

House Group Notes

7th February 2017



Ichthus Values, Characteristics & Distinctives Session 2:

Love – The Heart of Everything

Briefly remind the group that we are looking at Ichthus' values, characteristics & distinctives (what makes us unique) in house group for the next couple of months. Explain that the values come in groups of three, the first being the Trinity, which we looked at during the last house group.

Summary of the Trinity:

We believe that the Bible shows us that God is three in one: Father, Son & Holy Spirit, also known as the Trinity. Last time we looked at how God is defined as love, and that love is the glue that binds the Trinity together, fundamental to who He is as Father, Son & Holy Spirit.

The next group of three Ichthus values are: 1) love, 2) Spirit-led humility and 3) an evangelistic heart (briefly explain this Christian jargon). This is Ichthus' statement about these three values:

LOVE, SPIRIT-LED HUMILITY, EVANGELISTIC HEART.

Therefore we believe that the values by which the movement exists and grows are firstly love, which is the first definition of God (1 John 4:8,9,11), then humility which gives room for the Holy Spirit to guide the church (Luke 4:1) and thirdly evangelistic hearts like Christ's who came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Whether we think we have an evangelistic ministry or not we are all witnesses to His grace and power.

This week we will be focusing on: LOVE

God is love: READ 1 John 4:7-14

God is love! (verse 8). As we have already seen from the Trinity, God is defined as love. Love is the very heart of who God is, and this is what we are also aiming for! (see verse 11) To be defined by love too, and for the world to recognise the love of God in us:

Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

What is love?

Discuss: What is love?

READ 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

This shows love as much more than just a warm, fuzzy feeling! It is more than just something that we feel or don't feel. Instead, it is a character description! It shows us that love is a choice and an attitude, and it never fails.

Discuss: What does "Love never fails" mean? (Love never fails to be the right way to react, love never fails to produce more love, love never fails to reflect God.)

Who should we love? READ Luke 10:25-37

Jesus said that loving God and loving our neighbour are the two most important commandments (c.f. Matt 22:36-40). Explain the significance of the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan (i.e. the Samaritans and the Jews hated each other). This is why the story is so powerful. The story ends with a challenge: "Go and do the same".

Discuss: How can we meet this challenge to love? Do we do that already? How can we do it more?

Jesus takes the challenge even further and calls us to love our enemies! (c.f. Matt 5:43-38).

Discuss: What makes it hard to love each other? How can we keep loving even when we don't feel loving?

God loves us all the same, so we also must learn to love everyone, no matter if they love us back. We must also learn to keep loving each other even when we misunderstand each other, or hurt or offend each other, or simply don't feel like it!

How should we love?

READ Luke 10:27. Discuss: How can we love God like this?

READ 1 John 4:9-10. Love comes from God, and God loves you so much! Do you know that?

READ 1 John 4:16 & 19. Discuss: How do we know that God loves us?

We have to learn to believe God loves us, to receive His love, and then love Him back in response. God showed His love for us in Jesus, in sending Him to save us and to show us the way back into relationship with God. God is love, and that means that Jesus is love too.

RE-READ 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a as follows:

Jesus is patient, Jesus is kind and does not envy. Jesus does not brag and He is not arrogant, Jesus does not behave rudely, and Jesus is not self-seeking. Jesus is not provoked and Jesus keeps no record of wrongs. Jesus does not rejoice in wrong-doing, but rejoices in the truth. Jesus bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Jesus never fails.

Now individually re-read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a replacing "love" with your own name, e.g. Bob is patient, Bob is kind... etc.

Discuss: How did you find reading that? What did you think about it?

It is very challenging isn't it!!!

Pray together for us all to be defined by love.

Pray for us all:

- to know God's love for us
- to love Him back! With our heart, soul, mind and strength
- for help to love each other in the way that Jesus loves us
- to love "unloveable" people, whether strangers or enemies or people who were once close to us
- for the heart of our church to be LOVE