

The Letter of 1 John Series



Week 4: Love One Another

Read 1 John 3:11-4:6

Stanley Grenz wrote about the importance of living as Image-bearers of God in community when he stated "We declared that God is characterised by love. Throughout eternity God is the social Trinity- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit- the community of Love. More specifically, the dynamic of the Trinity is the love shared between the Father and the Son- namely the Holy Spirit.

God's purpose is to establish a reconciled creation in which humans reflect the very character of the creator. Even more awesome, the Triune God desires that we be brought together into a fellowship of reconciliation. This fellowship not only reflects God's own eternal essence; it actually participates in God's nature, which is Love. (1Pet.1:4)" But God's purpose is not always observed in His creation, let alone His church? At times the love that God reveals for us is not given nor reciprocated. How do you love those who are incapable to love in return? How are we to follow Jesus example to love our brother, neighbour or even our enemy? Stanley J Grenz and Jay T Smith Created for Community Baker Academic Grand Rapid Michigan

Does loving someone mean we have to like them? David L. Allen wrote. "Loving is a matter of obedience to Christ and the Word of God. Love penetrates beyond the superficial and moves beyond what it does to like in the person and minimises it in order to see the person as Christ sees him. Then seeing the person in that way opens the door to acting toward that person in a Christ-like way. Loving people you don't like means treating them as if you did like them! You choose to act toward them in a way that is pleasing to Christ and that exhibits how Christ would act towards them. The nature of Christian love is that it acts, it gives, it expresses itself towards others." DL Allen, Preach the Word Commentary 1-3 John , Crossways, Wheaton Illinois , 2014, p. 157

9) How does this comment sit with you? Can you think of people who you struggle to like? In what ways could you love them?

10) Why does John shift his thinking on testing the spirit? (1 John 4:1-6). How does John reveal that test is done? It should be noted that even the evil spirits knows who Jesus is and shudders, read Mk 1:24; 3:11; 5:7-8; cf Acts 19:15 So how can we tell if the spirit behind what we confront is from God? Do you think testing the Spirit is still important today?

11) If we love our fellow man (including our enemy and those who can't love us back) just as Christ loves humanity and died for the world (John 3:16) what this does say about our relationship with God? Verses 19-24

Action: Therefore if love is an action regardless of whether love is reciprocated, how do you or your group intend to show sacrificial love this week?

Acknowledging that not everyone is easy to get on with, how are you going to reveal a Christ-like attitude this week with 'difficult' people?

Starter: There are many songs sung about Love, either love lost or found. Its lasting endurance as a song genre is testament to the importance of such an emotion. Make a list your favourite love songs and discuss why do you think this emotion is so important?

- 1) John's opening words in this passage 1 John 3:11 "*For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.*" Why is love so important to the Christian Faith and how does it affect God's community of the church?

Jean Vanier wrote about Christian Community in his book *Community and Growth* where he stated "Communities are true communities when they are open to others; when they remain vulnerable and humble; when the members are growing in love, in compassion and in humility. Communities cease to be such when members close upon themselves with the certitude that they alone have wisdom and truth and expect everyone to be like them and learn from them." Jean Vanier *Community and Growth* St Pauls Pub Australia 1989 pg. 19

- 2) Do you agree with this comment? How do you define community? In what way do his thoughts reflect your community?
- 3) John starts this passage talking about the relationship between Cain and Abel. Why does he talk about these two brothers? Why did Cain act the way he did? (Read Genesis 4:1-16) What is this passage saying about a life with unresolved conflict, hatred or even broken relationships?
- 4) What kind of life does a life of hatred offer? How does such an emotion affect God's community of the church? What are the risks in bearing grudges against another? How important is forgiveness in the church?

- 5) Jean Vanier is the founder of L'Arche, an international network of communities where people with and without intellectual disabilities live and work together as peers. He defines love as "*Love is not something sentimental; it is much deeper than that. It is the power that brings people to greater inner freedom and growth. Love is not opposite to competence. Love is always competent. And, of course, that love is such that it encourages some people to walk on their own, to leave the community, to risk the pain of separation for greater growth*" Ibid pg. 98
How does this compare to your idea of Love? The Apostle Paul spoke of a better way in dealing with Love with the church in Corinth, read 1 Cor 13, And how does his definition compare to the Apostle Paul's understanding of Love?
- 6) "*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.*" V16. Throughout Jesus' life how has he shown his love (in verse 16 and the following passages)? How does that affect the way we live together? Mtt 5:43-47, 22:34-39; Lk 6:34-36; 23:34 Jn 12:24-26; Rom 5:7-9; Eph 2:3-5
- 7) Jesus' example of love is self-sacrificial, which is expected of us "*And we ought to lay down our lives for our brother and sister.*" V16 How does John suggest love should be applied in verse 17?
- 8) Jesus said that we ought to love our enemy (Matt 5:43-48). How hard is that for you? Vanier wrote, "*The enemy in the community reveals to us the enemy inside us.*" Ibid pg. 35
Discuss together how true do you think that could be?