

“Love changes everything”

A loving community is God's design.

What are the “ingredients” or “make-up” of an authentic New Testament community? What makes us unique? What makes us stand out as a people belonging to the Kingdom of God and living as his representatives? During the past 3 weeks we looked at the following characteristics:

1. A people who have met the Saviour personally and committed their lives to Him.
2. A people who know God's voice...and obey Him.
3. A people who live by faith and walk in His authority.

Surely the next “ingredient” is love – loving God and loving people.

1. A Loving God...and loving God.

- **God is love.**

1 John 4v8

⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

God does not only give love – He is love! He does not get love from somewhere else and pass it on to us – He is the source. God consists out of love!

- **God loves us.**

John 3v16

¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

If you are a parent, think about this for a moment: Sacrificing your own child, putting him / her through excruciating pain and torture for the forgiveness of trespasses by other people – that's what God did for us...that's how much He loves us.

- **We should love God passionately.**

Matt 22v37

Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

God wants us to love Him with all we've got ...and love Him only. He should be our first love – the recipient of our deepest affection and passion.

Revelation 2v4-5

4 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lamp stand from its place—unless you repent.

Psalms 34v7

Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.

We should find our greatest satisfaction, pleasure, joy, excitement, passion and “adrenalin rush” in God! He wants us to love Him fervently!

2. God's model for a loving community.

John 15v12-13

¹² This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

Acts 2:42-47

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³ Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵ and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. ⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

(We will extract the points pertaining to 'loving community' and not 'early church model')

- Characteristics of a loving community:
 1. **Care:** They shared & needs were met.
 2. **Unity:** One accord.
 3. **Friendship:** Fellowship from house to house.
 4. **Community:** They had favour with all people (in their community).

3. What keeps me from truly loving someone?

- Not knowing true love – God!
- Characteristics. **1 Corinthians 13v4-8**

LOVE...

1. "Is not proud" – **PRIDE**

- I think I'm better than you because: My skin is a different colour, I live in a different neighbourhood than you, I have more respectable career than you, I know more than you.
- What will people think of me when I...
- God has no favourites – we're all equal before Him.

2. "Is not self-seeking" – **SELFISHNESS**

- My comfort, My time, My possessions.
- I struggle to love people because they intrude on my comfort, they take up my time, they use my resources, they keep me from reaching my selfish dreams and desires.

3. "Keeps no record of wrongs" – **UNFORGIVENESS**

- Past hurts, offence & harm caused by other people whom you are not willing to forgive.
- When we don't forgive we are not forgiven. Matt 6v14-15

GROUP NOTES

Ice-breaker

Everybody has something they love doing. What is yours? Tell the group about your favourite hobby or activity – something you really love doing – and why you love it so much.

Word

John 15:9-17

⁹"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ¹⁷This is my command: Love each other.

1. Why do you think Jesus said: "*Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.*"?
2. Do you know of an example of anyone who has laid down his life for someone else?
3. What would you have to do to lay down your life for a friend?
4. What do you understand by "complete joy"? (v 11)
5. Have you ever felt that you have experienced "complete joy"?
6. Do you think there is a connection between obedience and "complete joy"? (v10-11)
7. Have you felt depressed lately? How close are you to God?

Loving each other is not an option – it's a command from God. We cannot choose whether to love some or not – it's part of being obedient to our God and King.

Start loving people courageously and unconditionally and you will experience His joy and remain in His love.