

## STUDY 3

# LOVE

LOVING WITH A SERVANT HEART



As a statement of what the church needs to be about, there's nothing more obvious than "Love." God **is** love (1 John 4:8), love is the **greatest thing** (1 Corinthians 13:13) and love is the way that all men will **know that we are followers of Jesus** (John 13:35). **Love** is what Christians are called to do. So LOVE certainly finds a place in our BIG FOUR!

But the world also knows about love. It is a 'many splendored thing', it 'lifts us up where we belong', and it's 'all we need.'

So what's distinctive about the way the church is called to love? What do we have to offer the world over any other well-intentioned human being? In short, what's distinctive about Christian love?

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## JESUS-STYLE LOVE

### *John 13:1-7, 33-35*

<sup>1</sup> It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

<sup>2</sup> The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. <sup>3</sup> Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup> After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

<sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."...

<sup>33</sup> "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

<sup>34</sup> "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

### **Feet Washing**

In 1st century Palestine, people ate dinners such as the Passover while 'reclined at the table'. Foot washing was customary to get rid of the grime from walking the streets in sandals. Dinner smelled better that way. (*cont. over page*)

### Read John 13:1-7, 33-35

Passover was an annual Jewish feast, possibly the most important in the calendar. In it they celebrated their liberation from Egypt in the Exodus. They did this by eating the passover lamb, remembering its sacrifice so that God's destroying angel would 'pass over' them. The death of the lamb meant the survival of the house. And it's the Passover that Jesus and his disciples are celebrating here in John 13.

1. What "end" do you think John is talking about in verse 1?

2. What does this tell us about Jesus' love for his own?

3. What prompts Jesus to wash his disciples' feet?

John (and Jesus!) seem to be saying that Jesus' **washing of his friends' feet** is a metaphor for the cross; a visual aid to help the disciples understand what Jesus' death meant. So that when they saw him naked on the cross, they were meant to think of that as being like when he was half-naked and washing their feet.

4. Cast your eye over the reading again. What does the foot washing incident tell us about what Jesus is doing at the cross?

5. What must we then do? (v33-35)

So having your feet washed was normal. But having them washed by anyone other than a low-ranked servant was not. In fact, some rabbis instructed their people that it was such a dishonourable task that Jewish bondservants should not be forced to perform it, only gentile servants.

6. What does the foot washing tell us about HOW we are to love each other?

A necessary task, for sure. But a humiliating one, only for the lowest of the low.

The kind of love that Jesus speaks of has two distinctive features. Firstly, it's willing to suffer, even die, for the other. Jesus-style love is radically self-giving. Secondly, it is willing to suffer humiliation for the other. We will look foolish. Much like Jesus did on the cross. Love and service can't be detached; loving like Jesus means loving from a servant heart.

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## JESUS-STYLE LOVE IN US

### Read Ephesians 4:25-5:2

In this passage Paul unpacks what it means to be Jesus' disciple. It means to "walk in the way of love" as Jesus did.

7. For each section, discuss how each of these is not just a 'rule', but an expression of love for your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Eph 4:25

Eph 4:26-27

Eph 4:28

Eph 4:29-30

### *Ephesians 4:25-5:2*

<sup>25</sup> Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. <sup>26</sup> "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup> and do not give the devil a foothold. <sup>28</sup> Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

<sup>29</sup> Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind

and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. <sup>1</sup> Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children <sup>2</sup> and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Eph 4:31

Eph 4:32

8. Share with the group one or two of these areas where you need to make some changes in order to love as Jesus did.
9. How do considerations of cost and respectability hold us back from truly loving like Jesus and not just like everyone else?
10. What could it look like in real life to love without those restrictions? Which of our conventional habits might we need to break?

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## LOVING TOGETHER

As we begin thinking through how we can love like Jesus together, take some time now to respond to God's word from Hebrews 10:24-25:

*“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.”*

How could loving like Jesus, shape little, incidental things like:

- Our choices about whether to come along to, for example, the church picnic?
- The time we start getting ready for church on Sunday?
- Where you choose to sit at church on Sunday?

### NO RULES, NO GUILT TRIPS!

These aren't rules designed to guilt trip, rather they're designed to start a conversation where we stimulate each others' imagination for the ways that our habits might be shaped by Jesus-like love for our church.

There are a whole variety of ways we can be loving others at MPC. Here are just a few ways to do that:

**Growth Groups** are great hubs within our church family for loving one another like Jesus. But there are all kinds of other opportunities to love like Jesus in our church community.

One example is simply providing **Morning Tea!** It makes a huge difference to how we connect with each other on a Sunday to do it over a cuppa and with the kids feeling cared and provided for as a part of it.

Another way we can love together is being part of the **Care Team**. Many people (especially the elderly) aren't able to be part of a growth group and are in danger of falling through the cracks in church life. Our Care Co-ordinator, Louise Campbell helps to match up needs with those who are able to offer care.

If you would like to make our church family aware of a need that you have, how about letting Louise know? Or if you would like some help knowing where needs are so that you can love your church family like Jesus, then how about joining the Care Network? Louise can be contacted at [louise@mpc.org.au](mailto:louise@mpc.org.au) or 0433 241 919.

*Our Big Four words are **Invite, Grow, Love and Send**. And yet we recognise that the fruit of all these things depends on God, who extends the invitation and gives the growth and moves us to love by His Spirit, and sends us on mission. Spend some time praying that God by His Spirit would move us to be very practical in **loving with a servant heart** like Jesus has loved us.*