

Small Group Curriculum • 1 John • Hello, Life.

WHERE'S THE LOVE • WEEK 5 • 1 John 3:11-18

Perhaps the most challenging call in today's climate of deep division is the call to love your neighbor. What if your neighbor doesn't look like you? What if your neighbor has different values or political affiliations? What if your neighbor just makes you mad by inconsiderate or selfish actions? Jesus calls us not to let our emotions dictate who is worthy of our love, rather to see the needs of others and respond in action especially when He provides us the ability to help.

REMINDERS

- Are you plugged into serving at Awakening? Check out the website for different [opportunities to serve](#)
- Prayer is a powerful avenue to witness God's work—be sure to share prayer requests and praises throughout the week with your small group

ICEBREAKER

Easiest/Hardest: Of people you know and interact with regularly (work, friends, extended family), who is someone you would have no problem inviting into your home for a meal? Who would be the hardest? Why?

INTRODUCTION

In this section of John's letter, he reminds us of the contrast of love & hate, righteousness & evil. John brings us back to Jesus's great commandment (in two parts): loving God with our whole heart, soul, and mind and loving our neighbor as ourselves, which is just as important as the first part.

QUESTION: In a climate where "hate" (maybe not so strong, but anger, frustration, lack of compassion) seems to be the controlling emotions of our newsfeeds and daily interactions, why is it so hard to lay down the emotion and pick up the call to love others as Jesus loves us?

DISCUSSION

READ: 1 John 3:11-18

QUESTIONS:

1. John provides the example of Cain as the archetype of hate/evil. From Genesis 4:3-5, why did Cain allow hate in his heart to grow for Abel? How have emotions allowed Cain to be more susceptible to the evil one?
2. Ryan's message points out that someone else's bad behavior never justifies our own bad behavior. Read Romans 12:9-21. What stands out in this passage? What are specific actions that you should avoid in order to build a true, love-filled approach to life? What are specific actions that you can take to demonstrate love to your neighbor?

A W A K E N I N G

3. Verse 15 directs us that anyone who hates his brother is a **murderer**. Why does John use such a strong term? How does John's pick up on themes from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5: 22, 38-39, 44-45)? Is this an effective way to emphasize the dangers of not loving our brothers/sisters? Why or why not?
4. John tells us in verses 16-17 how Jesus is the archetype of love/righteousness—what is the essential action of Jesus that most illustrates His love?
5. What other actions are we called to perform to demonstrate that God's love is in us?
6. Ryan also discussed the story of the Good Samaritan as a guiding illustration of Jesus's expectation of us to demonstrate active love. What labels have you used to avoid or reject acting in love towards God's children?

REFLECT (spend a couple of minutes to think on these questions):

1. Considering where you are right now in your life, faith, and relationships, what might be the biggest challenge you face in your desire/ability to love your neighbor as yourself?
2. What emotion do you most struggle with that works to destroy your ability to love? What excuses do you come up with to justify acting in a non-loving manner?
3. Moving through the rest of your week, who has God put on your heart to show active love towards?
4. Who in your life is particularly hard to love at this time? Why do you find it difficult to love this person?
5. If your group devotes time to prayer requests, ask for God's help in addressing one of the questions that is the largest roadblock to you being able to love others as you are called to do.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you that you provided the first and best example of Love in action. We thank you for the example of Jesus who demonstrated the truth of love by laying down his life for us. Remind us, Lord, of what we must lay down (emotions, excuses) in order to be fully open to loving your children who don't look like us or act like us or have different values than us. Give us eyes to see, Lord, the resources you have provided us so that we can put love into action for those who need it most.

Provided by small group leader, Maureen Bragger.
Thank you, Maureen!