

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:

If we always choose love, does it mean we could be taken advantage of or made a doormat? How can we share the love of Christ without being tossed about by the difficult people and situations we encounter in life? Paul says it requires us to grow up. To be mature believers, taking the high road, and operating from wisdom. And according to the example of Christ, two ways we can learn to love difficult people and to grow up in love toward the full stature of Christ are to speak the truth in love and set clear boundaries.

Key Scriptures

Ephesians 4:1-16

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. Share about a time when someone you knew spoke the truth in love? How did it change or impact your relationship?
2. Instead of just "going along to get along," how can telling the truth enrich and deepen a relationship?
3. Which boundary exemplified by Jesus stood out to you? Or surprised you?
4. Do you find you are good at setting boundaries?
5. Where do you need to create a boundary in your life right now?

Going Deeper:

Matthew 6:5-14

After Jesus teaches on retaliation and loving our enemies in Matthew 5, he turns to the work of prayer. "Pray like this..." he says. Read together Matthew 6:5-14.

- As a follow-up to last week, ask again, what role should prayer play in loving your enemies? How can your heart toward others be transformed by praying for others?
- Does anything stand out to you differently as you read these words on prayer in Matthew 6?
- What do you think it means, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven? What is the will of God for the world and what part are we supposed to play in it?

In his book *Love is the Way*, Bishop Michael Curry says, "It is impossible to know, in the moment, how a small act of goodness will reverberate through time. The notion is empowering and it is frightening- because it means that we're all capable of changing the world, and responsible for finding those opportunities to protect, feed, grow, and guide love. We can all plant seeds, though only some of us may be so lucky as to sit in their shade. Since we can't start twenty years ago, the best time to start is today."

We are invited to practice this way of love as a direct invitation by God into the work of redeeming the whole world. Our love really can make a difference, and it starts with prayer. Prayer transforms, sets free, and empowers us. Through prayer the Spirit can give us wisdom of knowing when and where and how to plant seeds of love.

- Inspired by this and Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5-7, what opportunities do you see to protect, feed, grow, and guide love beginning today?

Praying for those who persecute- Consider setting aside time to pray for the conflict in Ukraine; for the people, fellow believers in Christ, for war to cease, and for the leaders and officials to find other solutions. For a guide, consider this special publication from Lectio365 with responses of prayer to speak out loud as a community.

<https://www.24-7prayer.com/a-prayer-for-the-crisis-in-ukraine/?fbclid=IwAR2QiB2txzLQNdaxNw5n2YvX5eK7WRTB8pxR0ak4LxxlFhuTiLnvjqw7rEI>

Mark 4:35-41- The power of a good nap

- Revisit the story of Jesus calming the storm in the gospel of Mark. What do you notice this time? What stands out?
- How does Jesus acknowledge his own personal or emotional limits in this moment? Do you think he could give us permission to do the same, naming out needs and limits and setting boundaries?
- Has it ever occurred to you when reading this story, not to condemn Jesus for napping like the disciples do, but to act similarly?
- How is napping an exercise of faith?
- For more on the holy power of a good nap, see: <https://proverbs31.org/read/devotions/full-post/2020/05/19/the-holy-work-of-napping> [Yes, Proverbs31 is traditionally a women's ministry, but this commentary on the story of Jesus calming the storm can be for everyone. ☺]

Family-friendly:

- How can we share with our kids about the importance of speaking the truth in love, setting boundaries, admitting personal limits, and communicating our personal expectations and needs? If we find these things difficult to do ourselves, it may be even more so to talk to our children.
- Are you modeling healthy boundaries and truth-telling relationships? If not, how can we help you start?