



### Week Three

#### Opening Prayer

God, thank you for being with us here. We believe you are interested in helping us connect with you and with each other. Open us up to what you have for us. Amen.

#### Talk It Over

This series has been all about looking at the three areas of life we are designed to love and live — upward with God, inward with ourselves, and outward with others.

- In what area of life — with God, with yourself, or with others — did you experience the most love in this week —? Tell us about your answer.
- In what area of life — with God, with yourself, or with others — do you feel you experienced less love this week? Tell us about your answer.

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

Engaging upward, inward, and outward in the way depicted in the Bible is about learning how to rightly love God, rightly love ourselves, and rightly love others. The premise of this series is that we connect best with God, ourselves, and others when we understand that first and foremost we are loved by God. This week we focused specifically on the love — tangible and intangible — we share outward or with others.

In the same way, the love of Jesus is a real thing, Jesus invites us to love in real ways. He meets us at our best and in our mess and he constantly invites us to live out life knowing we are loved by him. Our connection with Jesus is where we find the capacity to love like Jesus.

- In what ways does your attitude, behavior, or disposition towards others change when your tank is full versus when your tank is empty?
- What might be some of the pitfalls of trying to love others when we are ourselves have not been given the free gift of love?
- How might we distinguish the difference between love and love in action?

#### Read 1 John 4:15-16, 19-21 (NIV)

The Bible tells us that our love should be what identifies us as Christ followers. John, the author of this verse and a dear friend of Jesus, would say that we don't know Jesus if we don't freely extend love to others. This call to love applies to all people — people we like a lot and people we don't easily get along with, people who are like us and people who aren't like us, people who behave well and people who don't. (In no way does any of this mean we have to submit to the authority, will, or ideologies of others. To love, like Jesus did, in no ways implies to love without healthy boundaries.)

- What type of people are the hardest for you to love?
  - Why do you think that is the case?
  - What do you think Jesus loves about that type of person?

*(Content continued on the next page.)*

- Tell us about how you were able to love someone who was hard to love?

### **Read Matthew 22:36-40**

To live like Jesus and in the way Jesus commanded is to love. This verse, titled the Great Commandment, is all about us living and loving well with God, ourselves, and others. This command sums up hundreds of “rules”, often called “laws” in the Bible, by telling us to pursue love.

- In what ways do you struggle with connecting with Jesus on the foundation of love?
- In what ways do you feel you are growing into a more loving person?

### **Read 2 Corinthians 5:18 (Voice)**

God’s Plan-A is that his followers would demonstrate his love to the world. The formula is simple: Allow God’s love to transform us and give that same love to others. That love is intended to be a guiding light back to God for all people. In other words, love is designed to be the foundation of our life, the healing tool that shapes us, the bridge we extend towards others, and the attractational power in the Jesus mission.

- Tell us about someone who helped draw you towards Jesus through their love.
- In what ways do you feel stuck in your capacity to love?
  - What loving words do you think Jesus would offer you regarding that area you feel stuck in?

### **Closing Prayer**

God, help us to say ‘yes’ to your love and to extend your love to others. We want to be the type of people who point others towards your love. Help us to live on mission. Amen.

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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.