

Youth group @ Home

Sunday 3rd May 2020

Christian Character – Session 3: Being Loving

Good morning and welcome to session 3 of Youth Group @ Home. Each week we are going to look at a different element of what builds Christian character. Last week we looked at being trustworthy, this week we are going to explore how we can be more loving. Why not go through today's session with family or friends? You could always Zoom call some friends and go through the activities together.

Activity

To start us off thinking about love, go through the list below and try to match up the couples.

Meghan Markle	Anne Boleyn
Kim Kardashian	Prince Phillip
Romeo	Wendy Darling
Queen Victoria	Jasmine
Mickey Mouse	Kanye West
Adam	Prince Harry
Henry VIII	Eve
Queen Elizabeth II	Juliet
Aladin	Minnie
Peter Pan	Prince Albert

Having matched up the couples, do you think these couples are in love with each other? Have a think about what you think love is? Write down what definitions you come up with. Try to include definitions that fit several types of love eg. Romantic, family, friend etc.

Here are some of the examples we came up with: the love between a husband and a wife is romantic, the love between me and my sister is family love, the love between me and my peers is friendship. See how many examples you can come up with.

Love is....

Think

As we mentioned in the activity above there are different types of love: You can love your mum but that's not the same way you love your boyfriend/girlfriend. You can love your best friend but you wouldn't treat them the same way you treat your dad. These different types of love have different names. These names might sound a little strange, that's because they are Greek words.

STORGE – this is family love

PHILIA – the love between friends (friendship love)

EROS – romantic love

AGAPE – this is spiritual love, the kind of love God has for human beings, this kind of love is unconditional and sacrificial

Read Galatians 5:22-23, this passage describes the fruit of the spirit, each character trait that is talked about in these verses; 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control' are all character traits that Jesus showed throughout His life on earth, and they are all character traits that we, as Christians, need to try to learn and develop. As we follow God - try to follow Jesus' example - we become more like Jesus in taking on more of the features described in this passage.

The fruit of love is one of the first listed in the 'fruits of the spirit' and this shows how important a feature of Christian character this is, and how important it is that we display this fruit to others around us.

God shows AGAPE love to everyone and as Christians we should be demonstrating the same unconditional and sacrificial love to others. This helps us to be beacons of light for God on earth, as Matthew 5:14-16 says *"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."*

If you read through the Gospel's (the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) in the bible, you will see that this is the kind of love (AGAPE) Jesus lived out 24/7. Showing unconditional love to people all day every day won't be easy, but sometimes that best things in life take hard work, and God can help. Spend time praying and asking God to help you to be loving.

Loving others not only makes them happier but will also make you happier too. As you make an effort to show love to those around you - even the people you find hard to love - you will build more loving relationships with those around you, this will make you feel good, but will also mean that people will want to be around you more because they will like how you treat them.

Bible Study

For this you will need a Bible, alternatively, you can look up the Bible passage on a phone or laptop.

We are going to be looking at Luke 10:25-37, which is when Jesus tells the parable of the good Samaritan.

A parable was a story told by Jesus when he wanted to illustrate a point to those He was talking to. He would tell a story of a life-like scenario, which enabled Him to explain something to the people, but in a way that made sense to them in their culture, experience, and understanding. Usually these stories were to illustrate a lesson about the way people should live.

First of all, read verses 25-29, in this section the writer (Luke) describes how Jesus came to be telling the parable of the good Samaritan. The parable is told to show us who we are to view as our neighbour in the commandment *'Love your neighbour as you love yourself'* (Leviticus 19:18). Now read verses 30-33.

A Levite is a member of the tribe of Levi who were specially chosen by God in the Old Testament to help the priests with jobs such as musical worship, serving as guards and carrying equipment.

A priest meanwhile was a descendent of a specific group within the Levite's, so both of these men who passed by were viewed in the Israelites eyes as good characters. Thinking back to last week's youth@home, we would usually trust these people, but Jesus is showing here how just because they may be trusted in society, doesn't mean that they always act in a loving way. Everyone makes mistakes sometimes!

