

### **Icebreaker**

Have you ever felt misunderstood as a person? When? Please describe the circumstances. Maybe it was when you were a kid, or it happened last week. Tell us about a time when you were jilted, dumped, or panned in a romantic relationship. By whom and when?

### **Opening Prayer**

God of all creation, thank you for meeting us here and now. You said you'd be there where 2 or 3 are gathered in your name. We plan to talk about love. We know you are the fulfillment of God's love. Encourage us; help us to see you working all around us, amen.

### **Open It**

1. What/how does being good display itself in a Christian's life?
2. Can we will ourselves into changing and become good people? Why do you think so?
3. What does love mean to you? Which of the following best describes it for you and why?
  - a. Love is passion, deep feelings of desire, and closeness you have for another person.
  - b. Love is commitment. Always stand by a person no matter what happens to that person.
  - c. Love is the honor you show for your father, mother, sisters or brothers, your family.
  - d. Love is the respect you give to God. It's the worship, the deep sense of awe for Him.
  - e. Love shows in how you care about the other through your actions.
4. Have you ever noticed it's so much easier to describe a new car to someone than to tell them about love, especially when talking to young children? Well, what is love anyway? Why do you think our English language has distorted the word for love to mean so many different things?
5. In the NEW TESTAMENT, the primary Greek words used to express love are *agapan/agape* and *philein/philia*; *eros*, signifying sexual love in Greek, is not used in the NT. Although the NT much prefers the use of *agapan*, in contrast to normal Greek usage, it is difficult to draw any precise distinctions between the NT use of *agapan* and the use of *philein*.<sup>1</sup> So then these three terms in Greek are Agape (God's love for us, our love for Him), eros (physical or sexual love), and Philo (brotherly love or love for our fellow man. When you say you love someone's house, clothes, or car, what exactly do you mean?

### **Explore It**

1. Paul indicates in many of his writings that man is incapable of love from the heart for other human beings, but it's only through God loving us first we can love others. Rom 5:1-8, Matt 12:28-31, Gal 2:20 Can love come from human beings in our natural sinful state? Why or why not?
2. As Christians, we have a duty to love each other. Luke 10:27,28 & Jn 15:12 If fact Jesus has told us the greatest commandment is to love God and love one another. Most of us talk about not knowing God's will for our lives and yet struggle with some decisions we need to make. What do you think? Can you

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<sup>1</sup>Achtemier, Paul J., Th.D., *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc.) 1985.

know God's will for your life by asking yourself which course of action would cause you to love God and your fellow humans more? Sight a circumstance or situation that may apply here.

3. God's love has changed our hearts. Once we have responded to his message of love for God and one another, we can no longer live in sin. Describe how God has changed you. How did you change after being called by God, or have you not changed? What do you see God doing in your life that indicates that you are a called and redeemed child of God?

**Love One Another I John 3:11-20** 11 This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. 12 Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brothers were righteous. 13 Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. 15 Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. 19 This is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence 20 whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.<sup>2</sup>

### **Get It**

1. Cain murdered Able because he was envious or jealous. Satan, the evil one, seems to use pride and envy almost more than any other method of attack. What is John telling us here about how to ward off this pressure from Satan? Does this work for you? Explain.

2. We tried to define love earlier during our discussion; I don't know if we ever really succeeded. What is the text telling us here about how to define love?

3. So, is love a good feeling towards someone or for our fellow man? I think not! Again from the text above, especially vs. 16-18, what is love?

### **Apply It**

It should be obvious how to apply it. Love is an action that is demonstratable. How will you respond to others during the next couple of weeks to demonstrate God's love?

### **Closing Prayer** - please ask about praise reports or issues needing prayer

Lord, change our hearts. Make us new creatures in you. It's only through you that we can lovingly respond to others. We are sinful people on our own. Our hearts often desire things that are not good for us or others. Help us now; help us to take action and show love to you and our brothers and sisters in Christ. Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984.