

life groups' sermon guide **make you feel my love**



Life Groups exist at Kingsway to provide authentic relationships for spiritual growth, caring for one another, and reaching out to others.

Introduction:

Relationships. We all have some. We all want good ones. We all have stories about broken ones. We live in a culture that televises speed dating in hopes to find “the one”, and games that parallel the hope of lasting love with monetary gain. Divorce rates are on the rise, but the truth is that statistic is increasingly skewed by the number of couples who never formally marry. When you ask people how to make love last, or how to make friendships work, there are varying answers, but a scarce few point us to the truth.

From the very beginning of time, God designed humans to be in relationships, first with Him, and then with others. Genesis 1:26 tells us that God made humans in the image of Himself, the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit-one God, three persons). The desires we have for love, community, peace, and unity are all a reflection of our longing for the God who made us. When we live out His image, we reflect His relational character of humility, love, diversity, submission and joy.

“In Genesis 1 God declared what he made ‘good,’ except for the man and woman, which he declared to be ‘very good.’ The only thing that we are told is not good before sin and the fall is Adam’s being alone. Even in a sinless state we were made for human contact, friendship, and love. Even though Adam had God above him and creation beneath him, he lacked an equal with whom to be in community, one who would enable him to function like the Trinity in covenantal partnership as ‘one’” (Doctrine, 122).

It is important to note that marriage is a covenant designed by God. Covenant, as defined by the Scriptures, is a solemn and binding relationship which is meant to last a lifetime. Genesis 2:18-25 documents the first marriage between Adam and Eve. Jesus later references this God-given union in Matthew 19:4-6.

God models covenant love with His people throughout the Old Testament, first with Noah, then Abraham, Moses and David. Repeatedly throughout history, God’s people fail to keep their portion of the agreement and God designs a new way to reach them. Ultimately, the new covenant fulfills God’s promises to His people and extends them to all nations. This covenant brings us relationship with God through the sacrifice of Jesus, and allows us to live with the help of the Holy Spirit. Hebrews 8:6-9:28 defines this clearly.

Discussion:

Given that God’s covenant love is foundational to our lives, and that we were made for relationships, examine the following scriptures and their implications.

Read 1 Corinthians 13.

Q: Paul writes this passage, primarily describing what love is NOT. Describe a life without love.

Q: Which of these areas of love is your greatest struggle with strangers? Which is the biggest challenge for those with whom you are the closest? If your answers are the same, how is God growing you in this area of living. If your answers are different, what are you learning about how you engage in your closest relationships vs. more distant relationships?

Read John 13:34-35

Q: According to these verses, why is love so important?

Q: How can the way we work through conflict with our families be a witness of God's love?

Q: What testimony has God given you from a difficult relational time that He can use to make disciples?

Read Galatians 5:22-23

Q: Love is a result of growing through the Holy Spirit. These verses describe several other virtues that are borne of God. On note cards or in a list, rank order the way you display these virtues in your own life. In which area are you convicted to grow most? How does your answer here compare to your answer in the question above (1 Cor. 13) regarding the most challenging aspect of love?

Q: Briefly search a concordance to find some verses you could put on note cards as a reminder or a memory aid regarding the area in which you need to grow. Discuss as a group which verses might be related to each area of need.

Read Colossians 3:12-14

Q: Verse 12 tells us to be clothed with a list of virtues. What are they? How does this list compare to the passage in 1 Cor. 13 and also Gal. 5:22-23?

Q: Look closely at vs. 13. In our closest relationships it can be difficult let offenses go. What does Paul say we should do? What would an "allowance" look like in your relationship with your spouse or your closest family relationships?

Q: According to vs. 13, why should we forgive others? Does consideration of Jesus' sacrifice for your own sins make it easier to forgive others?

Read 1 John 2:7-11

Q: The first part of this passage references the Old Testament (Lev. 19:18, 33-34). Love has been a part of God's design from the beginning of time. Read the verses in Leviticus referenced above. Who were the Israelites commanded to love?

Q: What does 1 John 2:9-11 tell us about the relationship between our actions toward other Christians and the depth of knowing Christ?

As time allows, Read Luke 6:27-36 and Luke 10:29-37.

What implications to these passages have for our work at loving others?

Application:

Scripture is clear. Love is at the foundation of our relationship with God and vital to our relationships with others. It is so important that God the Father modeled it repeatedly and Jesus died sacrificially for us so that we could be in love relationship with the Father. As Christ-followers, we strive to clothe ourselves in love and the actions that give love, even to the point of

sacrifice. We may be good at loving with no strings attached for people we do not know or with whom we do not have ongoing relationships.

- But what about our spouse, children, families, closest friends?
- What does it mean to love those closest to us with the love of Jesus?
- What would it look like every family at Kingway faced their struggles with each other in love?
- What would it take to have accountability to remind us of our need to forgive and to continue loving even when it doesn't make sense?

Love is a word we use in our culture quite a bit. But, love is more than just a feeling. It is a choice. Love, as a verb, is defined this way: to feel passion, devotion, or tenderness for; to like or desire actively. Apply this definition to Matthew 22:37-40. Love God. Love others as you love yourself. It seems simple, but at times it feels complicated. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 describes love more specifically as it applies to loving others.

Love is patient. Patient when a spouse isn't the person we want them to be. Patient when a toddler says, "I do it", but you're in a hurry. Patient when a customer service rep can't seem to do what we ask.

Love is kind. Kind when others are rude. Kind when another person has done nothing to deserve it.

Love is not jealous. Not jealous about people, things or status.

Love is not boastful. Not boastful even when we've done an outstanding job—even if our work "saved the day".

Love is not proud. Not proud even when we know we are right, and especially when we know we are wrong.

Love is not rude. Not rude when we've told someone "a thousand times", or when we tell them the first time.

Love does not demand its own way. Not demanding when the best way seems obvious, or the choice was one others knew you wouldn't want.

Love is not irritable. Not irritable when we are tired, sick, hungry, or when it's raining outside.

Love keeps no record of being wronged—no matter how big or small the offense. No need to keep score.

Love does not rejoice in injustice, but rejoices when the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

Lord God, let us make active choices to love, even when it isn't convenient, or we have to compromise. Let our lives reflect your love with those closest to us and those we will only meet once. Show us places in our own hearts that you want to shape so that loving others is an outflowing of your love in us.