

**Leadership Tip!**

One of the most important ingredients to being a successful life group is to focus on the people and not the content. Strive to create an environment that emphasizes authentic relationships in your group.

**IMAGINE – BEING LOVED****STARTER QUESTIONS:**

What are some ways that you experience being loved?

Is being loved all that you imagined it would be? Explain

**MAIN IDEA:**

Pastor Hank is starting the New Year off by asking us to “Imagine”. Gee, pastor, It seems as though I haven’t been asked that since I was a just a kid, so what in the world does it mean to imagine something? Well good old Webster’s defines Imagine as *forming a mental image of something not present*. Some synonyms include *dream, envision, and believe*. Ok, I get it now. Imagine what? The series begins by asking us to imagine *being loved*. But not just any kind of love. The kind of love that can only originate from God.

This love is described by the Greek word *Agape* in the New Testament, and is beautifully described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.(NLT)

*Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.*

After all, “*God is love.*” 1 John 4:8 (NLT)

“*And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.*” Romans 5:5 (NLT)

“*Long before he laid down earth’s foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love.*” Ephesians 1:4 (MSG)

Let’s take some time right now close our eyes, and quietly bow our heads and just “imagine this agape love that our Heavenly Father has lavished upon us. Now imagine what it would be like to walk in His love every day. Let us be still and worship the Lord through prayer and thanksgiving. Amen

**What are some ways we can begin walking in God’s love every day?**

Let's read this Psalm of praise from David:

*"The LORD is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. The LORD is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation. All of your works will thank you, LORD, and your faithful followers will praise you. They will speak of the glory of your kingdom; they will give examples of your power. They will tell about your mighty deeds and about the majesty and glory of your reign. For your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. You rule throughout all generations completely."* Psalm 145:8-13 (NLT)

**Does reading through this Psalm of praise from David, help prepare you to receive this "unfailing love" from the Lord?**

**Do you ever feel far from the love of God? If so, hold on to the following verses:**

*"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Romans 8:38-39

## **FINAL THOUGHTS:**

Remember when we were children, our imagination had no limits. Then we grew older and "reality" set in. But what is reality for a Christ follower? God's word is reality, and NOT the circumstances of this life. That's what walking in faith is all about. Perhaps that is why Jesus said in Matthew 19:14, *"Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children."*

Take the time to listen to this song by David Dunn, entitled "I Wanna Go Back".

**How can we "go back" and come to God as a child this week, so that we can receive God's love and let our lights shine?**

*"I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love; and may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how WIDE, how LONG, how HIGH, and how DEEP his love really is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it."* Eph. 3:17-19 (LB, NLT)

**How can our group pray for you?**

**CLOSE IN PRAYER**

**IMAGINE**  
“Being Loved”  
January 1, 2017

*“Now to him who by his power within us is able to do far more than we ever dare to ask or **IMAGINE**—to him be glory in the Church through Jesus Christ for ever and ever, amen!”*

Ephesians 3:20-21 (PHILLIPS)

*“My prayer is that light will flood your hearts and that you will understand the hope that was given to you when God CALLED YOU. Then you will discover the glorious blessings that will be yours together with all of God's people!”*

Ephesians 1:18-19 (CEV)

“God called you...” = “kaleo” = the reason God created you

**IMAGINE:**

- “Being Loved” – Everybody needs help: focusing on God
- “Belonging” – facing life’s problems
- “Becoming” – what God created you to become; strengthening their faith
- “Being a Blessing” – using talents to give back
- “Being the Difference” – finding a significant cause

*“God is love.”*

1 John 4:8 (NLT)

*“Long before he laid down earth’s foundations, God had us in mind, and settled on us as the focus of his love . . .”*

Ephesians 1:4 (MSG)

Your first Calling in life is not to do something – it’s to receive something.

*“This letter is from Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James. I am writing to all who are called to live in the love of God the Father and in the care of Jesus Christ.”*

Jude 1:1 (NLT)

*“I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love; and may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how WIDE, how LONG, how HIGH, and how DEEP his love really is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it.”*

Ephesians 3:17-19 (LB, NLT)

**God’s love is:**

- Wide enough to be everywhere
- Long enough to last forever
- Deep enough to handle anything
- High enough to cover my sins