love unconditionally as they begin to own their faith. Adolescents need opportunities to disciple others and to love difficult people without judgment or conditions. A great way for them to learn is through apprenticeship, assigning them opportunities to meet with and disciple others in the group.

Spiritual Parent - The language/behaviors of a spiritual parent are characterized by intentionality and strategy. Parents embrace self-sacrifice. Their love and concern for others is greater than their own needs. They consider others as more important than themselves and how they express love is through getting into the trenches with those who are hurting, broken, or lost. Parents will sacrifice their own comfort and needs for the sake of others. "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends." John in his Gospel account records Jesus as saying these words: "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." This is the portrait of love – to give of oneself selflessly for the sake that another may experience true life.

ADULT STUDY / HOMEWORK: (For your personal daily study time)

Day 1

- Read 1 John 4:16. What does this verse say about the character of God?
- Read John 3:16. How did God the Father prove how much He loves you?
- Say this verse out loud, inserting your name to make it personal.
- Read John 10:9-11, 12:47, Romans 5:8, 1 John 4:9
- How did Jesus prove His love for us? What blessings do we receive when we believe in Him for salvation?

Day 2

- Read John 17:20-23 - What does this passage say about the relationship between the Father and the Son?
- What does it say about the Believer's relationship with the Father and Son?
- What testimony does God say the world will have from those relationships?

Day 3

- Read John 14:34-35, 15:11-12, 1 John 3:23, 4:11,21
- What commandment does God give in these verses?
- Read John 13:35, 14:15, 21, 1 John 5:1-3, 4:19-21
- What does obedience to the command to "love one another" prove?

Day 4

- Read 1 Corinthians 13
- Write down all the actions love produces.

Day 5

- Read 1 Corinthians 13
- Write out in your own words the importance of love in our attitude and actions towards others.
- Which "love" action is the most difficult for you? Ask God to help you understand why it is hard for you. Ask Him to help change your attitude in that area.
- Choose one or two "loving" actions to work on in your life this week.

FAMILY STUDIES / HOMEWORK (For 1st Grade and up):