



7 Home Group discussion guides exploring life, love
and God's good news for human flourishing

GRAND DESIGNS

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." Mark 12:28-31 (NIV 2011)

Love is a reality of life. Every single one of us loves something or someone. And we ourselves need love. We love love!

But sometimes our experience of love is blurred and broken. Often we struggle to love people and God the way we should. Because our hearts are broken by sin, sometimes we love the wrong things, or love the right things for the wrong reasons. Before we know it, we're clinging to things like money, power, possessions, or even family, as God-substitutes.

That's where **the gospel** comes into the picture.

The good news about what God has done through Jesus is God's powerful way of capturing wayward human hearts, so they begin to love the right things for the right reasons.

That's why our first main teaching series of 2018 (our 'On Purpose' year) will focus on love. **Our goal in this series is to learn how the love of God revealed in Jesus realigns the loves of our hearts, so that we love in a way that glorifies God, promotes human flourishing, and strengthens the church.**

These Discussion Guides are provided to generate Bible-based, Christ-centred discussion around specific topics. Obviously, we can't unpack all there is to discuss on each topic. If there is a question you can't answer or if you wish to go deeper with something, check out some of the resources in the back of this booklet.

Each Home Group will have an appointed leader who will try to keep the discussion moving. Please respect their task, and try to be receptive to their promptings. We expect that the 7 questions you find in each Discussion Guide will take around an hour in total. Please try to balance the need to allow time for discussion, with an awareness of your time limitations.

May your discussions be filled with God's grace, truth, and . . . **love!**

Soli Deo gloria.

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THE GOD OF LOVE

DISCUSSION GUIDE 1

In this discussion we'll explore what it means for God to be love, and how his love for us (shown especially in Jesus) should shape the loves of our heart.

Getting Started / reflections on love

1. Think back to your childhood (if you can remember it!). Share a memory of something or someone you really loved. What did you love about it/them?

2. From what you recall, what stories from the Bible illustrate God's love to you?

Love is a big part of life. And it's a big deal in the Bible too. But instead of simply talking *about* love, the Bible does something so much better. It points us to the one who *is* love.

Read & Discuss / 1 John 4:7-21

3. While the wording is a little complicated, what do you learn about God from what John has said?
4. When it says 'God is love,' does that mean God is a feeling? Explain your answer.
5. God demonstrated his loving nature by sending Jesus as 'an atoning sacrifice for our sins.' How does this truth guard against being too simplistic about God's love?

'God is love' means God not only *does* loving things — he is, in his very nature, what love is. And being made in his image, we ourselves are created to love. All humans are essentially "lovers." But we don't love God or others the way we should.

God's answer to our disordered loves is Jesus. Anyone who has truly been drawn into the orbit of God's love shown in Jesus will begin to change. Like a planet circling the sun, followers of Jesus are bound to the gravity of God's love. We are to revolve around it, and reflect that love to others. And especially to him.

6. Share, if you can, a time in your life when you experienced or understood the love of God in a deeper way.
7. If ever we find it hard to love God or others, in what ways can we find the motivation to love better?

Pray

Going Further / things to read and consider through the next week

- Read John 15:26-17:26. What do you learn about the intra-Trinitarian love of God here?
- Listen to songs, conversations, the media. What are people saying about love? Is it right?
- Read Exodus 34:6-7. What does this tell us about the God of love?