



Discipleship Course

Loving your new family

Love your neighbour as yourself- session 3

Intro: All you need is love...

1. Why to love your new family (1 John 4:7-12, p. 1227)

a. A God of love (v9-10)

b. A people of love

→ *Our love stems from God's love for us (v7, 11)*

→ *Our love shows God's love to the world (v12)*

2. How to love your new family (John 15:12-17, p. 1083)

“A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” **Proverbs 18:24**

a. Sacrificial, not selfish

→ *Putting the needs of others first*

→ *Sticking at it*

“A friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity”
Proverbs 17:17

→ *Willing to forgive*

“Love is patient... it is not self seeking... it keeps no record of wrongs”
1 Corinthians 13:4-7

b. Intimate not superficial

“Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply from the heart”
1 Peter 1:22

→ **Consistency:** *No alternative to quality time*

→ **Honesty:** *No more masks*

→ **Accountability:** *encouraging each other in Christ*

3. Loving each other in a big church

a. The importance of small groups

b. The importance of a few close friends

Small Groups: John 13:1–17

On Friday morning Jesus will be hung on the cross. The night before, he shares a final meal with his disciples, and graphically shows them what that death is going to be all about.

1. **Before we get into the events themselves, what information does John want us to know? How will it help us to understand the rest of the events? (v1)**

Foot-washing in Jesus' culture was very normal (it was a dry and dusty land), but also a job reserved for the lowest slaves.

2. **Given what Jesus says in v3, what is surprising about what he goes on to do?**
3. **Why do you think Peter responds as he does? (v6, 8)**

If this foot washing had no more significance than Jesus just 'doing a dirty job', Peter's reply might be understandable. But Jesus' response to Peter in v7 shows that this footwashing points forward to a much greater act of sacrificial love- his death on the cross

4. **Why is Jesus' washing his disciples feet such a good picture of what he is going to do on the cross?**
5. **Why does Jesus issue such a strong warning to Peter? (v8)**
6. **At the start John told us that Jesus was going to demonstrate 'the full extent' of his love. How have we seen him doing that?**

Reflect: How can you let what Jesus has done for you really sink in?

7. **What lesson does Jesus want us to learn from his own actions? (v12-17)**
8. **What warning and what promise does Jesus give in v17? How can we heed the warning?**
9. **When do we find it hardest to put Jesus' words into practice?**
10. **How will remembering Jesus' example help us...**
 - When we find it hard to get on with someone at church?
 - When we see a job that needs doing and think 'someone else will probably do it'
 - When putting others' needs above your own is sacrificial and costly?
11. **If you have time, read John 13:34-35. How can we know what 'loving each other' should look like? What impact will this kind of sacrificial love have?**

Reflect: Be honest with yourself- do most of your decisions in life revolve around your own needs, or the needs of others?

Next week: 1 Corinthians 12

God had blessed the Corinthian church with many spiritual gifts. The problem was, they were using them in completely the wrong way! They had forgotten they were 'gifts', and had become proud competitive and envious over them. So in this chapter Paul issues a big corrective! His aim is to help us to understand what the **purpose** of God's spiritual gifts are, so we can get on and use them in the way God intends. His aim **isn't**

- To give us a comprehensive 'check-list' of gifts and encourage us to think 'which do I have?' The gifts he mentions are just a small selection Paul uses as examples.
- To clearly explain **what** every gift he mentions is. Some may be quite obvious to us, but others aren't. That doesn't matter.

1. **What do we find out about spiritual gifts in v4-7?**
2. **12:7 is an important verse that spells out God's purpose of spiritual gifts. What is this purpose?**
3. **Look through the list of gifts Paul mentions in v8-11. How do we see unity, and yet also diversity?**

The gifts Paul mentions are just a selection. Spiritual gifts are simply 'any God given ability of a Christian which God uses to bless other believers'.

4. **What other 'gifts/abilities' that we see in the lives of our church family at St Mary's might fall within that definition?**
5. **How does the image of a body help Paul to explain how the great diversity of gifts and abilities in the church fit together? (v12-14)**

Paul now goes on to explain that seeing our different gifts and abilities as being different parts of the same body impacts our thinking in two big areas-

→ *How I view my own role in the church family (v15-20)*

At a church like St Mary's, it's easy to feel that we don't really have anything to add!

6. **From these verses how does Paul answer some of these concerns-**
 - a. **I don't belong here! (v15-16)**
 - b. **I'm not needed here! (v17)**
 - c. **I feel like a misfit/mistake! (v18-19)**

→ *How I view others in the church family (v21-27)*

Sadly, pride and self-importance subtly find their way into every church family, and to some extent into each of our hearts.

7. **What does Paul warn us against in v21-24?**

8. Self-sufficiency is often held up as a great virtue in our individualistic society. How do these verses challenge that?
9. What is God's great desire for his family in v25-26?

Reflect: 'Church is not a meeting I attend, but a family to which I belong'. Is this your view of church? What impact will such a view have on

- **Your regularity at church (on a Sunday and midweek)**
- **Your approach to church when you're there?**
- **How you use the gifts and abilities God has given you?**

One to one in the week

- Talk through the 'reflect' questions from last week together, and share your own thoughts on these with each other
- Read through **1 Peter 1:22** and **1 Peter 4:7-9** and work through these questions
 - *What kind of love are we encouraged to show for each other?*
 - *How can such love express itself in your life?*
 - *How can such love 'cover over a multitude of sins'?*
- Share a prayer request, and pray for each other.

Recommended books for this term

<i>Relationships- a mess worth making</i>	Timothy S. Lane & Paul David Tripp	An introduction to what the Bible teaches about our relationships in life
<i>The Living Church</i>	John Stott	A wonderful introduction to God's vision for his church
<i>True Friendship</i>	Vaughan Roberts	How we can be grow in our friendships as Christians
<i>Serving without sinking</i>	John Hindley	A great book thinking through our motivations and priorities in serving others
<i>Married for God</i>	Christopher Ash	How to live out God's purposes in marriage
<i>The single issue</i>	Al Hsu	What does the Bible say about being single?

<i>Counterfeit Gods</i>	Tim Keller	How money, love and power can become 'gods' in our lives
<i>Gospel Centred Work</i>	Tim Chester	A book introducing God's plan for work and how we fit in with it
<i>Honest Evangelism</i>	Rico Tice	A short book helping us to see why telling others about Jesus is hard, but still worth doing!

Prayer Points