



The love of God set in motion the creation of all things and the great rescue mission of Jesus. The purpose of this mission was to restore us to the hope and purpose God longs for us to have! Followers of Christ are called to express the love of God in their lives as it promotes this amazing work of God to move through them and into the lives of others. Biblically speaking, our love for others is the paramount indicator of God's activity in our lives.

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## DISCUSSION #1: GOD LOVED FIRST

The love of God set in motion the creation of all things and the great rescue mission of Jesus. The purpose of this mission was to restore us to the hope and purpose God longs for us to have! Followers of Christ are called to express the love of God in their lives as it promotes this amazing work of God to move through them and into the lives of others. Biblically speaking, our love for others is the paramount indicator of God's activity in our lives.

In this discussion we will explore how God has demonstrated perfect love for us.

### MY STORY | Starting Place

Consider a relationship where you feel or felt deeply loved by someone. Share how they expressed that to you in a way that you knew it was sincere.

### DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application

A commonly-known Bible verse is John 3:16 where it reveals that "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son..." This is a beautiful truth, HOWEVER, it is easy to overestimate the goodness of people in this transaction and underestimate the radical love of God. Read Romans 5:6-8 and Ephesians 2:4-5 to better understand the nature of the people God redeemed in his radical love. If you want to take a deep dive into the true nature of man (apart from salvation) Read Romans 1:16-32.

Why is it important to understand our true nature/state when thinking about the love of God?

Does it seem like a radical, or maybe reckless, expression of love for God to do so much for rebellious people? Can you think of an example beyond Jesus where someone loved in such a way?

Consider God's love extended so extravagantly to someone who harmed you or those you love. How does this love affect your sense of justice and fairness? How can you reconcile those?

Pull up and listen to the hymn "The Love of God" as recorded by MercyMe. Discuss the lyrics and the image of the breadth of amazing love of God.

## **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

Knowing that God is loving is something many people believe, but sadly have not experienced. Where are you in this process? Where and how has God revealed his radical love to you? Where do you think he might be leading you to increase your awareness of his overarching love for you?

## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

It's a profound truth that God called us into his ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5) where he is revealing his love and nature to lost people. Prayerfully pursue someone this week and discern how God would have you express your love and His love to them.

# DISCUSSION #2: LOVE IS A VERB

The love of God set in motion the creation of all things and the great rescue mission of Jesus. The purpose of this mission was to restore us to the hope and purpose God longs for us to have! Followers of Christ are called to express the love of God in their lives as it promotes this amazing work of God to move through them and into the lives of others. Biblically speaking, our love for others is the paramount indicator of God's activity in our lives.

In this discussion we will unpack how love is active and tangible, not merely words and sentiments.

## **MY STORY | Starting Place**

Do you have an experience that you are especially proud of how you expressed love to someone else? Share...

## **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

Read the following verses: Romans 12:9-10; 1 Corinthians 13:4-5; Galatians 6:2; 1 John 3:16; Ephesians 5:25; Ephesians 4:2-3; James 2:14-1. Make a list of all the active and tangible ways we are called to love others.

What are some of the barriers you've experienced (emotional, physical, social, etc.) to actively love others?

How can you actively love someone who either won't let you help them, or you're not close enough (physically or relationally) to actually express love in a tangible way?

Can tangible love ever be harmful or hurtful? Explain how. What advice would be good for someone as they seek to love others well?

## **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

In John 13, Jesus beautifully served the disciples by washing their feet (the lowliest role that none of them were willing to embrace).

What is most difficult for you, taking the low role of serving others or letting others serve you?

Not letting others help (or love) you is another form of pride. How open are you with your needs? What might cause you to hold back?

## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Have you been resisting spending your time or energy in serving someone in your life? Take time this week to not only acknowledge that, but bless that person extravagantly.

