

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Leader's Guide

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

LESSON 13: LOVING OTHERS

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module entitled Christian Life and Worldview. This series of lessons examines the choices and practices that are essential for Christian living. To live as the Word of God teaches us means we understand that the choices we make each day affect our faith. It also means learning to pray, practising the commands of God and learning to serve others. These are important lessons for understanding the practice of Christianity. Include time to discuss these principles and how to effectively apply them to your life.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is new Christians, those who would like a refresher on the basics of Christianity, as well as those preparing to teach these Christian practices and beliefs. Also, those with an interest in Christian thought will find value in these lessons as they pertain to daily living and choices.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

LESSON 13: LOVING OTHERS

PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to communicate how we can begin to love others as God loves us, and to understand the importance of love in the Christian's daily life.

LEADER'S NOTE

The greatest need for all people is to love and be loved. God created us this way, and it is through love that He relates to His children. When we become Christians we should consider each day how we can love those around us. We may still behave selfishly, but through God's power we can choose to love, and to love in supernatural and unexpected ways!

INTRODUCTION

Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.

- ❖ What is the most loving thing someone has done for you? How did that action make you feel loved?
- ❖ How do you express your love for God? How do you express your love for others?
- ❖ Is it possible to really love someone and have them never know or see any evidence of it?

STUDY

Instruct the group on the following points.

- ❖ **God's Love for Us:** The Bible clearly teaches that God loves His children. God loves us unconditionally, and His love does not change based on our actions or what we have accomplished. God does more than just talk about love. It is demonstrated by His very nature. This love is expressed to us in many ways.
 - His love is revealed through his death



- o God loved us so much that he sent His Son to make the costly sacrifice of dying for us. We were not worthy of God's mercy and grace.
- o Romans 5:8
- His love is revealed through His patience amidst our failings
 - o God pursues us and is patient with our failings.
 - o Luke 15:11-24; 2 Peter 3:9
- His love is revealed through His discipline
 - o He treats us as His children and because he loves us, and will discipline us in order that we might mature in our faith and know Him more fully.
 - o Hebrews 12:10-11
- ❖ **Our Love for God:** God's love for us and His perfect nature should stir us to love Him. The Bible is clear about our love for God:
 - **It is a commandment that we love Him.** We are called to love God whole-heartedly with all we are. This isn't a command because God needs us to love Him, and wants to increase His power – because all power already belongs to Him! It is His love for us that directs us to love Him. He is perfect. Therefore, we will never be disappointed in Him.
 - o Deuteronomy 6:5
 - o Matthew 22:37-38
 - **We will obey Him if we love Him.** Part of loving God is trusting and obeying Him. We demonstrate our love for Him by obeying His commandments and living a life that is pleasing to Him.
 - o 1 John 5:3
 - o John 14:21
 - o Romans 12:1
 - **Our Love for God Motivates our Love for Others.** Our response to the love and character of God is to obey God in loving others. This is often not easy for us, as we struggle against our sinful nature which is selfish rather than loving. But God's great love for us can motivate us to overcome.
 - o 1 John 4:7-8, 11, 21
- ❖ **Our Love for Others:**
 - **We are to love ourselves:** We cannot love others well without loving ourselves first. Matthew 22:39 says, "You shall love your neighbor **as yourself.**" We must learn to see ourselves as God sees us. We are precious and loved by Him even though we fail and are weak. We must see that we are valuable to God. Every person, as a part of His creation, has value.



- **We are commanded to love others:** God is clear that we must love others. It is natural for a person to love his or her family, or to love the people who act in loving ways towards them. God asks us to love our neighbour which means those who are around us, the people we come in contact with each day.
 - [Matthew 22:36-40](#)
 - [Romans 13: 8-10](#)
 - [Romans 15:2](#)

- **We are to love our enemies:** The love God asks of us does not end with loving those in our vicinity or with whom we share something in common. We are asked to love our enemies. Loving our enemies is difficult, and it will take time and God's help to accomplish. It is one of the most powerful witnesses to the power of God when a Christian can forgive and actively love their enemies. Jesus Himself provides an example of this type of love.
 - [Matthew 5: 43-48](#)
 - [Luke 6:31](#)
 - [Luke 6:29](#)

- ❖ **We love in His strength:** The type of love God requires is too difficult to do in our own strength and power. We need the help of the Holy Spirit, and rely on God to give us love when we do not feel it for other people.
 - **Love is a choice:** We feel love naturally for some people. However, God calls us to love even when it is not easy and doesn't feel natural. This is a choice we face every day.
 - [1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#)
 - [1 Peter 4:8-9](#)

 - **God's love enables us to love fully.** In order to love with the love of God, we must be filled with the Holy Spirit and have God's love within us. We can't create this kind of love for everyone without God's help. We must learn to see people as God sees them, and love them as He does.
 - [Ephesians 5:18](#)
 - [Galatians 5:22-23](#)

 - **What love looks like:** The supernatural love of God is different from the selfish love we are capable of on our own. God calls us to love others as He loves us. His love is sacrificial, it is costly, it is supernatural, it is life-changing!
 - [John 13:34](#)
 - [1 Corinthians 13](#)
 - [Philippians 2:3-4](#)

