

Instructions:

Group leaders, take some time before your gathering to look over these questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you pick 3-5 questions to discuss that pertain to your group's unique style and needs.



Series: The Way of Love

We know what the scriptures say: love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and strength; love your neighbors as yourself; love is patient and kind; God is love. But living the way of love in Jesus is a daily challenge. Does love really make a difference when the world seems bent on hate, selfishness, and greed? And who is to say what love is, or what is loving in any moment? Do I really have to love my enemy? What does Christian love look like today?

Message Description:

Can someone like me make an impact in the world that is set on hate, fear, and division? Can living a life of love really make a difference? Paul wrote to the church in Corinth with a long list of all the ways they had gotten it wrong: they had allowed their diversity of status, class, race, and ethnicity to sow seeds of discord and division in the community. He writes to remind them; you are nothing without love! The agape love of God experienced and extended in a church community has the power to tear down such barriers, heal relationships, and love each other back to life.

Key Scriptures

1 Corinthians 13

1 John 4

Additional Resources:

The Four Loves by C.S. Lewis [summary here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Four_Loves]

Love is the Way by Bishop Michael Curry with Sara Grace

Questions Related to This Week's Teaching:

1. What is the main difference between the three natural loves (storge, philia, eros) and God's love? Do you believe the natural loves are easily corrupted, as C.S. Lewis claims?
2. Why do you think it is so difficult for us to understand the unconditional nature of God's love?
3. How have you experienced the agape love of God within a church community? Is there a time that you feel a church "loved you back to life?"
4. Is love like this possible even through difference and disagreement? How?

Going Deeper:

1 Corinthians 13

[*If you did not do so last week*, consider the following article for historical context on the church in Corinth and how this passage fits in the wider letter of 1 Corinthians 12-14:

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/reviced-common-lectionary/fourth-sunday-after-epiphany-3/commentary-on-1-corinthians-131-13-7>]

Ask:

- How do you understand these words differently knowing that Paul was writing to a community of Christians in Corinth and not romantic couples?
- How does this challenge how you understand and experience love?
- As outlined in the source above, Paul was writing this letter to a community deeply divided in competition and rivalry over spiritual gifts. How do the words of this chapter hit differently knowing that Paul was calling the Corinthian church to a self-giving, self-sacrificing love that is not boastful or envious, and keeps no record of wrong? How then does the love Paul articulates unify a community of people?
- What do you think Paul meant in verse 12 by being fully known? By whom? What role does being known play in loving one another? Or asked another way, is it possible to really love someone that you do not know?

List:

Love is a verb. Love must look like something, and according to our passage, love can be a list of intentional actions that are chosen daily. Re-visit 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, and every time you see the words "love is..." consider replacing with a specific verb or action. For example:

Love is patient	Love <i>waits</i> patiently
Love is kind	Love <i>acts</i> kindly
Love does not envy or boast	Love <i>honors</i> and <i>celebrates</i> the giftings of others

- Does this exercise help you understand what love must look like?
- Where do you have opportunities to show love in these ways right now?
- Where are you being challenged in patience, kindness, humility, or mercy? Could these be opportunities instead to choose the way of love? What could that look like specifically?
- How can we continue to grow in this kind of agape love together?