



Week Five Study Guide – October 11
The Jesus Way: Relationship
Romans 12:9-18

Opening Question:

- Describe someone who has truly loved you with sincerity and genuine affection. What characterizes that relationship?

Read aloud this introduction:

Marva Dawn in Truly the Community writes, “The Church has a wonderful message to proclaim - the hope of eternal meaning, the love of persons in deep relationship Everyone in the world is longing for that kind of hope, that fulfillment of being loved, that faith that will not change.” She goes on to highlight three aspects of this God-enabled community:

1. Truly loving one another
2. Truly belonging to one another
3. Truly experiencing gladness in one another

Mindy Caliguire in Spiritual Friendship says, “God created humans in his own image, which includes his very essence as community. We are designed to enjoy and to develop mutual relationships of self-giving love, just like the Trinity. But the pain and brokenness and disappointments of life often leave us deeply isolated, unwilling to extend ourselves relationally. Yet intimate relationships remain one of the primary ways God intends to be present with us and among us. We tend to forget this!”

These two writings highlight for us the lofty ideal of Christian community. Unfortunately, sometimes our own experience in the church with fellow believers falls far short of this. Even full-time missionaries, committed to serving God whole-heartedly, attest that the most difficult aspect of being on the mission field is summed up in two words, “other missionaries.”

The Apostle Paul, writing to the church at Rome, offered very tangible instructions for living in Christian community and with all people everywhere.



Invite someone in the group to read Romans 12:9-18 aloud.

Pray this prayer (one person or the whole group together):

Lord, as we come together to study your Word, we bring all of who we are with our needs, our hopes, and our expectations. Meet us here in the power and presence of your Holy Spirit. Give us insight and understanding as we listen carefully for your voice. And then give us courage and conviction to align our lives with the way of Jesus. We pray in his name. Amen.

Questions for Exploration:

What does sincere love look like? How might we be in danger of just pretending to love others?

We have heard it said, “hate the sin but love the sinner.” What is true about that statement? What might be the pitfalls embedded in this expression?

How do we “work hard for the Lord” without suffering burn-out?

What part does prayer have in relating to others the way Paul is instructing us?

What does it mean to “bless those who persecute you”?

How do we reconcile “living in harmony with each other” while having differences of opinion?

A Portion Of The Belhar Confession (have someone in the group read aloud)

In apartheid South Africa, Jesus-way people of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church drafted a statement of faith that would explain their convictions in a very divided country. One of the three sections of this Belhar Confession is a call to costly, all-in relational unity. Listen to the fraternal, relational realities they express. They declared that they, and all Christians, are to:

love one another . . . practice and pursue community with one another . . .
give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one
another . . . share one faith, have one calling . . . [be] of one soul and one
mind; have one God and Father, are filled with one Spirit, are baptized
with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink of one cup, confess one
name, are obedient to one Lord, work for one cause, and share one hope;
. . . come to know the height and the breadth and the depth of the love of
Christ; . . . are built up to the stature of Christ, to the new humanity; . . .
know and bear one another's burdens, thereby fulfilling the law of Christ . .

. need one another and upbuild one another, admonishing and comforting one another; . . . suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness; pray together; together serve God in this world; and together fight against all which may threaten or hinder this unity; that this unity can be established only in freedom and not under constraint; that the variety of spiritual gifts, opportunities, backgrounds, convictions, as well as the various languages and cultures, are by virtue of the reconciliation in Christ, opportunities for mutual service and enrichment within the one visible people of God.

Questions for Pressing it Out:

- How is true community built?
- What does true Christian community look like?
- Which of the actions Paul highlights are easier to put into practice? Which do you find more challenging?
- How should we live as peace-makers in our relationships?

Closing Prayer:

Depending on the needs/desires of your group here are some options:

- Ask one or two group members to close the group in prayer
- Pray the Lord's prayer together aloud:
"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever.
Amen."