- ❖ **Love in Action:** There are many practical ways we can love others. Some ways to love others in your community may look like this:



- o Invite neighbours over for a meal, or take a meal to someone.
 - o Invite newcomers to join you in recreation activities.
 - o Surprise others with helpful gestures (taking out trash, yard work, home repairs, giving gifts, meeting practical needs in unexpected ways).
 - o Remember people's birthdays, anniversaries, etc. and celebrate them!
 - o Get to know the names of people you interact with at school, in your neighbourhood, at the market, bank, bus drivers, café staff, etc. Learn about their family and look for ways to help them.
 - o Give of your time, money, and abilities to someone else, not because they deserve it, but because you want to express love.
 - o Watch your tongue and avoid gossip or negative words about others.
 - o Forgive others who wrong you.
 - o Look for ways to help those in society without family to help them.
- As a group look at the stories that follow and discuss how these people loved others. What can we learn from their example?

(see attached stories)

DISCUSSION:

- ❖ How do you feel most loved? Do you feel loved when someone listens to you, gives you their time, helps you with work, says kind things, demonstrates how they love you?
- ❖ Why would God command us to love Him? How do you feel about this command of God to love Him first, and then to love others as we love ourselves?
- ❖ Who in your life do you have difficulty loving? How can you make a choice to love them? How can you rely on God to help you with this choice?
- ❖ What are some practical ways that you or your church could love your community?
- ❖ How do you feel called to love others today? Is there a specific action God is telling you to take?



PRAYER

Pray for each participant that their love may abound more and more and they would be filled with the love of God for the people around them. Pray that each participant would find ways to love others and choose to put others first this week. Pray their hearts would be softened to the people around them and that God's will be done through their loving actions.

HOMEWORK

- ❖ Suggest each participant make a list of people they are struggling to love (perhaps they will need to include themselves in this list, or people who have wronged them). Suggest that they pray for each person, claiming God's love as described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. The participants should ask God to give them opportunities to demonstrate that kind of love. It may take much prayer, but God will change our hearts as we trust Him.



STORY 1

Francois lives in Burundi, a nation plagued by genocide and civil war. Ray, a director at TWR Africa, was going to that country. Francois spent an entire week's salary to buy a bus ticket to Bujumbura to meet with him. There he told his story. His family belonged to the Tutsi tribe. When soldiers with guns came into his village, he hid. He watched the soldiers kill all 13 members of his family, and there was nothing he could do. He was filled with hate for the soldiers, and wanted revenge. He considered joining a rebel movement and killing others for every family member he lost. One night, he was searching through radio static for something to listen to and came across a TWR program about peace and reconciliation. He'd only ever heard of revenge and retaliation - so peace and reconciliation seemed strange to him. Night after night he listened to the Christian program, and came to know Jesus Christ. In that moment, his anger disappeared. He forgave the soldiers and abandoned his desire for revenge. When asked how he could possibly forgive such a thing, he answered, "Humanly it is impossible, but through Christ all things are possible." Afraid that another genocide might occur if younger generations are not taught about love and forgiveness, he developed a program to teach young people and is now invited into schools, sharing about reconciliation. To this day he continues to teach children about mercy, grace, and forgiveness. Francois was able to love instead of hate, and bring that message of love to others because of Jesus Christ.

STORY 2

A staff member from Trans World Radio Canada was meeting with listeners of their programs in Burundi, and had the opportunity to meet an incredible woman. She told the story of how her husband and she had divorced. There was much pain in their relationship and neither person was willing to see the other. One night, the woman was listening to the radio, and a program about truth and reconciliation was aired. Even though this program was aimed at helping heal the wounds of racial war and genocide, she could apply the principles of forgiveness and reconciliation to her own life. She contacted her former husband and told him to listen to the program as well. As they began listening together, they began to see that the root of their problem was a lack of love and forgiveness. The truths from the Bible revealed in this program helped them to be reconciled with one another, and the two remarried as a wonderful display of God's ability to heal broken hearts. It is a powerful testimony when we choose love and forgiveness, over selfishness and hate.

STORY 3

Katie Davis was just 18 when she left home and traveled from the USA to Uganda. She loved the people she met there, and the following year she returned to teach children at an orphanage. She was heartbroken to see so many children not able to attend school, so she connected people around the world to eventually sponsor over 600 children in the area. This meant they could go to school, receive healthy meals, spiritual discipleship and medical care. During one disaster where many orphaned girls lost their home, Katie decided to legally adopt 3 of them. She went on to adopt 10 more. Katie moved to Uganda and gave up her family, a comfortable life in the USA and her schooling in order to love and care for these children. Katie went on to serve several other communities helping women provide for their children through trades, and children to attend school. Katie says "People tell me I am brave. People tell me I am strong. People tell me I'm doing a good job. Well here is the truth of it. I am really not that brave, I am not really that strong, and I am not doing anything spectacular. I am just doing what God called me to do as His follower." Her work is done out of love for the people God has made. Katie's love for God forms the choices she makes to serve people and love them every day.