

Life Group Questions

Tangible Love / Pastor Ray / John 1:9-14 / Dec 19-20, 2020

In our passage today, John, the disciple of Jesus, says: "The true light which enlightens everyone was coming into the world (1 John 1:9). John's 1st century world longed for true, genuine light – something authentic and real. Our world longs for the same thing. We're tired of being manipulated in relationships. We're tired of being played by the powers that be. We're not sure who to trust. Can we trust news networks, government leaders, religious leaders, relatives . . . ? Today, we will be thinking about the topic of "tangible love," a love that is so real, true and concrete that, once experienced, we will completely trust its Source.

Reconnect

Come together with these preliminary questions:

- Who is one person in your life that has loved you well? What was it about their love that most impressed you?
- What has most helped you understand God's love?

Opening Prayer

Father in heaven, together with the psalmist we say, "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is your steadfast love toward those who fear you; as far as the east is from the west, so far have you removed our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so you, O LORD, have shown compassion to those who fear you. For you know our frame; you remember that we are dust." Thank you, our God; you came to be with us and to show us what you are like. Through our study tonight, enable us to see you more clearly, love you more dearly and follow you more nearly. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Message Recap

Review the message using the questions

1. What stood out to you most in this week's message?
2. What was the most meaningful thing that you heard in the message? Why?
3. What questions are still lingering?

Choose discussion and application questions

Reflect on John 1:9-14 and the message by discussing the questions.

1. **God shines his light on every person.**
 - a. Like the people from Eastern religions (mentioned by pastor Ray), in what ways do Christians sometimes live as if God is distant?
 - b. Why is it important to you that God "emptied himself" for you?
 - c. J.I. Packer described the incarnation as "a voluntary restraint of power; an acceptance of hardship, isolation, ill-treatment, malice, and misunderstanding; finally, a death that involved such agony—spiritual even more than physical—that his mind nearly broke under the prospect of it. It meant love to the uttermost for unlovely men..." How do you respond to these words?

2. **God moved into our neighborhood and made himself known.**
 - a. Pastor Ray said, "Jesus' birth immediately moves us beyond the purely intellectual, the speculative and the mystical to the concrete." What difference does this make to the way we relate to God?
 - b. Like the Samaritan woman, what is the "thirst" of your soul that only Jesus can satisfy?

3. **God revealed his heart through Jesus.**
 - a. How specifically has God revealed his heart through Jesus?
 - b. Recount the story Pastor Ray shared about the missionary to China, Gladys Aylward. What stood out to you about this story?
 - c. Often in our darkest times, we have the greatest moments of intimacy with God. How have you experienced this to be the case?
 - d. People of Jesus' day rejected him because he didn't meet their expectations. In what ways do you think Jesus will not meet the expectations of people?

4. **Jesus invites all people to become family.**
 - a. Jesus invites you into his light and love on a daily basis. In what ways are you in need of knowing God's light and love at this time?

5. **Reflection questions / guidance**
 Pastor Ray asked 3 reflection questions at the end of his message. You could take some time to discuss these in your group.
 - a. How has God shone his light (favor-, goodness, truth) on you recently?
 - b. How have you experienced God's personal love for you recently?
 - c. How does being a son or daughter of your Father in heaven change the way you see yourself?

Digging Deeper

Read 1 John 4:7-12 and then discuss the questions.

1. What does the text say?
2. What is God teaching you through this passage?
3. How is God prompting you to respond?

Choose Your Next Step

What next step will you commit to for the upcoming week (and beyond)?

- Individual**
 - Take 10 minutes in silence to examine your heart in relation to God's love. Do you truly believe he loves completely, unconditionally and eternally? Are there any doubts?
 - Use Ephesians 3:14-21 to pray for a greater revelation of God's love.

- Christian community**
 - The experience of God's love is tied together with the experience of loving relationships in the church. Is there anyone in the Christian community that you find difficult to love? Pray for them, and ask God for wisdom to show practical love to them.

- In his first letter, John wrote that we prove that we are children of God by the way that we love our brothers and sisters in need. Are there any needy people (whether materially or in some other way) in your Christian community that you can love in practical ways?
- **The world**
 - What are some ways this week that you can show God's love to neighbors, colleagues or family members?

Closing Prayer

My Jesus, I love you, I know you are mine; for you all the follies of sin I resign. My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou, if ever I loved you, my Jesus tis now. I love you because you have first loved me; and purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree. I love you for wearing the thorns on your brow; if ever I loved you, my Jesus, tis now. Open our eyes to grasp your deep love, so that our hearts may be expanded to love you in return. We ask this in your most holy name. Amen.