



Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides! If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions beginning at the bottom of page 2.

NEW this year: These study guides will be written by thoughtful and experienced Life Group Leaders. As always, use these guides as a head-start in your own preparation as the needs and culture is different from each group. And of course, please continue to give us feedback.

LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE
for the Sermon given on January 8, 2023
by Pastor Bryan Wilkerson
"FROM LONELINESS TO LOVE" - 1 John 3:11-17



Question: Why are relationships so important to our faith journey?

Bottom Line: When we dare to live a with-others life, *when we accept the risks of loving one another*, we discover life as it was meant to be lived.

 Last week Pastor Ruthie kicked off 2023 with Jesus' invitation to his disciples and to us to, "Come, follow me." We hope you will continue to take the time to reflect and take steps in your own spiritual journey. Our ministry theme for the ministry year (September through June) is **Disciple-Making: With God, With Others, For the World.**

Back in the fall we focused on life with God as we followed Moses and the Israelites on their journey to the Promised Land. We talked about with-God practices like prayer, Scripture reading, silence and reflection. This winter we are focusing on the **With-Others** dimension of disciple-making, because hospitality, relationship-building, and care also play vital roles in our spiritual formation.

We are excited to try something a little new this year, and that is utilize some of the gifting and passion of talented and experienced group leaders and so much of this study has been created by one of our seasoned Life Group Leaders. Thank you for being here today.

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

Main Scripture Reading: 1 John 3:11-17

¹¹ For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. ¹² Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. ¹³ Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters,^[a] if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵ Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

¹⁶ **This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.** ¹⁷ **If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?**

Group Discussion Questions

1. Pastor Bryan began his message with lyrics from the Simon & Garfunkel song, *Like a Rock*.

*I have no need of friendship, friendship causes pain
 If I never loved I never would have cried
 I am a rock, I am an island
 And a rock feels no pain, And an island never cries*

Let's take a moment and reflect on the times you have experienced loneliness – describe a time that you felt lonely and how you responded to it.

2. The Scripture reading makes reference to the story of Cain and Able from Genesis 4:1-16. Why do you think Cain killed his only brother?
3. Love can be defined in many ways. One describes it as *“disadvantaging yourself for the sake of another.”* What are some ways that you have defined love?
4. Take a few minutes to think of some ACTIONS that you can take to demonstrate love and kindness to your spouse, family, colleagues, friends or brothers and sisters in Christ – how can you put some of these into practice this week?

Take Home Message:

Apart from relationships there can be no disciple making. We need one another to be disciples and to make disciples. ALL of our relationships are important because every one of them is a venue for spiritual growth and impact.

Homework Until Next Time:

Ask the members of your LG to complete the Discipleship Planning Tool and the GPS Assessment Tool before your next meeting. Here is some fresh language:

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's 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.

Let's Pray

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 also opportunities in the life of our church).

Teaching Points:

- You can't be a disciple or make a disciple alone. You have to be in relationship.
- John uses two different words for life in the 1 John 14-17:

- Verse 17 uses the Greek BIOS, which means physical biological life
- Verses 14-15 uses the Greek ZOWEH, which means soul life, spiritual life, life with God. It is life that is satisfying, beautiful and even eternal.
- Love is more than feelings and more than words. Love is ACTION, sacrificial action on behalf of another person (in practical everyday ways)
- Being a disciple and making disciples is not only about your devotional life and your Bible knowledge, it is also about your marriage, your friendships, your parenting your neighbors and how you treat your brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus
- If you have not yet done so, please spend 15-20 minutes to complete the Discipleship Planning Tool ([grace.org/the journey](http://grace.org/the-journey)) and the GPS Assessment Tool (grace.org/volunteer)

For Further Biblical Study:

Genesis 4:1-16

4 Adam^[a] made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.^[b] She said, “With the help of the LORD I have brought forth^[c] a man.”² Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.³ In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD.⁴ And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering,⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

⁶ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? ⁷ If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”

⁸ Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.”^[d] While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”

“I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

¹⁰ The LORD said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground. ¹¹ Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. ¹² When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.”

¹³ Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is more than I can bear. ¹⁴ Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”

¹⁵ But the LORD said to him, “Not so^[e]; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. ¹⁶ So Cain went out from the LORD’s presence and lived in the land of Nod,^[f] east of Eden.

1Corinthians 13:1-13

13 If I speak in the tongues^[a] of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast,^[b] but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

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.*

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.’^[a] 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.*’^[c] There is no commandment greater than these.”

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.”

John 15:9-17

⁹ “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² *My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.* ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

James 2:14-19

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.”

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

How to Use These Study Guides:

- Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
- Begin each meeting with a short time of checking in with one another.
- 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.
- 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.
- If your group meets over Zoom:
 - You may need to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
 - Try to be sensitive to attention spans over Zoom—keep the meetings shorter than they would be in person.
- Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

Group Leader Support: Please reach out to your Campus Pastor or your Coach 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 or Grace Lee from the Group Life team.