



## Week Two

### Opening Prayer

God, thank you for being with us here today. Lead us as we process and discuss; we want to hear what you are inviting us into. Amen.

### Talk It Over

Last week we kicked off our new series, “re-engage”, that is all about us looking at the three areas of life we are designed to love and live in. The big idea for this series is that we are invited to re-engage upward with God, inward with ourselves, and outward with others by understanding we are loved.

- Looking at your past week, when did you consciously feel loved by someone else?

### Read Our Theme Verse For This Series: 1 John 4:19 (NIV)

Engaging upward, inward, and outward is about learning how to rightly love God, rightly love ourselves, and rightly love others. This week we are focusing on how we engage ‘inward’ specifically and seeing how God’s love for us is meant to change how we love ourselves.

- Looking at your past week, was there a time you felt conscious of God’s love for you?

### Read Mark 8:36-37 (NLT)

The Bible teaches us that each of us has a soul; our soul is considered the most important aspect of who we are. It encompasses all our life. Our soul is the deepest part of us that brings together our entire personhood. Our soul seeks to connect us inward with our true selves, outward with others, and upward with God.

Dallas Willard, one of the most respected thinkers on the topic of spiritual formation of our time, says it this way: *What is running your life at any given moment is your soul. Not external circumstances, not your thoughts, not your intentions, not even your feelings, but your soul. The soul is that aspect of your whole being that correlates, integrates, and enlivens everything going on in the various dimensions of the self. The soul is the life center of human beings.*

- What’s your comfortability and familiarity with the topic of soul? Feel free to share whatever you’d like on this topic of soul now.
- How could caring for our soul impact our life?

### Read Galatians 2:20 (NIV)

Since Jesus said our soul is the most important part of us it’s important we learn to care for our souls or deepest, truest self well. And while the words we are hearing in mainstream media floating around “self love” sound a lot like the words we might find in the Bible when it comes to this topic, it’s important we are open to seeing when self-centered love is being promoted. In other words, while the ideas are self-centered love and Christ-centered self love may sound similar, the impact and effect of the two forms of love are different.

- In your own words, how would you describe the difference between forms of self-centered love and Christ-centered self love?
- Do you know someone who seems to know how to walk in Christ-centered self love? What sorts of habits, qualities, or characteristics do you see this person demonstrate?
- Have you ever been hurt by someone who acted in ways that felt rooted in ideas like “self love” or self-centered love? Tell us how that person’s self-love hurt you.

### **Read Ephesians 1:4-7 (NLT)**

Christ-centered love is about seeing ourselves as God see us. Through this lens we are able to freely own and see own our humanity — the good and the bad — in light of God’s unconditional love. The invitation and call laid out in the Bible is that our success, failures, strengths, weaknesses, ego, shame, fears, and labels become right sized and properly positioned in light of God’s gracious, perfect, endless love. Christ-centered love is about finding our whole identity in Christ.

- In what ways do you feel you are doing well at finding your identity in Christ this season?
- In what ways or areas of life would you like to get better at finding your identity in Christ?

### **Closing Prayer**

God, thank you for loving us. Help us to find our whole identity in you. Help us to care for ourselves and our souls in a way that honors you and honors our truest, deepest self. Amen.

**Homework:** Jump online later this week to check out the final portion and fill-ins for this week’s talk.

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### **How To Use this Discussion Guide**

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create space to grow in friendship and faith. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group connect in friendship and grow faith.

With that in mind, consider reviewing the guide before your group to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don’t feel pressure to read all the content or to hit all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help foster friendship and faith for your specific group.

Spend some time praying about your group, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance regarding your specific group.