

Welcome

- ▶ Share in the chat:
 - ▶ A favorite song with love in the title, or about love
 - ▶ Where are you joining from?
- ▶ Welcome and Opening Prayer

Gathering Ritual: Opening Prayer

- ▶ God of steadfast and transforming love, we give you thanks for your incarnational love made known to us in Jesus Christ.
- ▶ You provided for us that which we could not achieve or attain ourselves, a love so powerful as to cleanse and heal and save.
- ▶ Make us acutely aware that we love because you first loved us and that with that love comes responsibility.
- ▶ With the Spirit's help, move us to manifest our gratitude and devotion to you in the concrete ways we love our neighbor. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

GOD OF ACTION

- ▶ Love is the **concrete expression** of our **devotion** to God, **manifested** through the **character and quality of our relationships** with our neighbors, **so that our lives testify** to the **incarnational** and **transforming** work of Jesus Christ in our lives and in the world.
- ▶ GOD RELATES TO HUMANITY THROUGH LOVE
 - ▶ What do **YOU** know about love?
- ▶ **Love** is the **concrete expression** of **our devotion** to God

What we know about love?

- ▶ Experience, books, poetry, films and cultural commentary
- ▶ **Love goes a long way in the Bible**
 - ▶ 740 instances in which the Greek or Hebrew words are translated as love
 - ▶ OT @ 595; NT @ 145
- ▶ Today: what the **New Testament** teaches us about love.
 - ▶ The God of the Old Testament is the exact **same God** we find in the New Testament.
 - ▶ Much of what we know about love in the New Testament is **steeped in Jewish tradition**, as it comes from Jesus, the Gospel writers and Paul, all of whom understood Judaism.

Eros: romantic, physical, desiring love

Phileo: kindred love

Agapao/Agape: love for and of God

Reflect

- ▶ TWO VOLUNTEERS TO READ SCRIPTURE ALOUD
 - ▶ LUKE 6:27-36
 - ▶ 1 CORINTHIANS PASSAGE
 - ▶ NO DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE TWO READINGS
- ▶ Group Reflection: How does hearing Jesus' admonishment in Luke change how you hear 1 Corinthians? »
- ▶ In what ways do we treat our neighbors, or our enemies, with the love described in 1 Corinthians? »
- ▶ What does a concrete expression of this kind of love look like in our lives

Luke 10:25-37

- ▶ Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.” But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”
- ▶ Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.
- ▶ So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’
- ▶ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

I CORINTHIANS 12:31 – 13:1-13

But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing..

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrong doing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.

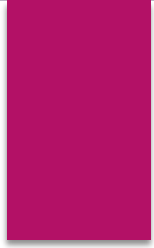
And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

What do these
texts say about
God?

What does the
text say about
love?

LUKE 10:25-27

1 CORINTHIANS 12:31 –
13:13



Small Group Reflection (8 minutes)

- ▶ How does hearing Jesus' admonishment in Luke change how you hear 1 Corinthians?
- ▶ In what ways do we treat our neighbors, or our enemies, with the love described in 1 Corinthians?
- ▶ What does a concrete expression of this kind of love look like in our lives

Regroup: Reflection

- ▶ What do these texts say about God?
- ▶ What do these texts say about love?
- ▶ Return to the Circle: What would you say are the characteristics and qualities of love as defined in Scripture?
- ▶ View Week 5 God in Action (first two vignettes)

Reararticulate

- ▶ HOW WILL I (MY FAMILY OR THE CHURCH) LIVE DIFFERENTLY NOW THAT I UNDERSTAND LOVE AND WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT?
- ▶ WE ARE CREATING SPACE FOR THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN BUILDING **A BRIDGE BETWEEN WHAT WE BELIEVE AND HOW WE LIVE**. BECAUSE DISCIPLESHIP IS A “TEAM SPORT,” WE DO THIS TOGETHER, IN CONVERSATION WITH OTHER DISCIPLES WHO ARE ON THIS JOURNEY WITH US.
- ▶ THE KEY IS FOR EACH PERSON, IN COMMUNITY, TO **WRESTLE WITH HOW THIS NEW UNDERSTANDING OF LOVE WILL CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK**, THE WAY WE ACT AND WHO WE ARE AT THE **CORE OF OUR BEING** AS WE ALL SEEK TO LIVE INTO GREATER FAITHFULNESS

Review

- ▶ View next two vignettes
- ▶ Explore Romans 12:9 – 18
 - ▶ Group work: How do we WRESTLE WITH **HOW THIS NEW UNDERSTANDING OF LOVE WILL CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK, THE WAY WE ACT AND WHO WE ARE AT THE CORE OF OUR BEING** AS WE ALL SEEK TO LIVE INTO GREATER FAITHFULNESS?

Romans 12:9-18

- ▶ Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Insights on LOVE

- ▶ Love and justice are unalterably interwoven. - It is God's love of, care for and commitment to people, especially those who are most vulnerable, powerless and marginalized, that brings about the commandment and expectation of justice. Author and activist bell hooks provides an example:
 - “There can be no love without justice. Until we live in a culture that not only respects but also upholds basic civil rights for children, most children will not know love.”
 - Personal acts of love are made tangible in relationships.
 - The public or communal act of love is justice.
 - Justice is the way in which God's love is codified through systems and governments.
 - Cornel West's famous quote sums it up: “Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public.”

LOVE TRANSFORMING LOVE LITANY

- ▶ [VOF Testimon +Curriculum.pdf](#) p 131