



Groups

Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides!

If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions towards the end of the document.

- These study guides will be written by thoughtful and experienced Life Group Leaders.
- Use these guides as a head-start in your own preparation as the needs and culture is different from each group.

Senior Pastor Search Update:

This week we as a congregation are voting to approve our senior pastor final candidate, Joshua Clough. We invite you to consider the significance of this moment and to incorporate a time of prayer this week.

Outline

- I. Introduction and Main Scripture Readings
- II. Group Discussion Questions
- III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search
- IV. The Journey Resources
- V. Support for the Leader

How to Use These Study Guides:

1. **Before the meeting:** Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
2. **Check In:** Begin each meeting with a short time checking in with one another.
3. **Read Scripture:** You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
4. **Ask Questions:** Don't feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with and see how the conversation flows.
5. **End with Prayer:** Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

If your group meets over Zoom:

- Expect to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
- Be sensitive to attention spans over zoom. Keep meetings shorter than they would be in person.

Group Leader Support:

- Please reach out to your Campus Pastor if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic.
- If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor [Tim Ghali](#) or [Grace Lee](#) from the Group Life team.

LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

for Sermon given on March 3, 2024
by Pastor Joshua Clough (Senior Pastor Candidate)

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING – Mark 12:28-31



I. **Introduction**

Welcome to the third installment of our Lenten series, *Kingdom Come: Thy Will Be Done*. Today is a special day because the message will be given by Dr. Joshua Clough, our senior pastor candidate. Pastor Clough is visiting us today from Kansas City with his wife, Claire, and his daughter Adah. This sermon series has focused on Jesus' words, *Thy will be done*, from the Lord's prayer, and what it means for us live a life of surrender. You will want to pay particular attention to today's message, *The Most Important Thing*.

Questions: What is the most important commandment?

Bottom Line: The most important commandment is to love God and to love people.

Let's begin in prayer before we begin reading and discussing our text.

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Main Scripture Readings:

Mark 12:28-31

²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

²⁹ “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’^[b] ³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

1John 4:7-8

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Matthew 5:43-45

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor^[a] and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

1Peter 3:9

⁹ Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

Ephesians 5:1-2a

¹ Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

II. Group Discussion Questions:

1. Pastor Joshua began with a simple, but central question, *What's most important to you?* What is your initial response to this question?
 - Take time to give some answers to the question - what is important to you? This should reflect your values, where you spend your time, people, or places.
2. David Brooks, author and professor, talks about two types of virtues: resume virtues and eulogy virtues. *Resume virtues* are what we list on our curriculum vitae, accomplishments that make us feel important: educational degrees, salary, job title. *Eulogy virtues* are the things that our family and friends will say about us at when we die. What mattered to them was the person you had been and the things that you had done for others.
 - What do you think people would remember about you and your values? What would you like your loved ones to remember about you at your funeral?
 - What kind of virtues did Jesus care about while he was on earth? How did his loved ones remember him then? How is he remembered now?
 - How can we be more like Jesus in the person we are becoming and the things we are doing for others?
3. Pastor Joshua said that sometimes we can fall into the trap thinking that we can earn God's love by doing good deeds and following rules. After all, Hebrews believe that by observing the rules of the Torah (all 613), they demonstrate their love of God. However, love is really a posture of surrender.
 - What is it, specifically, that we are surrendering to God?
 - How does this free us from the laws of Moses?
4. In his sermon Strength to Love, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said the following:

Over the centuries, many persons have argued that this is an extremely difficult command. Many would go so far as to say that it just isn't possible ... Jesus was an impractical idealist who never quite came down to earth. Yes, it is love that will save our world and our civilization, love even for enemies.

 - Share your own thoughts about love saving our society, which also includes loving your enemies. Is this an ideal act that only Jesus could do, but we could only ever strive for? Is it possible for us mere humans to show love to our enemies?
 - Ask your small group to share personal experiences of how they demonstrated love to their enemies, or how their enemies showed love to them.

5. Pastor Joshua shared his own family's experienced the love of others through Adah's premature birth. Over those 10 weeks, they experienced Christ through somebodies – doctors, nurses, specialists, their church community. They gave Adah her middle name, Grace, because they experienced God's grace.
 - Can you think of how you were blessed by somebody during a tough season in your life? Tell us what you were going through and how you felt after receiving that help.
 - How has the church been for you a place of experiencing God's grace? How can we as a group be part of blessing others with God's grace?
6. Today we learned from Pastor Joshua that *love is a somebody and love is an action. Love is somebody doing something for someone else. And that Somebody is Jesus!*
 - As we close in prayer, ask the Holy Spirit first for His help to love Him with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. And then from that overflow, for His help to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.
 - After experiencing His heart and love, then ask the Lord to put on your heart the name of someone who you can be a somebody to this week, and what is it, specifically, that they might need from you. It could be someone in your family, neighborhood, school, workplace or church community. It could be as simple as greeting someone with a smile, giving a compliment, or listening with care.

Take Home Message:

Between the love of God and the love of people is somebody ... not just somebody, Jesus ... and also you and me.

Let's Pray

III. Prayer for the Senior Pastor Search: VOTING WEEK

This week is an important week as we are voting to approve Joshua Clough as the next senior pastor. During this next ministry year as we navigate transitions, we invite you to secure time during your life group to pray over the whole process.

Click [here](#) to access the full resource of the prayer guide.

IV. The Journey



We're all on a journey. Where is yours taking you?

The beauty of the way of Jesus is that it's not just good for us, it is good for the world around us. But that kind of beautiful life doesn't come from just hearing the words of Jesus. It comes from putting them into practice.

Three kinds of practice, actually:

- The **with-God life** of our personal habits and routines;
- The **with-others life** of our genuine and life-changing relationships; and
- The **for-the-world life** that makes an impact beyond our immediate homes and families, into our communities and beyond.

Growing as disciples of Jesus will make a Kingdom difference in our world and a transformative difference in our lives as believers and as a group. And these resources are helpful in identifying the next steps for our journeys.

Launching by the end of September: The newly, revised Discipleship Planning Tool

We invite your group to [take the assessment](#) and to spend a session to share about the practice and perspective you chose to focus on for the next three months.

V. Support for the Leader

These Teaching Points are provided to help the group leader make connections from the message to their group with both insights from the Biblical text and opportunities in the life of our church.

Teaching Points:

- Love isn't just a warm and caring feeling, but a way of acting, giving selflessly, to bless others
- ***Chesed*** (Hebrew): covenantal love, mercy, the act of showing kindness for its own sake, not because it is earned or deserved
- ***Agape*** (Greek): unconditional love; a decision to take action for another
- Surrender is a somebody. Love is an action
- Every time we surrender ourselves to God, when we love others, we are not far from Jesus; every time we love, we are not far from the kingdom of God

Supplementary Scripture Readings:

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

⁴ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.^[a] ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

Leviticus 19:18

¹⁸ "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

John 13:34-35

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."