

Thriving in Place!

Love (May 3rd, 2020)

PREPARATION

- Familiarize yourself with this Study Guide.
- If you missed it, watch the sermon online [HERE](#).
- Spend some time in prayer before your group gathers.
- You **always** have the option to use some or all the questions and/or prepare your own questions.
- Review the learning objective to focus the conversation, read the primary scriptures as a group, summarize the main points, ask the questions, and use supporting texts to enhance the concepts.

DISCUSSION

Opening Prayer: (1-2 minutes)

In light of what God is saying through this week's message, here's a suggestion of how your group can invite God into your time together.

Thank the Lord for His sovereignty over all things! Praise the Son for his ability to compassionately sympathize with our suffering! Praise Jesus for dying in our place and conquering sin so that by faith, we will be brought into an everlasting kingdom where there will be no more sickness, pain, and suffering as we fellowship with God! As we shelter in place, pray that we would continue to endure and deepen our roots as we learn to love in the power the Holy Spirit! Finally, pray that the good news of Jesus would reach those who are suffering from the Coronavirus by sending us to represent your love!

Discussion: (45-60 minutes)

What's Going on This Week

This Sunday, Pastor Buz led us into the final week of our mini-series titled *Thrive-in-Place!* Pastor Buz points us to a couple of different passages in 1 Peter in order to help us discover what it looks like to love like Jesus during this shelter-in-place season. Throughout the series, we have spent time expressing some of the major frustrations we have all experienced during this shelter-in-place season. Pastor Buz, however, integrates the concepts of enduring hardship and growing deep roots so that we might courageously move forward and learn how to deeply love God and love others like Jesus did!

“If we come out of this season with a clean garage, a new blog, and caught up on our new shows, but we didn't invest time in the Word, in our relationship with God, or in the relationships that matter, what have we really done?”- Pastor Buz Hannon

Suggested Questions

Check-In: Icebreaker – Over the *Thrive-in-Place* mini-series, we will be offering some fun Check-in questions to lighten the mood! During the COVID-19 season, what is one act of love that has stood out to you the most and why?

Study Tip: 1 Peter can encourage us while we are sheltered in place because the letter is considered to have been written to scattered churches fleeing the persecution of the Roman empire in the mid-60's A.D. Most prominently, Peter's letter reminds the scattered church of their **love** and **unity** by comparing their current situation to the scatterings of ancient Israel. 1 Peter 1:10-2:10 elevates the scattered church because they are born again of the imperishable Holy Spirit (Gen. 2:17; Is. 40), allowing them to seek God's holiness (Lev. 11:44) through the atonement of the eternal Passover lamb (Ex. 12-15). This transforms the church into God's royal priesthood (Ex. 19:3-6) in His temple with Jesus as the cornerstone (Ps. 118:22; Is. 28:16). Using this analogy, Peter challenges us to perfect Israel's culture of familial, brotherly love (*philadelphian*) which expresses affection and value (*agape*) in a manner that is unceasingly deep (*ektenos meaning straining all of our muscles*) since we have been included into God's covenant family (v. 2:9-10)! As you consider Peter's encouragement to love the scattered church, let's consider how we can strain each muscle so that our **love** and **unity** would display the love of Christ!

- **Objective #1: Explore how love could look like *Unity* in your life.**

Primary Texts: 1 Peter 1:1, 22-25, 3:8 – After spending time expressing his shelter-in-place frustrations, Pastor Buz thinks about how we can love others well like Jesus considering the fact that we are all scattered as a church. Pastor Buz uses texts from 1 Peter in order to extract a Biblical picture of what loving others might look like while the church is fragmented. The first point that Pastor Buz makes is that love in this season will look like sincere **unity**. Who are some of the people in the church or in your life that come to mind when Pastor Buz challenged us to connect with someone? How might becoming a better *listener* affect the way you love and unite with these people?

Supporting Texts: (Love Characteristics) Ex. 34:1-7; 1 Jn. 4:19-21; 1 Cor. 13:1-13; Phil. 1:3-11 (Unity) Jn. 17:20-23; 1 Cor. 1:10; Gal. 3:23-29;

- **Objective #2: Explore how love could look like *Forgiveness* in your life.**

Primary Texts: Psalm 103; 1 Peter 3:9-10 – Next, Pastor Buz talks about how some of the stress and anxiety of being sheltered-in-place has brought a lot of impatience and shortness in his own life. The text in Peter says that love for others during a scattered time looks like genuine **forgiveness**. Which relationships come to mind when you hear the word forgiveness? What are some steps that you can take to begin reconciling this relationship?

Supporting Texts: (Love and Forgiveness) 2 Chr. 7:14; Js. 1:19-20; Col. 3:12-17; Eph. 4:23; 2 Cor. 5:11-21

- **Objective #3: Commit to putting love into *Action* this week!**

Primary Texts: 1 Peter 3:11-12 – Finally, Pastor Buz concluded with the notion that love looks like **action**. What are some creative ways you can love other's like Jesus during this shelter-in-place? After the shelter-in-place? How can we pray for these specific opportunities?

Supporting Texts: (Love in Action) Matt. 9:35-38; Mk. 12:28-34; Jn. 15:9-13; Phil. 2:1-11

Closing Prayer: (5-10 minutes)

In light of what God is saying through this week's message, here's some suggestions of what your group could talk about with God in prayer.

Thank Jesus for being the ruler over all things! Ask that the Holy Spirit would give us the ability to endure these hard times and to grow deeper roots in our relationship with Him so that we can love God and love others like Jesus did! Finally, pray that the Holy Spirit would continue to transform our minds so that we can set our thoughts on obeying Jesus and seeking the promise of eternal life as we walk through this COVID-19 season.

THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

-Further Reading and Exploration: *Read Philemon* Do you ever wonder what it would look like to apply the concepts of love that we just went over? Unity, Forgiveness, and Love in Action is displayed nowhere better than in Paul's letter to Philemon regarding Onesimus. Onesimus was a runaway slave who became a Christian under Paul's mentorship. As you read this short letter, pay attention to how Paul advocates for Philemon's status (unity), his financial restoration (forgiveness), and prolonged care (Love in Action) simply because Onesimus is united in Jesus Christ!

-Stay up to date with Coronavirus Ministry Opportunities: Help us out by pointing the people in your Community Group to 3Crosses.org/coronavirus. If you or anyone in your group is looking to serve food in our pantry, access spiritual care, or seek financial assistance, you can find all you need at 3Crosses.org/neighborhood

-Extend an invite to Alpha! Are you, or is anyone around you, craving community and seeking answers to life's most difficult questions during this time? Check out our new 3Crosses Alpha course designed to welcome the voices of anyone with questions or doubts about the Christian faith. Learn more at 3Crosses.org/alpha and feel free to invite the skeptic in your life along with you starting *Wednesday Nights at 7:30 pm*

- Find out how to pray for two people in your group this week! Pray that the members of your group would see God growing their faith as they endure this season and make us more dependent on Him!