

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:

Wait, was Jesus serious about loving our enemies? Is that even possible today? "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." This was one of Jesus' most difficult teachings, and one he *was* very serious about. So serious that he prayed to God to forgive his persecutors, even as they were crucifying him. In an increasingly polarized and divided world, maybe we can start by loving the people we simply do not like; the ones who annoy us, challenge us, maybe even offend us. This kind of love looks like honoring each person as created in the image and likeness of God, and are therefore worthy of our respect.

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. Is there someone in your daily life (work, school, family) that you are having difficulty loving right now?
2. How did the teaching challenge you to see them differently, or more graciously?
3. What are the three implications of the principle of *imago dei* and why are they so important to remember when trying to follow a way of love?
4. What role could prayer play in your ability to love your enemies? How can we be praying for you this week?

Going Deeper:

Matthew 5-7: Consider reading a larger section of the Sermon on the Mount, starting in Matthew 5.

- What teachings stand out to you as counter-cultural, or as challenging the powers and way of life of the day?
- According to this teaching (especially Matthew 5), what is the kingdom of God like? Or what can we say the reign of God will be like?
- What is Jesus doing with the law in our passage (5:43-48, and other references to the law in 5:21-42) and how should we understand it in light of Matthew 5:17-20, when Jesus says he has come to fulfill the law?
- The greatest commandment in Matthew is not found until 22:34-40. For this gospel, everything seems to be building toward the death and resurrection of Jesus, and then the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20. Revisit this account at the very end of Matthew. What do you hear or notice differently? In light of our teaching series and these verses highlighted from Matthew, what is the most important thing that should be included as we seek to follow the Great Commission?

Next Steps

“To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us.”- Tim Keller

- In the last few weeks, we have reflected on 1 Corinthians 13:12 and the power of being fully known in love, asking, is it possible to love someone that you do not know? It is hard to begin to love our enemies if we do not know them well; if we do not engage with people who think and act differently than us. It is easier to simply categorize, label, and then dismiss others when we do not like something someone says or does. *What opportunity do you have to better know and understand someone in your life whom you find hard to love?*
- Bishop Michael Curry in his book writes, “We need a revival of relationships across difference-difference of religion, difference of ethnicity, difference of political ideology. And as former secretary of state Madeleine Albright has said, ‘Instead of conspiring with the like-minded, we need to spend time learning from those we consider wrong-headed’” (Love is the Way, 222). Do you agree or disagree? Where do you have an opportunity to learn from someone you consider “wrong-headed” or confused?
- Thinking about the community you live in, how Louisville is organized, and the neighborhood our church is in, how can you actively play a part in building relationships with the people you don't know?