

# SMALL GROUP LESSON: THE LOVE OF GOD

*The Real God, Part 7*

## Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1–13

<sup>1</sup>If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup>If 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. <sup>3</sup>If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

<sup>4</sup>Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup>It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

<sup>6</sup>Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup>It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

<sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup>but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. <sup>11</sup>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. <sup>12</sup>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.

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

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## DISCUSSION STARTERS

Read through the questions below and pick the ones that would work best for your group. Chances are, you won't need to work through all of them! Ask the questions in your own words—don't feel that you need to read them "as is." And feel free to ask your own questions! Keep the overall objective in mind so that no matter what "path" your conversation takes, you end up driving home the objective.

## OBJECTIVE

To help your students understand that God's love means that He values us unconditionally.

### 1. WARM UP

- Share a personal example of a time you experienced love from someone. What made that experience powerful and meaningful?
- Based on the message, what's your definition of God's love?

### 2. SET UP THE PASSAGE

"Love is a word we use all the time, but we rarely take the time to think about what it really means to love something or someone. First John, chapter 4, talks about love: <sup>10</sup>This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup>Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

"To love is to show value. God valued us so much that he sent His Son to die for our sins. Human love is conditional: it says, "I will love you if..." God's love is unconditional: He loves us no matter what we do. We are called to love as God loves. In today's study, we are going to look at one of the most popular chapters in the Bible so that we can learn how we ought to love one another."

### 3. CONTEXT QUESTIONS (focus on scripture)

- Read the passage out loud (consider having a different student read it a second time).
- Does anyone have any questions about this passage? Did you find anything confusing or difficult to understand?
- Why does love matter when it comes to using helping others by speaking in tongues or prophecy, sharing knowledge, expressing faith, or being generous? Why is it important to not just do good things, but to do them with good motives?

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### Re-read verses 4–7.

- Pick 1 of the 15 actions in these verses and give an example of when you have seen love expressed in this way.
- If love “keeps no record of wrongs” and “always trusts,” does this mean we should trust bad people who take advantage of us? Explain why you feel the way you do

### Re-read verses 8–12.

- According to this text, why does love “never fail”?
- In verses 11 and 12, what is the purpose of the child/adult and mirror references? What point is Paul trying to make?
- Why is love greater than faith and hope? Jesus calls us to have faith, hope, and love, so why aren't all three equal?

## 4. APPLICATION QUESTIONS (focus on personal significance)

- Why do you think some people struggle with the idea that God loves them unconditionally?
- Under what kinds of situations is it difficult for you to love others in the same way that God loves you?
- Because God loves us, he has given us gifts that we can use to serve him and others. This passage begins with a warning: we are called to serve others in love. Is it time for you to begin serving in ministry at your church? If so, where? If you are already serving, where are you serving and how has it made a difference in your life?
- Re-read the list of love's actions in verses 4–7. Which one of these actions is easy for you, and which one is difficult?
- In last week's message, we had three responses to God's love. Which one was most challenging for you personally and why?

1. Receive his love by faith.
2. Reflect his love by loving others.

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