

SESSION 9

#LoveGodLovePeople

God&Me&Us

Focus Point

The church exists to display God's wisdom. We do this by sharing the Gospel and loving one another.

The Key Truths

Why does the Church exist? God's purpose in establishing the Church "*... was to use the church to display His wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.*" (Ephesians 3:10, NLT), to preach the Gospel and teach the saints to be disciples of Jesus (Matthew 28:19-20), to love one another as Jesus commanded and "*...if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way.*" (1 Peter 3:15-16, NLT)

The focus of this lesson is to enable each young person to realise that what is expected of the Church is expected of each believer as an individual in community. The writings of the Apostles make it clear that we were created to be in fellowship with, and to love God as well as other believers.

Scriptures to Consider

Colossians 3:12-17 highlights the following truths and the expectations of everyone who belongs to Jesus:

- If we have accepted Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, it is only because **He chose us** (v12) to belong to Him. Before that, we were spiritually dead and needed to be made alive (Ephesians 2:4-6).
- Just as when others look at us, even from a distance, the first thing that they will notice is the clothing that we are wearing. In the same way, others must be able to see our "*...compassionate [caring] hearts, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*" (v12).
- It is always very easy to be critical of others, especially if they don't measure up to our expectations. Refer to Matthew 7:3-5 and, in the light of what Jesus said, always be "putting up" with one another and willing to forgive those who have wronged us (Matthew 18:21-22).

- The single thing that can bind us together as followers of Jesus is love (v14). Jesus said that our love for one another would show that we are His disciples (John 15:12). John, in his first letter, wrote, *"If someone says, 'I love God,' but hates [or doesn't love] a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? And He [Jesus] has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers."* (1 John 4:20-21, NLT)
- Peace must *"rule"* in the hearts (v15) of all believers. Peace doesn't just happen – it takes hard work by everyone. The writer of Hebrews told his readers to *"Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord."* (Hebrews 12:14, ESV)
- We are called to be *"thankful"* (v15). In the words of a song, *"Count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done!"* (Guy Penrod). One of the ways to show that we are thankful is to *"Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts."* (v16)
- Everything that we do or say needs to be done and said in such a way that we will follow Jesus' command to *"...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."* (Matthew 15:16, ESV)

Group Discussion Questions

Question 1: How is it possible for someone to change the way that they have always been? If someone always had a bad temper, they can't just change, can they?

Answer: We read in 1 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV) that *"...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."* That is what the Holy Spirit does in us when He makes us spiritually alive in Jesus. As we allow the Holy Spirit to change us, His fruit begins to show in our lives (Galatians 5:22).

Question 2: What does it mean to "love" other people?

Answer: We become God's children by accepting the forgiveness that Jesus offers through what He did on the cross, by repenting of (turning away from) our sin. When we believe what He said about Himself to be true, and believe in His name, we become children of God.

Question 3: What if someone is genuinely not very likeable – such as someone who is always smelly or doesn't pay any attention to me unless they want something from me?

Answer: Some people are fairly easy to love, especially those who like us and are friendly towards us; however, it can be very difficult to love those who make us want to move as far from them as possible, or those people who make us feel inferior, intimidated or ignored.

When we committed our lives to Jesus, we “died” to our old way of living and were given new life in Him. As His followers, He expects us to follow His example of loving: Paul described that love in Romans 5:6-8 (NLT) where he wrote, *“When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.”* We have to die to ourselves and then the Holy Spirit enables us to love those who we would, of ourselves, not be able to love.

Word of the Day

Ecclesia

Verse of the Day

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.” – Hebrews 10:24 (ESV)

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