

INTRODUCTION: Spiritual maturity is not the amount of biblical knowledge we have. Spiritual maturity is measured by how we demonstrate love. It is easy to hide behind knowledge, but it is actions that reveal the true state of the human heart. To truly love, one must be willing to sacrifice their own desire to be always put themselves first. Real love seeks someone else's best interest ahead of our own.

1) God seeks our best interest first.

READ: Philippians 2:5-11, 1 John 4:9-10, John 3:16, Romans 5:8. *Discuss* the following statement as to how it relates to God's love for us. How did God "seek our best interest first"?

2) READ: 1 John 3:17-18 John states that love requires more than idle talk. It demands simple acts, which anyone can see, that meet the need of brothers and sisters in distress.

READ: James 2:15-16 and 1 Corinthians 13:1. How could you make "seeking someone's best interest first" practical in your day to day life?

3) Would you agree that demonstrating this type of love is possible for EVERY believer?

4) What are the barriers or excuses you have seen or experienced that prevents us from loving the way John says we must?

5) READ: 1 John 3:16. John talks about "laying down our lives". How can we do this in our modern world?

6) READ: 1 John 4:19 This passage is a very strong teaching. Relate those verses to 1 John 4:17 and 18. Comparing the two passages of scripture how could you define "hate" in practical terms?

7) Share with your group some specific action steps you could take tomorrow to bring your day to day life in line with the teachings of this week's lesson.

#### FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) *Discuss* the concept from Sunday's lesson and on the podcast: that your enemy or the difficult person in your life can become your greatest spiritual asset because they expose areas of your character or nature that are not yet surrendered to the Lord.
- 2) *Discuss* how Satan can exploit those un-surrendered areas in your life to create a spiritual crisis for you.
- 3) Begin to pray for the difficult people in your life and thank God for them for He is using them to reveal the real you.

*Memorize 1 John 1:9...this verse will give you hope as God uses the difficult people in your life to purify you. There is always forgiveness when self rears its ugly head and we fail to love.*

#### AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PRACTICAL SERVICE:

The Psychiatry patients at Health Sciences North are in need of warm clothing and craft supplies. Many who are admitted come without anything but the clothes on their backs and often have no support system.

They need: Sweat shirts, mitts, toques, socks, personal sized toiletries (hand creams, toothpaste, deodorant etc) newer magazines to read, older magazines to be cut out for collages, board games, puzzles and paper puzzles (books of crosswords etc.)

To deliver:

1. At HSN 6<sup>th</sup> floor North you can park in short term delivery and proceed to the 6<sup>th</sup> floor and take your goods. Whoever meets you at the elevator will take your supplies.
2. At the Kirkwood Site go to the front desk and ask for Ashley Mason; she will receive your goods.

*Please keep track of what you send and when and give that info to your small group leader. That leader will then inform Pastor Amanda. This way we can provide a coordinated need for these very vulnerable people.*