

SESSION

1

LOVE

Focus Scriptures: Galatians 5:22; 1 John 3:11-18

Session Goal: To help group members understand what it means to live out, through the power of the Spirit, the fruit of love.

OPENING OUR MINDS

Option 1

Begin by asking people what they think about when they hear the word “love.” Then, read the following statements and ask your group if they would consider these acts of love.

- *A wife receives flowers from her husband.*
- *Parents ground their teenager for lying.*
- *An employer fires an employee.*
- *A friend buys a gift for another friend.*
- *A father donates a kidney to a relative who needs a transplant.*

Follow up by asking,

- **How would most people define love?**
- **Is it hard to define love with just a definition?**
Why, or why not?

Option 2

Read the following statements on love. Pause between each one, inviting your group to respond.

- *Love is never having to say you are sorry.*
- *It is better to have loved and lost, than to never have loved at all.*
- *Love makes the world go round.*
- *Love is merely madness.* (William Shakespeare)
- *Love is the greatest refreshment in life.* (Pablo Picasso)

Then, ask the group to complete this statement: *Love is . . .*

Imaginative Option

Distribute a colored marker or pencil and piece of paper to each person. Invite each person to draw a symbol or picture that portrays and/or defines the word "love." Allow sufficient time, then ask for volunteers to share their picture with the group.

OPENING THE WORD

Understanding Galatians 5:22

The fruit of the Spirit work together, through the power of the Holy Spirit, in the life of Christians as they live out a Christlike example daily. The first fruit mentioned, love, is the foundation for all others. The word used, *agapē*, means a selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love. We experience this love from God. We live out this love by reflecting God's nature through our lives.

Understanding 1 John 3:11-18

John describes believers as those who love one another. He contrasts the love we are to have with one another with that of Cain's actions, who murdered his brother. Our example is Jesus Christ, who willingly laid down His life for us. Because of God's love for us, we are able to love others. This love is not merely shown by the words we speak, but actions that are founded in God's truth.

Option 1

Each week you will read Galatians 5:22-23 to begin. Open your time together by asking people to respond to the following questions by raising their hands: *Who loves . . .*

- *Chocolate*
- *Reading a good book*
- *Sports*
- *Country Music*
- *Liver*
- *Family*
- *God*

Do we love chocolate the same way we love our spouse and children? If not, what's the difference? Read 1 John 3:11-18.

Read v. 11.

- **Why do you think Christians “should” love one another?**

Read v. 12.

- **Why do you think John uses Cain as an example?**
- **How are Cain's actions the opposite of love?**
- **What was inside the heart of Cain? What motivated his actions?**

Read v. 13.

- **Why would the world hate believers?**
- **In what ways might hatred toward believers be expressed?**

Read vv. 14-15.

- **How would you interpret these verses?**
- **What is our motivation for loving others?**

Read vv. 16-18.

- **Why is Christ the ultimate example of love? How are we to follow His example?**
- **In what ways are words inadequate to the expression of godly love toward others?**
- **What do you think it means that we are to love with actions “in truth”?**

Option 2

Invite your group to silently reflect on the following questions:

- *What makes something easy to love?*
- *What makes something difficult to love?*

Share with the group that love is a word we define differently depending on how we use it. For instance, we may tell someone we love chocolate and later that day we tell our child we love him/her. Although we used the word

love in both cases, we define our *love* for chocolate differently from the *love* we have for our child. Love in our society is a term overused and carries different depth of meaning. Invite your group to share all the ways the word love is used in our culture.

Read 1 John 3:11-18.

- **John says we are to love one another (v. 11). How do you think he defines love?**
- **How are Cain's actions (hatred) the opposite of love?**
- **In verse 14 John says we have "passed from death to life, because we love each other." What do you think he means by this statement?**
- **How is Jesus Christ the ultimate example of love?**
- **Do you think John literally means that we are to lay down our lives for others? (v. 16) If not, what do you think he means?**
- **Why is expressing godly love with our actions more powerful than just saying it with our words?**
- **What is the "truth" John is talking about in verse 18?**

OPENING OUR HEARTS

Option 1

There is a saying that goes something like, "I would rather see a sermon than hear one." When it comes to Christian love, it is best expressed through our actions. We can say we love someone, but the true way we show love is by our actions. True love expresses itself in the things we do. Share the following in regard to true godly love:

- **Love originates from God.**
- **Jesus Christ gave us the greatest example of love by laying His life down for all humanity.**
- **Because of God's love for us, we are to love to others.**
- **We do not love on our own strength but, being grounded in God's truth, we love others through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Invite your group to get silent before God. Ask them to reflect on God's love for them and their love for others. Close by asking God to show them areas in their lives where they need God's help to express His love to others.

Imaginative Option

Casting Crowns has a song entitled "Love Them Like Jesus." This song is about taking the love of Jesus to those who need to experience it.

Consider playing this as a closing for your time together.

Option 2

Close your time together by asking your group to quiet their hearts before God. As they do, ask them to reflect on these three questions:

- *Have I accepted the love God offers me through His Son, Jesus Christ?*
- *Am I loving others as Christ loves them?*
- *Are my actions guided by God's truth and empowered by the Holy Spirit?*

Connect

WEEK 1

Love

THIS WEEK: This week we will talk about love as one of the fruit of the Spirit Paul mentions in Galatians 5:22-23. Love is not something we just say, but something we do. Take time this week to read this passage and think about its message.

THINK ABOUT THIS: What does it mean to truly love someone with Christlike love?

PRAYER CONCERNS: