

BACKGROUND: The Apostle John is perhaps best known for his writing of an eye witness account of the life of Jesus known as the 'gospel' of John. He also wrote three other Bible books known as First, Second and Third John. The books of 1, 2 and 3 John are known as 'epistles'. Their express purpose is to provide a framework for believers to live out their Christian life in the day to day world, to provide instruction in God's truth and to correct heresies, or false teachings, that may have crept into the early church.

FOR DISCUSSION: (read over this entire section first)

What is God really like? How would you describe His characteristics?

Where did you get your concept of God?

How much of your concept of God do you think has been shaped by your personality and experiences?

Here are four common examples of what people think God is like. Discuss them. Is one of them yours? Do you have another to add to the list?

- The doting grandfather
- The deadbeat dad
- The angry Judge
- The Santa Claus blend

READ: 1 John 4:7-8 New International Version (NIV)

- a. How does John describe God in section of scripture?
- b. What do you think "God is love" means?
- c. Is this your experience of God? Explain please.

READ: 1 John 4:9-11

Verse 9. a. How did God demonstrate His love for us?

b. What do you think the statement "that we might live through him" means?

Verse 10. a. How is love characterized in this verse?

b. Who made the first move in this redemption drama and why do you think that's important?

c. How important to you is it that God made the first move toward you?

Verse 11. a. What is our response to be to the world around us, since we understand what God has done for us?

b. What stops you from 'going first' when it comes to loving people?

In the **Gospel of John 13:35**, Jesus states the distinguishing characteristic of a genuine disciple. What is it?

DISCUSS: What are some of the ways you could demonstrate a greater degree of 'love' to those around you?

What specific actions could you take this week both inside the church and outside the church?

DISCUSS: If we really want to understand who God is we must look at the Christ of the cross. Are all of God's attributes (all of who God is) revealed in the cross?

FOLLOW UP discussion and planning: Where and when is your group planning to serve?

PRAYER:

Share a prayer request with your Small group members. Write their requests below.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

CHURCH PRAYER REQUESTS:

1. The new church building: that the Lord would clear a straight path to completion, and that capital Campaign promises would be fulfilled with the Lord's help.
2. Pray for those who have been invited to attend church, that their hearts would be softened and their spirit ready to receive the gift of Christ's love.