



STUDY GUIDE September 10, 2023

Message Series: Side By Side
Message Title: What is Love
Teaching Pastor: Brian Hughes

Warm-up/Icebreaker: (10 min.)

If you could switch places with anybody in your family for a day, who would it be and why?

Pray:

Heavenly Father, we praise You for Who You are, the Author of love and of life. We ask that You clear our hearts and minds of all the noises and distractions so that we can hear clearly from You. Impress the truth from Your Word on our hearts and let it change us from the inside out. Guide this conversation in a way that is pleasing to You. Thank You in advance for all You are going to do in us and through us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Get Started: (30 min.)

- Do you prefer solitude or togetherness?

"Part of our Divine design is community. Family. Society. Togetherness. You might not be a people person, but you have people. You might, half joking but half serious say "I don't like people", but you like SOME of them. Perhaps just a few, but that still qualifies. We were meant to do life not in isolation, but with each other." - Pastor Brian Hughes

- Do you agree or disagree with the last statement? Why or why not?
- What might be some advantages or benefits of doing life with each other? Share an example of where doing life in community has made a difference in your life and/or faith journey.

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9:10, Galatians 6:2, and 1 Corinthians 12:25:27.

- Based on these verses, how would you summarize the biblical reason for being in community?
- *"We have an example to follow. To live side by side well, we have to love each other without it being self-seeking. Not in every single situation, but often. - Pastor Brian Hughes
So, how are you deploying your most excellent gift - the gift of love - in an others-focused way?"*

Read John 15:12-14 and Philippians 2:3-8.

- What is one key observation or application from these verses?

"Yes, there are consequences to poor decisions. Of course, there is a price to pay when you mess up. But we deal with it, we suffer through it, and then we put it behind us. Listen to the language that you use. If you are constantly bringing up the past and still holding long ago actions against others, constantly confessing their age old sins, you might have an accounting problem. Get the problem on the table, deal with it, put it behind you – close the books.... So where are you keeping score and how can you burn the ledger? - Because love - true love - keeps no record of wrongs." - Pastor Brian Hughes

- Pastor Brian posed the question so let's ask again, where are you keeping score and how can you burn the ledger? How would you evaluate yourself in this area? How might others evaluate you?

Read Matthew 6:9–15 and Psalm 103:10–12.

- If Jesus were seated here with you right now and teaching you from these verses, what do you think His reason would be for “closing the books” on someone else’s offenses and “burning the ledger?”
- What would it look like to keep NO record of wrongs? What might you need to do differently?

Watch and Discuss Video (running time 6 minutes, 15 minute discussion)

Just to recap the verses: Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. **5** It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. **6** Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. **7** It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. **1 Corinthians 13:4-8**

- *“When it comes to loving others as defined in what we just read - how are you doing? As you read through the scripture; where do you sense that you are loving others well? **Share** those words.*
- *Now read through it again. Is God nudging you to be aware of ways you’re missing the mark? **Circle/Share** those words....Ask God daily for wisdom. Open your heart to opportunities to grow in love.” - Pastor Brian Hughes*

Reflect and Commit: (15 min.)

Read 1 John 4:8.

- Has there been an experience in your life that has affected your ability to love well?
- Were you ever surprised by a situation of unconditional love personally or through another person’s story?

Gather prayer requests and pray. (5-10 min.)

Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. ~Psalm 63:3

Pray:

Lord, You are the only one who can help us love the way we are called to love. In our humanness, we are naturally selfish and self-seeking, we are prone to keep a record of others' wrongs and not our own, and we don't always delight in truth, and worse than that, we sometimes even delight in evil. But Lord, you live in us, and Your Spirit can enable us to love as You do - selflessly, without keeping track of wrongs, and more fully delighting in truth - *Your Truth*. We thank You in advance for all You are going to do to help us love like You do, because You *ARE* love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.