

# HOW TO USE THIS GROUP GUIDE

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## CONNECT (10 MINS)

- Pick one or more of the warm-up questions and have all the group members give a response to the question(s).
- Make sure everybody gets a chance to speak. Don't let talkative people dominate the conversation, but graciously welcome everybody to participate.

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## TRUTH (15-20 MIN)

- Read the scriptures and paragraphs in this section to clearly communicate... what the Bible says about the week's topic.
- **"DISCUSS" sections:** These sections get people discussing the practical implications of the truth being discussed. Have one or two people give an answer, but don't spend too much time on these questions.

## GRACE (5 MINS)

- Read the grace scripture and section which shows how the passage points to Jesus Christ and God's grace.
- This section is really important, because it shows that life change begins with the grace of God and not our own efforts.

## **CHANGE (10-15 MINS)**

- Have everyone give an answer to each of the change questions.
- Take a good amount of time here. Really encourage people to think through how they can practically put truth into action.

## **PRAYER (10-15 MINS)**

- Read through the prayer focus points and have one or two people in the group pray.
- Make sure not to rush through prayer. The things we want God to change in our lives will often happen through prayer.



**WEEK 3**

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE



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# CONNECT

- ▶ What are some things you've been doing to enjoy the summer?
- ▶ What are some aspects about growing old that make you nervous?

# TRUTH

*Read 1 John 3:7-17*

There's a belief out there that says a person can be self-centered and loving. John, however, reminds us that loving Jesus means loving each other, and loving each other means being willing to sacrifice for someone else's benefit. But this life of love is far better than a self-centered life. It's a life of substance.

## LOVE EACH OTHER

*At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. (1 John 2:8)*

At first glance, John's claim is confusing. We have to ask, How is the command to love both new and old? In John's Gospel, he recounts a time when Jesus said to his disciples, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another" (John 13:34). The command to love was present in the Old Testament law, but Jesus framed it in terms of his own way of loving – all-giving, sacrificial love. This is the way followers of Jesus are called to treat others.

# DISCUSS

- ▶ What are some definitions of love that are different from sacrificial love?



# TO LOVE EACH OTHER, WE MUST GROW UP

*I am writing to you, little children...  
fathers... young men...  
(1 John 2:12-14)*

The poem that John shares is a reflection on our Christian life. We start as little children, then become young men, and finally reach the status of fathers. Initially we are welcomed into relationship, but as we grow we begin to resist sin, invest in the lives of other Christians, but most importantly read the Bible. The final step of fatherhood is one that means to be in deep relationship with Christ. The Christian life may be one of sacrificial love, but it's also one of growth, depth, and strength.

## TO GROW UP, WE MUST NOT LOVE THE WORLD

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.  
(1 John 2:15)*

Hate isn't the only thing that can stop us from loving each other. Loving the world can too. John lists three things of the world we can love – desires of the flesh, desires of the eyes, and pride of life. We can use John's earlier definition of love to know if we're in love with these things – sacrifice. We know we love these things of the world when we're willing to sacrifice whatever it takes to get them. Essentially, we love the world when we sacrifice for ourselves what we should sacrifice for others.

# GRACE

*And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

*(1 John 2:17)*

All this talk of sacrificial love can be uncomfortable, because it challenges us to orient our loves around God and others rather than ourselves. But that's exactly what Jesus did for us. The joy that helped Jesus endure the cross lay on the other side of sacrifice, and there's a joy and depth that awaits us if we'll walk like Jesus walked, in all-giving, sacrificial love for each other.

# CHANGE

- ▶ How has this discussion changed your ideas about what love is? How can this definition of love change the way you live?
- ▶ Are there steps that God is calling you to “grow up” in your faith? What are they and how can you apply them?
- ▶ Do any of these three tend to entice you – desires of the flesh, desires of the eyes, and the pride of life? How can you replace love for these things with a love for Jesus.

Pray that you all would begin to love God and others rather than the world.



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