



WINTER 2023 // WEEK 7

Life Group Questions

A People of Hope // February 25/26, 2023

What Does Love Actually Look Like? // 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

Introduction

Though our passage this week is rather short, it's packed with clear guidance in what it takes to live as children of Light in a dark world. Our hope is that your group discussion will help you develop the kind of connectedness that deepens your relationship with Jesus and with each other.

To think through the main ideas in the sermon and prepare for your discussion together, we invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group. Due to preferences over a wide range of groups, we do not expect you will cover every question each week.

Warm Up *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

- 1) What is the biggest way you've changed since you were a child? In what way are you still the same?

- 2) If you've experimented with any of the Personal Spiritual Exercises from our weekly Sermon Questions, share which ones have been meaningful to you.

Getting Started

Transition into group discussion.

- 1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
 - a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
 - b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
 - c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you

 - 2) Choose someone to read the passage aloud for the group.
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Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

- 1) How did the sermon this week help you understand what it means for Christ-followers to be people of hope?
- 2) Think of a typical drive home from a weekend church service. **Are you more likely to express criticism or appreciation relating to your experience?**

What heart posture might be motivating your responses?

Share with one another how your time together in Life Group can support you in becoming more grateful followers of Jesus.

- 3) At the end of verse 13, we are told to live in peace with one another. Pastor Jeff talked about cultivating peace from a heart finding rest in God. **How much do you experience peace throughout your day from a heart finding rest in God? Explain your answer.**

Examine Philippians 4:4-9. This passage is similar to our passage. **Discuss the similarities. From what you remember from Pastor Jeff's sermon and from these two passages, what does it look like to cultivate a heart of peace in your life?**

What is one thing you could do this week to begin finding rest in God?

- 4) These days it's all too easy to admonish someone who is far removed from us (over a social media stream, through an email, in a blog post) rather than have an honest, face-to-face conversation with a person in real life. **Have you posted or written something that you wish you hadn't? If you are willing, share the outcome and what you learned from that experience.**

When was the last time you had an honest, face-to-face conversation with a close friend that was intended to help them grow through an area of weakness? Without breaking a confidence, share how that affected your relationship.

- 5) Our culture promotes revenge and repaying evil for evil as a way of taking justice into our own hands. Yet, Paul is clear to point out that we are to be patient with *everyone* and seek the good for *all people*. Consider a few different areas of life where you encounter a variety of people. How are you seeking the good for all people in each of these areas?

- Your home and with family
- Your workplace or school
- Your neighborhood and community
- The culture at large

(See the Prayer Focus below to help you reflect and pray over this question)

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts. **Next week in Life Group, take a few moments to share how the Lord may have used this exercise in your life.**

Prayer Focus: Look back at the list of people in your life from question #4.

1. Pray a simple prayer of openness like, “Search me, O God.”
2. Ask God to reveal the times you resist seeking good for others.
3. Confess your resistance and need for God to fill you with His love for ALL people.

Scripture Focus: Peter gave similar instructions as Paul in his writings to 1st Century believers. Read 1 Peter 3:8-12 and notice that he is quoting Psalm 34:12-16. The thread of gospel truth is woven throughout scripture!

Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

A significant part of “coming together” is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say “Amen” aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?