

# Life Groups in Central Telford Parish

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

Week beginning 21<sup>st</sup> June 2015

### 1 John 4:7-21 – "God's Love and Ours"

#### • The Aim of this Session

It may be just an English thing or maybe it is about people in general, but sometime it is not just "blessed" to but "easier" to give rather than receive. We get embarrassed that someone has actually done something for us because they actually care about us ... or even love us! The same is often true in our relationship with God ...

#### • Welcome

What is the biggest surprise present you have ever received? How did you react to it? What did you feel?

#### • Worship

Read Romans 5:8. We have done *nothing* to deserve God's never ending, perfect and all-consuming love for us. Jesus died on a Cross for us 2000 years before we were born and did so because he was compelled by love.

Read Matthew 22:35-40 Love demands a response even if it is to deny it or decline it. If we do decide to respond, then we need to do so wholeheartedly.

Read Revelation 3:15-16 God wants us to be one or the other, not lukewarm.

Spend some time in quiet (or with some quiet music playing) and ask yourselves what your response to God's love for you has been. It may be appropriate for the leader to pray a prayer of confession on behalf of the group and then read 1 John 1:8-10.

#### • Word

One thing we know is that Love is a powerful concept! Plays, films, books, poems and especially songs try to grasp the way love drives people: "All You Need is Love", "Love Changes Everything", "Love is All Around" ... (See Session 8: 1 John 3:11-24 – "Love One Another" for more!). So if we know how powerful love is, and we are the recipients of the most powerful love in existence, why are we so reticent in receiving it and living in it?

- ❖ Do you find it I easy to accept being loved in life in general?
- ❖ Why do people sometimes find it hard "to be loved"?
- ❖ What are the implications of "being loved"?
- ❖ What are the different ways we can respond?
- ❖ Have you ever been loved but rejected it?
- ❖ How do you feel about the idea that God loves you personally and deeply?
- ❖ Why might people find it hard to accept that?
- ❖ What are the implications of being loved by God?
- ❖ And what are our possible responses?

Read 1 John 4:7-11. Remember ... this talks about *agape* love (Session 8), not *eros* or *philia* love.

- John talks about the love that is in the relationship we have with God spilling over into our attitudes and relationships with others (v7) and that this is something that starts to happen naturally as our relationship with him grows.
- What does a lack of this love say about us ... and our Church community (v8)?
- How great is God's love for us (v9-10)? Read John 3:16 and Romans 8:32.
- How great is Jesus' love for us? Read Philippians 2:6-7 and John 15:13.
- How does verse 11 relate to John 13:34-35?

Read 1 John 4:12-17. In these verses, John's argument is that the more we love one another with God's love (*agape*) and the more the Holy Spirit grows the fruit of this love in us, the more we will see God in each other. And when others see it (think John 13:34-35), they will be able to receive this love for themselves – and the Kingdom grows. **BUT ... we have to be able to receive God's love first!** And, more than that, we need to not just receive it (like a birthday card from a distant Aunt) but *live* in it, *grow* in it and be totally *consumed* by it throughout our lives in order to be effective in our Christian lives).

- ❖ What happens when a relationship is half-hearted or when one side loves more than the other?
- ❖ Why are people scared to commit to God and receive his love?
- ❖ And what is the result of this in their faith?
- ❖ How real is "fear" in this ... and what are people afraid of?
- ❖ Why should this not be a problem when it comes to God's love? But why is it still a problem ...?

Read 1 John 4:18-21. John answers this question in verse 18. Fear exists in *human* relationships because ...

- we are afraid the relationship will not work or survive (maybe like previous ones).
- we are afraid the other person will find out about our inmost secrets and stop loving us.
- we are afraid that we are not worthy of being loved and, therefore, put up barriers to being loved.
- In human relationships, there is imperfection ... what difference does the word "perfect" (v18) make?
- What sort of love does God love us with (v19)? ... Insert the word "perfectly" into this verse!
- And how should this affect the way we love in response (vv20-21)

- **Walk**

Take some time to quietly reflect on the verses you have read: maybe with some music, read again 1 John 4:7-11 and, after a pause, read verses 18-19. The leaders could read the following statements, pausing between them for the group to reflect.

- ✓ God is love. Perfect, infinite, forgiving and all-consuming love.
- ✓ God's love for me, as an individual child of his, means that he sent Jesus into the world for me.
- ✓ Jesus' love for his Father and for me as an individual, meant that he willingly went to the Cross for me.
- ✓ Jesus allowed himself to be tortured and killed, because he wanted me to be able to live an abundant life in the Father's love, freed from all of my sin.
- ✓ God's love for Jesus meant that he raised him from the dead, so that I could live in his presence forever.
- ✓ God's love is perfect and I have nothing to fear. He knows all about me – every little fault as well as the great big ones. And still he loves me passionately and wants me to know him more and more.
- ✓ And he wants me to respond to this love. So how am I going to respond tonight? This week? In my life?

Pray for each other to be honest and open to receive God's love day by day by day by day.

- **Next Time ...**

**John: 1 John 5:1-12 – "Faith In Jesus"**

What does living in this love actually look like?

