

LOVE IS THE WAY

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK THREE

Chapters 5&6: Can my
love have an impact?

*"The place where God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."
–Frederick Buechner*

Welcome everyone to this third session. Read the quote above to begin. In chapter 5, Bishop Curry refers to John Coltrane's album "A Love Supreme." For your centering time, invite people to listen to one movement of that album by playing this YouTube recording (the words that Coltrane used to inspire his music are on-screen): <https://tinyurl.com/johncoltrane-psalm>. Ask attendees to meditate on the words.

Connecting:

Invite the group to reflect aloud on this question:

- What word or phrase spoke to you as you listened to the fourth movement of "A Love Supreme?"

Close this section with prayer. You might use the prayer to the right as your weekly opening prayer.

Covenanting:

Remind the group about your covenant from session one as your guiding principles for this time together.

Bible Study: Matthew 22: 34-40 (CEB)

"When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had left the Sadducees speechless, they met together. One of them, a legal expert, tested him. 'Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the Law?'"

He replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.'"

Read the scripture aloud. Invite the group to share their responses to these questions:

- Love God. Love your neighbor. Love yourself. Which of these three come easiest to you? Which is most challenging? Why?
- Jesus holds that these three are connected. Have you found that to be true? For example, has your love of God given you a deeper heart for your neighbor? When you have given of yourself to others, has it increased your sense of well-being?
- What would it look like if we truly used these two commandments as our daily guide for living?

Loving God, fill my heart with the love that you freely give. Make love my first and last thoughts. May I love others and freely give to them. Make my spirit a spirit of joy, happiness, and love for both my friends and my enemies. Help me love abundantly as you have loved me. Amen.

*Based on John 13:34
DailyPrayerGuide.net*

Video: Watch this week's video with Rev. Cynthia Williams.

Depending on the size of your group, you may want to move into breakout groups/rooms of three to allow for deeper sharing.

Going Deeper:

Invite the group to reflect aloud on these questions:

- Consider Frederick Buechner's quote at the top of the page. What do you sense is your unique calling? What are your gifts, big or small, that you do because they come easy to you and bring you joy? Is there a place or someone in need that would be blessed by your gifts?
- Bishop Curry, expressing his own version of Barbara Harris' advice, wrote: "Don't try to be what you ain't. But that doesn't mean you don't grow and change with life's experiences." Where have you learned to say "this is who I am" and to stand your ground on your convictions? How has it felt to do that? Have there been some life-defining experiences that have profoundly shaped you in ways you did not expect?
- Imagine it is the end of your life and you are listening in to those gathered at your funeral. What would they be saying about you? What might surprise you about the seeds you have planted in their lives? Is there anything you want to do more of or less of now while you still have the time?

Going Out:

Invite the group to share responses to these questions:

- What is your takeaway idea from this week's reading/video?
- What is a seed you can begin planting today in your journey toward growing deeper in your love of God, love of self, and love of neighbor?

Closing:

Invite people to close their eyes and listen to an excerpt from Henri Nouwen's "Life of the Beloved": <https://tinyurl.com/henrinouwen-lifeofthebeloved>. Tell them to let the words wash over them as if God is speaking directly into their heart. Read slowly, and allow for a moment of silence at the end.

Remind the group to read Chapters 7 and 8 for next week.