

Love one another: Community (Unfolding the Vision Bible study: Part 3)

Opening: Leader opens in prayer.

1. Gathering (each member of the group can choose one of the following):

- What would your 'perfect dinner party' look like? Who would you invite? What food would be presented for each of the courses? (Let your imagination run wild! Imagine money is no option, and you can bring anyone you like from all over the world.)
- How did your family make Christmas special when you were growing up?
- Finish this sentence (then add a couple more if you like): 'I wish I had more time for... because...'
- OR: Tell the group about a time when you felt warmly welcomed by someone, and you were treated as an honoured guest.

2. Wrestling with God's Word

There are two aspects of Christian community and love – the vertical aspect (what God does for us through Jesus in the community of his people) and the horizontal aspect (God's love, overflowing from us, towards the 'one anothers' that God places around us).

The vertical aspect could be summarized in Jesus' words, 'AS I HAVE LOVED YOU,' and the horizontal aspect in his words 'So you must love one another.'

Read **John 13:34-35**, then **Hebrews 10:19-25**.

How do these passages speak of the vertical dimension of community? What is God doing/giving? How is God expressing his love?

How do these passages speak of the horizontal dimension? What does God command us to do? How do we express our love for one another?

If we are to 'Love one another as Jesus loved us,' there are some ways of doing this that we can only do *corporately* (in a large group, gathered together) and some aspects that are only possibly *personally* (one-to-one or in a much smaller group of people).

Quickly brainstorm in your group the aspects of community that are *corporate*. *List as many ways as possible.*

Again, brainstorm in your group the aspects of community that are *personal*. *List as many ways as possible.*

Choose some of the following bible verses which speak about the corporate and personal aspects of community. Read them aloud.

Corporately:

- Worship (Hebrews 11:19-25)
- Hospitality (Hebrews 13:2, Romans 12:13)
- Table fellowship (Luke 5:27-32)
- Generosity (Acts 4:32-36)

Personally (2 or 3 or a small group...):

- Pray for one another (James 5:16)
- Encourage one another (1 Thess. 5:11)
- Confess your sins to one another (James 5:15, 1 John 1:9)
- Forgive one another (Matthew 6:14-15, John 20:23)
- Admonish one another (Colossians 3:16)

Which aspects of community seem most difficult to you?

Which are most life giving? Which ones do you crave?

3. Wrestling with the World: Visioning for our Community

Love one another - Community (L ove one another, S erve the world, F ollow Jesus)

Imagine a community of people who know they are forgiven sinners, and so can be gracious, forgiving and welcoming with the people around them...

Imagine a community where *each person* is surrounded by 'one anothers' who are committed to loving that person as Jesus has loved them, by the power of God's grace...

- How have you experienced *this gathering (SNAS, your congregation, and/or this small group)* of God's community as a gracious, welcoming, life-giving community?
- How could the community/your leaders help you and others to live a life of 'loving one another'?
- Be practical and specific. (Please let your leaders know practical suggestions! Leaders, please let Pastor Nathan and the CTM know!)
- What excites you about the vision of continuing to grow as part of a community committed to 'love one another'?
- How do you think you might be a part of 'unfolding the vision'?

NOTE: AT the present time, the LSF community offers two specific, powerful ways to help us 'love one another' and so experience the life of true community to which Jesus calls us, when he says 'Love one another as I have loved you.' One of them is the Bible Study group – meeting around a meal, sharing life, reading God's Word, praying for one another. We hope and plan that everyone can be involved in such a group, and that these Bible study groups will continue (probably on a fortnightly basis) into the future. We would love you to join one of the groups that is already meeting, or express interest in starting your own group.

The other is the Life Transformation Group – a group of two or three people of the same gender who meet for one hour a week in order to do three things: confess sin and receive forgiveness, read Scripture continuously and in context, and pray for those who don't yet know Jesus. All you require for an LTG is one other person, your bible, and a simple bible bookmark. If you want to know more about LTGs, or join one, please talk to Pastor Nathan.

4. Closing

Spend some time in prayer for one another, asking the Holy Spirit to help you continue to be filled with Jesus' love and so love one another as he has loved us.

5. After the group - Questions for personal reflection:

Who are your 'one anothers'? Who do you share table fellowship with? Who encourages you and shows you the face of Christ? Who do you pray with, and ask for prayer when you need it? Who would you trust enough to 'confess your sins'? Who would you be willing to hear Godly admonition from? Spend some time in personal prayer asking the Holy Spirit to show you who your one anothers might be, and how you might engage in the practices of loving one another. If the Holy Spirit brings some names to mind, be intentional about talking to those people and encouraging them.

You can also do a google search for 'one anothers in the New Testament' – you will find various listings of these commands. Have a read through some of them and see which ones you might be able to take up.

6. Appendix:

For Further reading

(all of these books are available on request from Pastor Nathan)

Life Together (the classic exploration of life in Christian Community) by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Search and Rescue: Becoming a Disciple who makes a Difference by Neil Cole (this book describes Life Transformation Groups, a simple and yet very powerful way of making disciples, and experiencing True Christian community)