



## Discussion Questions *(with your group)*

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- 1) Love is the topic of this week's passage. It is a word that is repeated many times and used in multiple ways throughout these verses. **Share with your group some thoughts about God's love, or loving others that you noted during the sermon teaching or from your personal study.**
  
- 2) What does John say about how we have been loved by God in verses 7-11?

Can someone who doesn't know God (unbelievers) truly love others? Why or why not?

- 3) Verse 12 says that, "No one has ever seen God...". Why is this? (Look to Exodus 33:18-20 and John 4:24 to confirm your answer.)

How does the second half of verse 12 explain how people can "see" an invisible God? (Look at John 13:35 and 17:20-21 to confirm your answer.)

- 4) Think about an area in your life where you worked so hard for perfection. **Describe that process. How successful were you?**

By contrast, does the perfecting of God's love in us, the sanctification process, require effort on our part?

What role does abiding play in sanctification? How do you pursue abiding with God?

How can your Life Group be an encouragement to you in this on-going, sanctification process?

5) According to verse 17 and 18, if God's love is made complete in us, what will be the result?

Verse 17:

Verse 18:

**What is the relationship between love and fear? Why does perfect, mature, complete love cast out fears about the day of judgment to come?**

Share with your group if you are willing. **What are some of your fears about God, about others, or about circumstances? How have you seen the perfect love of God cast out fears in any of these areas bringing you confidence.**

6) According to verse 19, what should be our motive for loving others? Also, what are some lesser motives that we tend to have when loving others?

**As you think through your relationships with others, do you see this as your main motive for loving others? Explain your answer.**

Most of us know the tension of loving God, but at the same time, also wanting to sidestep loving a person in our lives who is difficult to love. **In verses 19-21, what is the message to us regarding these hard relationships?**

**How can you apply this message to a hard relationship in your life? What are some practical ways you can love well simply because God loves you?**

## Personal Spiritual Exercises

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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 that we might experience inner growth. Since God longs

for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit— we invite you to strengthen your souls with exercises that challenge and stretch you in new ways. Choose one and commit to repeating it until you gain strength in that area.

- 1) **Scripture Reading: to listen and soak in the Word as an experience of the words washing over you.** Read or listen to the entire letter of 1 John at least twice/week. As you take it in, resist the impulse to study and parse the details. The point is not to gain “head knowledge” but a stirring in the heart as the Holy Spirit brings the Word to life in you.
- 2) **Memorization: to internalize God’s Word.** A key passage for this series is **1 John 4:7-14**. Commit to memorize it yourself and encourage others in your group to do it with you.
- 3) **Walk & Pray: to actively engage with the scripture passage.** Write out the passage of the sermon each week on a note card and take it with you on a daily walk.
- 4) **Journal Reflection: to practice remembering what God has done.** Make time in your schedule to put down in writing the feelings and thoughts that are stirring as you interact with the Word of God.
- 5) **Self-control Exercise: to help you come to stillness from a busy or hurried pace of life.** Set a timer for 10 minutes. Sit upright but comfortably in a chair with your palms open and upward on your lap. Focus on a word or short phrase about the character of God the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. When your thoughts wander to the things on your to-do list or other people’s needs, redirect them back to the character of God. When the 10 minutes is up, close in a short prayer of gratitude.

## Prayer

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Praying together in a group is different than praying alone with God. It’s a conversation that can help you grow closer to each other as you are in God’s presence. One way to pray follows this often-used pattern in scripture – acknowledge who God is, recognize the need we have for Him, and ask to partner with Him on behalf of others. When possible, use the passage of scripture from this week’s sermon as your starting point, then form a prayer that follows this pattern:

God, our Father, this week we learned that you are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ .

As I looked into your Word, I understood how I need you to \_\_\_\_\_. Help me to be faithful to \_\_\_\_\_ in the week ahead.

Other people are on my heart, and I trust that you have put them there for a reason. I ask for your will to be accomplished in their life as they \_\_\_\_\_. Help me to know how to respond well to the needs of \_\_\_\_\_, even as my first step is in praying for them right now.

Each group engages in prayer differently. Some groups go around and allow anyone to pray that desires to do so. Other groups have several people pray or maybe 1 person closes the group in prayer. Still other groups split into smaller groups of 2-3 people and those people pray for each other. How you choose to engage in prayer is dependent on your group and your choice to ENGAGE! **We learn to pray by praying and by listening and praying with others!**