

Life Goals: Love

DESIRED OUTCOMES

You don't necessarily need to discuss these, but be aware as a leader.

- To see that growing in the spiritual fruit of love is both vital and inevitable for followers of Jesus.
- To engage with practical ways of loving others better.

INTRODUCTION

Our culture talks about life goals, and points to things like getting more money, being comfortable, pursuing influence... While God says that the best life goals are around character development and growing in the fruit of the spirit.

This series is based on Galatians 5:22-23, which says: *'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control'*. These fruit are traits that God grows in us, they are not merely a list of things to 'try harder at', nor do they grow individually, but they are formed as we focus on becoming like Jesus in how we are in every part of our life.

SHARE

- Why does the search for love dominate so much of popular culture – songs, novels, films and the lives of so many people?
- Who in life has loved you well? How has that love affected and shaped who you are?

READ

1 Corinthians 13:1-8

This passage is a fantastic description of what love looks like in practice. *Read the passage out loud a few times between the group, then leaving space to reflect individual, before sharing:*

DISCUSS

What stands out to you? *Take some time to pray in response to it.*

In the passage, Paul *personifies* love. This is surely deliberate – when Paul thinks of love, he thinks of Jesus. Based on your knowledge of Jesus, and this passage, in what ways (some may be surprising) does Jesus model what love looks like?

How does His love motivate you to love others?

On Sunday, Matt shared that love cannot only be a feeling – it must be a combination of affection and choice. Do you agree? How does our understanding of love shape how we go about actually loving people?

EXPLAIN

In the New Testament there are 4 different ways of understanding love:

Philia – *The love of friendship, companionship*

Storge – *Family love, like with a brother or sister or parents and children.*

Eros – *Romantic love, passion, and desire, often associated with sexual attraction and intense emotions.. This word is not directly in the Bible but the idea of it is and it's expressed in different ways.*

Agape – *Often translated as "unconditional love," or "love for all," agape is a selfless, sacrificial love, often associated with divine love.*

The New Testament uses agape as the primary word to speak of God's relationship to humanity. It is the word used both in 1 Corinthians 13 and in the Galatians 5 description of the fruit of the Spirit. When it comes to love, God sets the bar high – He calls us to 'love the unlovely' in the way He loves us, despite our unloveliness.

DISCUSS

What sort of people do you find it hard to love? Who is unlovely to you? (No need to name names!)

How have you seen God's love demonstrated through other Christians?

What things have you found helpful in provoking you to better love others?

How does God grow the fruit of love in us?

What are some practical ways you can love the 'unlovely' – share ideas with the group (this will help you with this session's 'try out').

REFLECT & PRAY

- Ask the Holy Spirit to increase your love for Jesus and others.

You may wish to play a worship song to help you invite God to help you:

For the One – Bethel

https://youtu.be/e_bj6mjUj7k?si=1LTUAflb3xPjoOVS

TRY OUT

In the week:

- Think of someone you find it especially hard to feel warm toward, someone you encounter regularly.
- Reflect on why it's difficult to love this person.
- Recognising that love is not based on feelings, what are some practical ways you can show love to that person?
- Decide one specific action you will take in the coming week, and do it
- Pray that will begin to increase your love each day.
- Report back next week how it went.