

Small Group Bible Study Questions

- A) It's an ironic concept, I believe, that the world will believe in the authenticity of Jesus Christ by the love which Christians have for one another. What does the world think about Christians based on this measure of authenticity? If you were to ask a stranger about Jesus Christ based on His followers, what answer would you imagine you would receive?
- B) It is obvious, from John 13:34-35, that Jesus wanted to have a community of followers which were sensitive to the needs and observations of the "lost." However, many churches today have been "duped" into thinking that the way to reach lost people is to create "seeker sensitive" or "seeker centered" church programs and use non-church lingo in publications and preaching. In fact, what can this kind of approach create?
- C) What is the best way for our church to reach lost people?
- D) What are some creative and innovative ways you could reach the people in your community in light of John 13:34-35? For example, inviting a "lost" couple and a "found" couple over for dinner. Expose people to the love between Christian friends! What other examples can you think of?
- E) It would be easy to look at Long Beach Alliance Church and beat it up for "not being loving enough." I think any church could say that about itself. Rather than this pessimistic, foul and negative perspective... How is Long Beach Alliance Church doing well at loving one another? How can we increase our strengths in these areas? What would need to happen in your own life for your love of others at LBAC to become observable by lost people? Is there anything blocking your love of others at LBAC? Take time to pray for our church and for each other in relation to John 13:34-35.

Somebody's Watching You!

Long Beach Alliance Church • June 19th, 2005 • Pastor Chris Lankford

"A NEW COMMANDMENT I GIVE TO YOU, THAT YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER, EVEN AS I HAVE LOVED YOU, THAT YOU ALSO LOVE ONE ANOTHER. BY THIS ALL MEN WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES, IF YOU HAVE LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER."

~JOHN 13:34-35 (NASB)

1) The Last Supper In An Upper Room*

- A) The setting in John's gospel account shifts from Jesus teaching large crowds & confronting the religious system/ leadership (John 1-12) to much more personal and intimate settings (John 13-18).
- B) As a point of reference, Jesus is teaching His disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem, hours before His betrayal (13:1-3).

* For those who are keeping careful track of our progress through the book of John, you will note that we have skipped a section of the book (John 13:1-30). This is because we discussed these verses in great detail earlier this year (March, 2005). This chapter relates to the beginning of what is known as "Passion Week," which we discussed in relation to the Easter season. If you missed the sermons in March which cover John 13:1-30, you can hear them (and download the corresponding outlines) on our website @ www.lbac.org. Follow the link for "Sermons" and browse for March 6th, 20th & 25th for the specific sermons in question.

- C) Jesus teaches His disciples about servanthood and humility by washing their feet (13:4-20). He also predicts His betrayal by Judas (one of the 12 disciples), who departs from the upper room to initiate the plan to capture Jesus (13:21-30).

2) Going Out In A Blaze Of Glory

- A) Echoing the same sense of purpose from John 12:27-28, Jesus responds to Judas' possession and departure (13:27-30) with determined resolve that in this moment of greatest darkness, God's glory will shine brightest (13:31-32).
- B) Jesus' appeals to His disciples are both urgent ("immediately" -- 13:31) and compassionate ("Little children" -- 13:32). Jesus has an intense message for His disciples, but doesn't want them to be disillusioned or 'freaked out' by what He is about to tell them (13:33).
- C) Jesus has told his opponents ("as I said to the Jews") that He was going to a place where they could not capture Him (7:33-34; 8:21). He now tells His own disciples they must come to grips with the same type of message (13:33).

3) Something Brand New!

- A) Jesus gives His disciples a "new commandment*" to love one another in the same way ("even as") He has loved them (13:34).

* In the Latin Vulgate, "new commandment" appears as *mandatum novum*, from which we derive 'Maundy Thursday', the anniversary of the Last Supper when the new commandment was instituted (D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According To John*, Pg. 484).

- B) The command "to love" was not a new command (1st John 2:7-8). It had been given to the Jews in the OT in two distinct fashions:

- i) First, the Jews were to "love the LORD your God" with all of who they were (Deuteronomy 6:5).
- ii) Secondly, the Jews were to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18).
- iii) Jesus even said that the entire Law was summed up (Mark 12:28-33) by these two great OT commands.

- C) The 'newness' of the command is its measure by a new standard, that of Jesus Christ's love. The command was significant when given, but would have taken on even greater significance after Christ's sacrificial death (1st John 3:23)

- D) These new "marching orders" are more than the standard of Christ and His love. They are to reflect the love which exists between Father and Son (John 8:29, 10:18, 12:49-50, 14:31, 15:10) -- a response to God for His gracious choosing of believers into the community of Christ-followers (Christians).

- E) Rightly living out this gracious response to God with one another validates and proclaims the truth of God before a watching world! It is by this love which Christians have for one another that the world will know (authentically*) -- that we are truly the community of God's chosen people (13:35).

* Tertullian (early church father about 100 years after John) wrote that the heathen of his day, commenting on the horrible persecution which Christians were facing, said, "See how they love one another! ...how they are ready to die for one another!" Chrysostom (another church father) commented though, "there is nothing else that causes the heathen to stumble, except there is no love..." As one modern commentator notes, these words are not irrelevant in our day, "The attractive power of communities of love is no less evident in our age, where such communities are increasingly uncommon" (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According To John*, Page 563).