

Life Groups in Central Telford Parish

Summer Term 2015 "Words of Life – The Letters of John"

Week beginning 7th June 2015

1 John 3:11-24 – "Love One Another"

• The Aim of this Session

At the core of all we believe as Christians is the simple command to love. John talks about it over and over again – the love of God we can experience: how enormous that love is, how Jesus showed it and how we should live in so that it overflows to those around us. So what does that love look like in reality?

• Welcome

Who was your first love?

• Worship

Read 1 Corinthians 13. Read again verses 4 to 7 and the first three words of verse 8. The reality is that we have not lived up to the description in verses 4 to 7 and so we have failed to love. Using some quiet music or silence, reflect for a couple of minutes on the past days and weeks and ask "When have I failed to love?" At home? At work? With friends? In Church? Someone may like to sum up thoughts in a prayer of repentance and then read 1 John 1:8-9.

• Word

- ❖ What is your favourite love song?
- ❖ What is your favourite love play or film?
- ❖ What is your favourite love book?
- ❖ Why is it so hard to define love?
- ❖ How would you define it?

In English, we have one word ... "love" ... but we use it in different ways meaning totally different things:

- I love that song.
- I love my family.
- I'd love a chocolate.

In Greek there are several words for "love" ...

- "*Eros*" ... Romantic Love ... from where we get the word "erotic".
- "*Philia*" ... Friendship & Family Love.
- "*Agape*" ... A Love that we choose to express.

Throughout the New Testament, the word used for "love" is "*agape*" ... so when John says "**God is love**" (1 John 4:8), he is NOT saying God is *eros* or *philia* but *agape*. In other words, God is the sacrificial love that is described in 1 Corinthians 13 personified. Go back to 1 Corinthians 13 and read verses 4 – 7 but this time, substitute the word "God" for the word "Love" ... makes sense, doesn't it!

Read John 13:34-35

- How would you sum up Jesus' New Commandment, now that you know about the word "*agape*"?
- What is the difference between "liking" someone and "loving" (*agape*) them?
- So do we have to like everyone?
- What are the challenges of loving everyone?
- What is the target Jesus sets them at the end of verse 34?

- Why is this Commandment important in our witness (v35)?
- How does *agape* go against the general attitude of the world?

Read 1 John 3:11-16. John reminds them of the Commandment of Jesus and uses the first murder in the Bible (where Cain kills Abel) and says that the reason that it happened was not because of the immediate circumstances but because of the underlying attitude of Cain towards Abel.

- Why is it likely that if we fulfil the Commandment of Jesus that the world will hate us?
- In what form might this take?
- Have you ever experienced this?

John goes on to contrast the hatred of Cain with the absolute opposite – the love of Jesus in sacrificing himself for us (verse 16) and then reminds us of the height at which the bar is set (verse 16 – see John 13:34). And then he suggests an application for this:

Read 1 John 3:17-20

- How does verse 17 affect our attitude to our possessions?
- Is it possible to be a “rich” Christian?
- How does this help us to understand the story of the Rich Young Ruler in Luke 18:22?
- ❖ And how does this challenge us when we see someone starving in Africa ...?
- ❖ ... or poverty in this Country?
- ❖ ... or someone in Telford who obviously does not have what we have?

Verse 18 simply says that our words need to be backed up with actions ...

... and verse 19 reinforces this by saying that this shows that we love God

... and this, in terms, fulfils the Command in John 13:35

... and this helps us to understand the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats of Matthew 25:31-46.

• **Walk**

These passages are often misunderstood because people have not fully understood the incredible depth and challenge of the word “love”. We are not called to “like” people (which is probably a relief to many of us!) but we are called to “love” people ... and that includes those we naturally loathe. Think of the Good Samaritan and you get the picture ...

Whilst this may not be a topic that is either easy or right to discuss in the group ...

- ❖ Are there people at home you find hard to love?
- ❖ Are there people at work you find hard to love?
- ❖ Are there people in Church you find hard to love?

Be honest with yourself about this and look for ways in which you can obey Jesus command this week. Pray!

• **Next Time ...**

John: 1 John 4:1-6 – “Knowing the Truth”

Dealing with the world in which we live and the spiritual challenges it presents us with.

