

### WELCOME

Generations of poets and musicians have attempted to define and capture the essence of love throughout time. Yet the poems and songs just keep on coming. The reason? Love is such a powerful force that we never grow weary of hearing about it. Even still, we all struggle to adequately comprehend and express love to others on a daily basis. We know that God is the creator of all things—and therefore is the creator of love as well. So, we must look to him to understand what love truly means. He can reveal how we can hold his love in our hearts while giving it away at the same time—just as Jesus showed us throughout his life and in his death.

**Key Question:** What does it mean to sacrificially and unconditionally \_\_\_\_\_ others?

**Key Verse:** “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made \_\_\_\_\_ in us” (1 John 4:10–12).

**Key Idea:** I am \_\_\_\_\_ to loving God and loving others.

(Key Application #1): I am their \_\_\_\_\_.

(Key Application #2): I sacrifice my \_\_\_\_\_ to see them succeed.

(Key Application #3): I help them see God’s good \_\_\_\_\_ for them.

### GETTING STARTED

Begin your discussion by reciting the key verse and key idea together as a group. On your first attempt, use your notes if you need help. On your second attempt, try to state them completely from memory.

**KEY VERSE:** “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us” (1 John 4:10–12).

**KEY IDEA:** I am committed to loving God and loving others.

### GROUP DISCUSSION

As a group, discuss your thoughts and feelings about the following declarations. Which statements are easy to declare with certainty? Which are more challenging? Why?

- God’s grace enables me to forgive people who have hurt me.
- I rejoice when good things happen to other people.
- I demonstrate love equally toward people of all races.
- I frequently give up what I want for the sake of others.

1. Who are the toughest people for you to love? Family members? Coworkers? Strangers? Explain why.

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2. It's easy to love someone who meets your needs. But is it possible to genuinely love someone who does nothing for you or even hurts you? If so, how?

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3. Outside of Jesus' example, when have you witnessed expressions of Christlike love?

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Read Matthew 18:21–22, John 13:31–35, and 1 John 4:19 –21,

1. The Bible describes love as a quality that shows we belong to God. Given this, why do you think Christians are often described by outsiders as hypocritical and judgmental?

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2. Based on what you read, what is the best strategy for developing authentic and genuine love for God and others?

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3. Forgiveness is a key component of effectively loving one another. How can withholding forgiveness be an adversary of genuine love?

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### CASE STUDY :

Use the following case study as a model for a real-life situation where you might put this week's key idea into practice.

Bo's boss is not easy to work for. He shovels out criticism by the truckload, talks disrespectfully to his employees, and often takes credit for ideas that are not his own. Rumours have been circulating around the office that the boss's wife served him divorce papers over the weekend. He has basically locked himself in his office all week. When he does come out, he hardly says a word and looks awful.

Most of the employees are revelling in their boss's pain, secretly making jokes and snarky comments.

Bo has never liked the man, but something in his spirit won't allow him to join in with the other employees. He wonders if he should ask his boss if he's okay or just give him space. Does his boss deserve sympathy? Or is he simply reaping what he sowed?



# Session 1:

How Does God Want Me To Love Others?

Using the following key applications from this session, what could you say or do to help Bo exercise the virtue of love in this situation?

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**KEY APPLICATION #1:** I am their advocate.

**KEY APPLICATION #2:** I sacrifice my rights to see them succeed.

**KEY APPLICATION #3:** I help them see God's good vision for them.

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

Close your time together with prayer. Share your prayer requests with one another. Ask God to help you put this week's key idea into practice.