

Community of Love

John 13:34, 35 & I John 4:7-11

Scripture

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34, 35, NIV)

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (I John 4:7-11, NIV)

Main Idea

Love one another is placed up front in this study of the "one-anothers" of Scripture because it is the central "one-another" from which all the others flow. It is in the gospel that we see the love of God most clearly and it is by the gospel that we are able to love like God Himself. This study's purpose is to lay the theological groundwork for the rest of the studies – to focus on the love of God in the gospel as the power that creates a new community of love.

Starters

- [For Family Groups] Share your "love" story. How did you meet? First date? Engagement story? Pick some aspect of your love story to share with the group.
- [For mixed/non-married Groups] Describe a time in your life when you most strongly felt the love of God for you.

Discussion

Q1: How can Jesus' command to "love one another" be a new command? Wasn't Jesus' own summary of the commands of the OT "Love God and love your neighbor" (Mark 12:28-31, Deut. 6:5, Lev. 19:18)?

Q2: Jesus says love one another as he loved us, so His love forms the pattern of what our love should like. How has Jesus loved us and what would it look like for us to love like Him in this community group? (Look at John 15:12, 13)

Q3: According to the I John passage, "loving one another" is how our knowledge of God is expressed (4:7-8). So, why is it that our knowledge of God and His word often doesn't lead to our becoming more loving? How can we approach God and his word in this group in a way that doesn't promote just knowledge but love?

Q4. If "love one another" is Jesus' central command and the way that people will come to see Jesus in us (Jn 13:34, 35), then community is essential to following Jesus. We all have to have "one-anothers" to love...Why would Jesus make being in community the most essential ingredient of our following Him and making him known?

Q5: Both of our passages make sure that we understand that God's love for us was prior to our love for him. This prior love is the basis for our love for one another (look at 1Jn 4:10, 11). How does it impact you to know that God loved you first? Why is this important?

Q6: What is it about being loved by God that frees us and empowers us to love other people? How can we as a community group help each other to experience this freedom?

Prayer

Share any obstacles you might have in knowing and experiencing the love God has for you (i.e., you didn't have a loving father, perfectionist tendencies, you have a low self-image). Pray that God might remove these obstacles and give us all a fresh experience of His love for us in Jesus.