

Community Groups are used extensively as the primary vehicle for discipleship at The Gathering and run on a quarter system. There is one in the fall, one in the winter and one in the spring. During the summer weeks we don't meet in Community Groups but we still offer the Growth Guides as a tool to help you grow personally. The Growth Guides are designed to help you dig deeper into the weekly sermon on your own or with your family and are available each week along with the note sheets at church as well as online.

## Consider...

Use the summary and discussion below to review and apply this week's message:

### Message Summary

Some things just naturally go together. Peanut Butter and jelly. Bacon and eggs. Bert and Ernie. Batman and Robin. And when the apostle John wrote the letter that we now call 1 John, he knew something else that should go together: being loved by Jesus and loving like Jesus. Unfortunately, because there was a growing heresy called "Gnosticism" in the early church, many people who claimed to be loved by Jesus weren't then loving like Jesus, and 1 John is the letter that John wrote to call them out. Of course, he wrote it because he loved them (in fact, "love" is used 35 times in the NIV) and knew that if  $1 + 1$  didn't equal 2, then there was a problem somewhere. In week 1 of the series, Paul taught on the problem and the solution.

1. **The problem: They weren't loving like Jesus.** More specifically, the problem was that they were trying to love like Jesus *WITHOUT* JESUS, and John was quick to show them that this is impossible. By taking Jesus out of the equation, they had turned love into a god and were justifying all the inconsistencies in their lives by saying "they had love." John told them over and over again (1 John 1:6; 1:8; 2:3-6; 2:9; 3:10; and 3:14) that they couldn't simply try to love more. They needed something else first.
2. **The solution: They needed to be loved by Jesus.** John knew that they didn't do something first, but someone first, and His name is Jesus. In 1 John 4:19, John made it clear: we can only love God (and others) because God has loved us first. Being loved *BY* Jesus will always result in loving *LIKE* Jesus! 1 John 1:7 makes that clear! Walking in the light of Jesus' love for us gives us the capacity to love like Jesus. And here's how Jesus loves: He loves first (1 John 4:19), He loves sacrificially (Romans 5:8), He loves honestly (John 8:11), and He loves unconditionally (Luke 13:34). And John knew that when we've been touched by Jesus and loved like that, we'll find ourselves loving others like that, too. **We will love like Jesus when we have been loved by Jesus.**

### Discuss

Use the following questions to review and apply the points learned in the message.

- John wrote a lot in the opening verses of 1 John about what he had "seen" and "touched" and "heard." What are some things that you have experienced in your life that are more real because of your experience?
- Read Job 42:5 and discuss how that statement from Job ties into how we need to experience God. What are some things that you had "heard" about God but now you've personally experienced?
- Looking back over your notes from the past week, was there anything that confused you or really caught your attention?
- On a scale of 1-10 (1 being "not at all" and 10 being "all the time"), how much does the love you give to others match up with the love Jesus gives to you in the 4 ways that Paul mentioned (Jesus loves first, sacrificially, honestly and unconditionally)?
- Which of those 4 ways of loving comes most naturally for you right now? Which is the hardest?
- Take time to confess those areas to God and thank Him for the promise in 1 John 1:9 that he is a FAITHFUL, FORGIVING, and CLEANSING God!