

Loving the Way Jesus Loves (Part 1)

What Love Is Not *Life Group Guide*

1. Read John 13:34-35 & discuss the following question:
 - What are the implications of not obeying Jesus' command here?
2. Turn to 1 John and read carefully through chapter 3:11-24 and 4:7-21.
 - What do these verses teach us about loving one another?
 - Is there anything that struck you as you read through these verses?
3. Now turn to 1 Corinthians 13 & read verse 1-8.

Text Note: This is one of the most famous parts of all of Scripture, mainly because it is often read at weddings. It is the Bible's most complete definition of love & the chapter ends by declaring love to be the greatest of God's gifts. As familiar as this chapter is however, it is probably not understood as well as it should be. When Paul wrote these words he was not giving us something nice to read at weddings. The love he writes of here is not romantic love (*eros*), but the selfless & sacrificial love of Jesus (*agape*). Instead of preparing people for marriage then, Paul was desperately trying to show a church which was divided by self-centredness, super-spirituality, & power hungry people that there is a more excellent way to do church – the way of selfless & sacrificial love.

- What do these verses teach us about what love is not?
4. Read through 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 twice more. The first time insert your own name in place of the word 'love', the second time insert Jesus in place of 'love'. Then ask the following question:
 - Whose love would you rather put your hope in, your love or Christ's?

It's popular today to simplify the gospel by suggesting it is simply to love God & love people. However this is not good news when we honestly examine our hearts under Paul's description of love. We all know we continue to miss the mark by a long way. According to Jesus '*Love God, love people*' is actually a summary of the law, not the Gospel (Matt 22:37-40). If we had to love God & people with the love described in the passages we read to get right with God, we would have no hope of salvation. We cannot produce such love within ourselves; the law only reveals how loveless we are. As always we only have one hope, we only have one place we can look if we are to find Good News & see this genuine love produced in our lives. We cannot look to ourselves. If we are going to love the way Jesus loves then we need to know his rescuing love for us. 1 John 4:19 says "***We love because he first loved us.***" Romans 5:5 tells those who place faith in Jesus only; "***God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.***" Here we find the only hope for our loveless hearts. Our hope of becoming *agape lovers* is the Person of Jesus & his promised Holy Spirit. Only Jesus can produce this love in us by his Spirit. These verses then are not a prescription of how we must love to become Christian's, but a description of how we will learn to love because we are Christian's.