

Life Group Lesson

Life Hurts, Christmas Heals • Week of December 4

Introduction

In this weekend's message, the story is told of 'Sandy' a barista who in 2008 worked at a Starbucks in Richmond. One autumn day, she looked up to greet one of her regulars 'Anna Maria' but noticed something was wrong; she was not her usual self. Sandy compassionately asked what was going on and found out Anna Maria had been diagnosed with kidney failure and in need of a transplant immediately. Neither her husband nor her son was a match. Sandy put herself in the woman's shoes. What would it be like to be in need of a kidney and without your family during the holidays? Sandy did a bold thing and went to find out if she was a match. Discovering she was, Sandy donated her kidney to Anna Maria.

What causes an individual to be willing to do something so radical for another – to be willing to lay down their own life for another individual? Empathy. There is power in empathy because as we step into someone else's world, their plight and pain, we are doing what Jesus did for us. God came into this world, became flesh (human) and experienced everything we experience. Yet, He did not sin. Jesus Christ, God's Son, took our place on the cross and rose to life to save us. Jesus faced many obstacles, He stayed the course and helps us when we face setbacks. He is near to anyone who sincerely calls out to Him in time of need. Christ will personally show up. He is Emmanuel, *God with us*.

The Lord wants His children to love like Jesus, a love that takes action – a love that is willing to lay down one's own life for another person. John says: "And this is His commandment: We must believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. Those who obey God's commandments remain in fellowship with Him, and He with them. And we know He lives in us because the Spirit He gave us lives in us" (1 John 3:23-24).

Reading the Text Read 1 John 3:7-24

1. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

2. What are you going to do about it?

3. How can we help you?

Reflection

When we choose to love others like Christ, Emmanuel shows up. *Agape* (unconditional love) proves to others that God is also with them, that the Lord is near to them and concerned with their pain and challenges. When has someone loved you with *agape*, unconditional love? Recall that experience, and briefly share how that kind of love has made an impact on your life.

Life Hurts. Yet, the Christ of Christmas came to this earth to heal. No one is exempt from challenges, pain, unexplained hardship. But remember, the Lord is near to the brokenhearted and He lifts those bent beneath their load. The comfort God brings us, His children, during times of personal suffering actually strengthens and equips us to comfort others during times of great pain and loss (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). Jesus said, "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). Close by reading together the Scripture below—

*“The LORD hears His people when they call to Him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed. The righteous person faces many troubles, but the LORD comes to the rescue each time”
(Psalm 34:17-19).*

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Close in a Time of Prayer asking:
How can I pray for my fellow Life Group participants this week?

LIFE HURTS, CHRISTMAS HEALS

Text: I John 3:11-24

Plain Truth:

Loving like _____ begins with
_____ and leads to _____.

Here’s our part in the hope Christmas offers:

1. Living out I John 3:16 by practicing _____.
2. Love through _____.
3. Close the _____ between _____ and _____.

One Year Bible Readings

December 4: Daniel 11:36-12:13, 1 John 4:1-21, Psalm 123:1-4, Proverbs 29:2-4
December 5: Hosea 1:1-3:5, 1 John 5:1-21, Psalm 124:1-8, Proverbs 29:5-8
December 6: Hosea 4:1-5:15, 2 John 1:1-13, Psalm 125:1-5, Proverbs 29:9-11
December 7: Hosea 6:1-9:17, 3 John 1:1-14, Psalm 126:1-6, Proverbs 29:12-14
December 8: Hosea 10:1-14:9, Jude 1:1-25, Psalm 127:1-5, Proverbs 29:15-17
December 9: Joel 1:1-3:21, Revelation 1:1-20, Psalm 128:1-6, Proverbs 29:18
December 10: Amos 1:1-3:15, Revelation 2:1-17, Psalm 129:1-8, Proverbs 29:19-20

December 4, 2022