# DISCUSSION #3: WORSHIP GOD THROUGH SERVING OTHERS

The love of God set in motion the creation of all things and the great rescue mission of Jesus. The purpose of this mission was to restore us to the hope and purpose God longs for us to have! Followers of Christ are called to express the love of God in their lives as it promotes this amazing work of God to move through them and into the lives of others. Biblically speaking, our love for others is the paramount indicator of God's activity in our lives.

In this discussion we will explore how acts of service to others can be a way to worship God.

## **MY STORY | Starting Place**

Can you think of a time in your life where someone's love and service to you left you speechless, or almost embarrassed you?

## **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

Read Luke 10:27 and Micah 6:8. Both paint a picture of a worship-focused lifestyle God requires of those who follow him. Make observations and compare/contrast these passages.

As noted in a previous module, God initiates love and our acts of love are simply a grateful response. Read 1 John 4:10-5:1 and ponder, if God loves to such an extravagant extent, how can we limit our extravagant love for others? Is there ever a biblical reason to withhold love? Explain.

Is it a new concept to "spiritualize" our love for others as an act of worship to God?

What excites you or causes concern in thinking this way?

How do you know that you are truly loving for the glory of God and not for a direct reward?

## **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

Take a mental inventory of potential relationships in your life, and the different social environments in which they could exist. Is there one challenging relationship that God might be prompting you to pursue as a way of worshipping him? What would that look like?

## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Flowing from the last question, what steps can you take to start engaging that person?

# DISCUSSION #4: LOVE ON MISSION

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In this discussion we will unpack how, through purposefully loving others, we become a conduit of God's love to the world.

## **MY STORY | Starting Place**

Who was the first Christian who invested in you before you became a believer or shortly after? How did they respond to your rough edges and/or ignorance?

## **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

Read Matthew 5:43-48 and 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

Make a list of practical observations from these passages on loving others and the greater mission of God.

How can loving and serving others be a practical and fruitful ministry to those far from Christ?

How can this practice give you a unique "platform" to share God's love?

What is the greatest barrier for you in practically loving non-Christians? How can we maintain healthy boundaries with non-Christians while still loving them extravagantly?

## **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

Do you have a practical example where you served someone far from Christ, and it opened a door for deeper connection and conversation? Maybe you have a story of an experience that didn't go well. Either way, share the story. What were some lessons you learned from the experience?

What are some key insights you would share on making the often-difficult transition from generous service to speaking about the love of God (which is not always received well)?

A quote attributed to St. Francis is, "*Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary.*" Do you agree or have issues with this? What does it mean to preach without words? When is verbalizing the Gospel absolutely necessary?

## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

Is there someone you're practically loving or serving that God might want you to share specifically about His love? How will you broach the subject?

# DISCUSSION #5: LOVE AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH

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Often Christians measure spiritual growth by knowledge and church activities (i.e. going to church, serving, etc...) Though these are not bad things, in this discussion we will unpack how the love we have (or do not have) for others is a central indicator of our spiritual health.

## **MY STORY | Starting Place**

In your life, with which group of people were you most comfortable? (high school, college, a specific job, etc...) Explain why...

## **DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application**

The apostle John was a dear friend of Jesus and clung passionately to the truth of Jesus' message. Read the following passages and make notes on collective insights from this eye witness of the life messages of Jesus.

1 John 3:14; 1 John 4:7-8; 1 John 4:19-21; John 13:34-35

John writes in very "black and white" language (there is no gradation in his thinking). Do you think he is speaking with hyperbole or is the Christian life really that clear?

Of the points you discovered in the above passages, which point(s) were most convicting to you?

## **GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship**

What are some of the "scorecards" Christians use to determine their health or success?

In your own life, what are some of the ways you have used to evaluate your spiritual health?

How does this study challenge your thinking?

## **MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action**

As you consider love as the greatest indicator of spiritual health, who comes to mind as a person God might want you to exercise love toward? Prayerfully ask God to reveal them and specifically what action He wants you to take.