

Small Group Bible Study Questions

- A) God's love is amazing! Even when we were in the darkness of our own sinful nature -- God still loved us (Romans 5:6-8)! Take some time to write a note to God, thanking Him for His great love for you and thanking Him for saving you from certain destruction!
- B) It is from this heart of experiencing the love of God that we have the opportunity and ability to love others. First and foremost, God calls us to love "each other" (1st John 4:7-8). The "each other" are the other brothers and sisters in Christ who are around you and around the world. Share with your group a time when a fellow Christian significantly shared God's love with you -- and the impact it had on your life.
- C) God also calls on us to show mercy and love to the sinful world around us (Luke 10:30-37). At the same time, we are supposed to be very careful not to "love" the world or anything that is opposed to God (1st John 2:15-17). The Bible even tells us that our closest friends should not be unbelievers (2nd Corinthians 6:14). Why do you think such caution is necessary? Have you ever experienced 1st Corinthians 15:33?
- D) Oftentimes, we get very excited about reaching our friends with the Great News about Jesus Christ. But before we can reach them, God puts an emphasis on what they will become a part of -- the local church. Name some ways you can think of to enhance our church's ability to "love one another."
- E) Loving each other, serving each other, keeping others needs and wants in mind before your own... These are all tough aspects of being a Christian. In fact, impossible if we lose sight of what Christ has done for us (Hebrews 12:1-3). What are some areas of prayer for your own life your small group could keep you accountable to in the next weeks and months to come in relation to God's love and loving one another?!

Reaching In, Reaching Out

Long Beach Alliance Church • September 5th, 2004 • Pastor Chris Lankford

WE LOVE, BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US. IF SOMEONE SAYS, "I LOVE GOD," AND HATES HIS BROTHER, HE IS A LIAR; FOR THE ONE WHO DOES NOT LOVE HIS BROTHER WHOM HE HAS SEEN, CANNOT LOVE GOD WHOM HE HAS NOT SEEN. AND THIS COMMANDMENT WE HAVE FROM HIM, THAT THE ONE WHO LOVES GOD SHOULD LOVE HIS BROTHER ALSO.
~ 1ST JOHN 4:19-21 (NASB)

1) Love -- An Overview

- A) God is love (1st John 4:8). His love, which is expressed to Jesus Christ personally (1st John 4:9; John 3:35; 5:20; 14:31) is also expressed to the creation (Matthew 5:43-47) and even extends to the whole world in the person of Jesus Christ (John 3:16, 1st John 2:2).
- B) God has designed (Ephesians 1:1-14) that some people will respond to His love and experience salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:4-9). These "children of God" (Galatians 4:6-7) are uniquely loved by God (1st John 4), and are called to abide in love to God (John 15:1-11; 1st John 3:23-24; 5:3-4).

2) God Loves The World -- But Wants More...

- A) God's love for His creation is a salvation invitation! God desires that ALL will come to repentance (2nd Peter 3:9, 1st Timothy 1:15-16). Jesus Christ has called on us to "scatter the seed" of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Matthew 13).

- B) Simply, that Jesus Christ came and died for the sins of the whole world, including yours (2nd Corinthians 5:21; 1st John 2:2, 1st Peter 3:18). His death is a 100% sufficient payment for the penalty of your sin (Romans 6:23). Jesus Christ showed His victory over death and sin through his resurrection from the dead by God (1st Corinthians 15:1-4, 13-19).

- C) How can we respond to the love of God? We must believe that Jesus Christ's death and resurrection are true (1st Corinthians 15:12-19). We show this belief (faith) by asking God to forgive us for our sin (Acts 13:38-39, 2:37-38 -- repentance) and take complete control of our lives (Romans 6:20-23) which results in a total transformation of who we are (Romans 12:1-2; 2nd Corinthians 5:17).

3) What Happens Next?

- A) **Proclaim Christ!** Jesus Christ commanded that when a person professed that they had been saved by God, they get baptized to show symbolically what had already happened spiritually (Matthew 28:19; Romans 6:1-7; Acts 2:38, 41, 8:35-38).

- B) **Remember Christ!** Whenever the family of God gets

together, we are to remember Jesus Christ (his death and resurrection) by participating in communion (1st Corinthians 11:23-34; Matthew 26:26-30). As with baptism, communion is a symbolic identification of death (the bread/body of Jesus Christ) and resurrection (the wine/blood of Jesus Christ).

- C) **Love One Another!** Because God has loved us so much (to send His Son to pay for our sins), we show our love for God by showing love to each other (1st John 4:7-21). This is how God has chosen to reveal Himself to the world, through our love for one another (John 13:35, 1st John 5:1-5).

4) How Do I Love Some Of These People?

- A) **Keep Your Eyes On Jesus!** Consider what Christ went through for you (Hebrews 12:1-3), and consider what a great love God has for us (Ephesians 2). This should be our guide in getting our own minds in a place where we are more interested in following God and loving others, than in being comfortable (1st John 4:11; Philippians 2:3-4).

- B) **Practice, Practice, Practice!** Love each other as Christ loved (John 13:34-35, 15:12-17). Be devoted/show preference to each other in love (Romans 13:8; Philippians 2:1-18). Serve one another (John 13:1-20; Galatians 5:13). Tolerate one another in love (Ephesians 4:2, 1st Thessalonians 5:13). Be sincere in your love (1st Peter 1:22).

- C) **Fearless Self-Evaluation!** If you find yourself falling short on love, go back to the beginning, and fearlessly love God, each other and the whole world (1st John 4:18-21)!