Read verses 33-37, this is when the 'Good Samaritan' walks by. A Samaritan was the child of Israelites who married Assyrians (the enemy) and so a Samaritan child was seen as a half-breed and viewed in biblical times as less important, and were treated poorly because of this, in comparison to the Jews that Jesus is talking to in this passage.

Jesus specifically chose a Samaritan in the story to be the good guy to demonstrate how the love of God, that we should be showing to those around us, knows no boundaries and should go beyond what society says should be done. The Samaritan doesn't just pick him up and give him to someone else to be helped, instead, he promises to return and pay for any extra costs that the innkeeper has to pay while taking care of the injured man.

Jesus finishes by saying that those that follow him must love their neighbours, but that means everyone, not just the person living next door.

What other characteristics of Galatians 5:22 does the Samaritan show?

In the following situations, think about your answers to these questions. For example:

- A homeless man in the street
- A old lady struggling to reach the top shelf in the shop
- Your sibling struggling with school work
- A friend (or stranger) who finds out when they're at the checkout that they're 10p short of buying something

Is it easier to pass by or to help someone you see needs help? Why might you walk by rather than stopping to help? Would you help in all the situations?

If someone who was always nice to you needed help, you would help them, right? Well, the thing about how God loves, and how God wants us to love, is that AGAPE love helps the people who aren't always nice to us, as well as those who are.

Are there any other situations you can think of where you would/ have already helped someone you saw in need?

Challenge

Try this coming week to find ways to be extra loving and take the time to notice if people around you need any help and if there is anything you can do for them. It might be frustrating being stuck indoors all the time while in lockdown, but if we are loving to the people we are living with, it will make it a bit easier for everyone, and probably more fun too!

Perhaps take the time to complete the 5 love languages quiz. The five ways people will commonly show someone else love are 'Words of affirmation', 'Quality time', 'Physical Touch', 'Acts of Service',

'Giving and Receiving gifts'. This quiz helps you to identify how you prefer to show and receive signs of love and can help you to build loving relationships with family and friends. You can take the quiz by going to: www.5lovelanguages.com

Remember

Here are some key points for you to remember:

- 1) God loves you beyond measure and was willing to sacrifice His Son (Jesus) so as you could have a relationship with Him - He will take care of you.
- 2) Sometimes it can be difficult to love someone when the other person shows no sign of returning that love, but when it comes to what God has asked us to do, we need to focus on us behaving the right way, and choose not to worry about how other people behave - we need to do what we know to be right. And the thing about unconditional love is... It's **unconditional**. No matter how someone treats you or whether or not they love you back, you are going to freely love them and treat them kindly - you require nothing in return from them.
- 3) There is a whole Bible full of examples set out by God of how to love others unconditionally – Maybe you could try and search out some more examples of this (Google is very helpful!).

Prayers

As we come to the end of our session on Loving others, let's take some time to pray for those we naturally love and those who we find it difficult to love. Let's ask God to help us.

Dear God,

We pray for those people we know who find it difficult to act lovingly towards (say the names of the people you are thinking of) Help us to be more like you in loving without discrimination.

We pray for those who we already love. Help us to continue to be loving towards everyone we meet as we go about our lives. In this unusual time of lockdown help us not to allow the tension of being indoors most of the time to affect how we love one another.

We pray for people who have been let down by times when we have been unkind or not as loving as we should have been (you may want to pray for a specific situation) Please help them to forgive us, and please help us to be forgiving to those who have not treated us right at times.

We pray for those who don't experience good, loving relationships, for those who are perhaps in foster care or in a house during this lock down which those who are not loving towards them. Help them to find hope and happiness in their lives and ultimately to discover your unconditional, unending love.

Please God, lead us and guide us. Help us to remember that you are always with us and love us no matter what.

Amen.

Remember, you can pray anytime – day or night – God is always listening to you and He loves to hear your voice.

We really hope you enjoyed this session. If you have questions you want to ask, or want to request a certain topic for a future session, you can email me: Freya@Bedhampton.Church.