

Southwest Life Groups

A Place to Belong...A Place to Transform

May 25th, 2008

Focus: To explore the connection between our acceptance of God's love and our acceptance of others.

I John - Lesson #13 Choosing God's Love

Introduction: I once heard Brennan Manning say that he believed that there would be one question asked to us by Jesus when we got to heaven. It was simply this, "Do you believe that I love you...that I desire you...that I have waited on you...that I long to hear your voice?" He stated that one group of Christians would say, "yes, and I have shaped my life as a response to your love." Another group of Christians would answer, "I wanted to. I wished I could. I always wanted to but I just don't."

- Describe the differences in the way these two groups live life.
- How has your life been different during times in which you felt completely accepted and loved by God versus times in which you did not?

Text: John is beginning to wrap up his letter. He comes back to the one thing he has said over and over. Love is the litmus test! How you love others tells us how much you feel loved by God!

- Read the text.
- What if anything is John saying that is new to us in the letter?
- Describe John's definition of love and how it differs from our culture's definition.
- Discuss the ideas in verse 18 pertaining to fear, love and punishment.
- What is the result of God's love for us? Are we experiencing that?
- Why is John being so repetitive?

Application:

- Describe a time in which you felt completely loved and accepted by God.
- Assess the validity of this statement: How you feel towards others (friends, coworkers, enemies, Christians, non-Christians, etc.) reveals how much you trust the love of God.
- What is different in your life when you feel safe with God?
- Deep down...do you believe God loves you just as you are?

Meditation: Simply invite your group to rest and center on the love of God. After a few minutes, make this statement and allow the group to listen for God.

I know your whole life story...every skeleton in your closet, your shallow faith, your feeble prayer life, your inconsistent discipleship...every sin, shame, and dishonesty. But I beg of you...will you dare trust my love for you just as you are, not as you think you should be?