DEEP LOVE

Life Group Leaders Guide

Directions

This packet contains the background information, series information, and weekly curriculum you will need to lead a life group during our *Deep Love* series. Everything on this page is to help you stay connected to the series as a whole. Behind this page is the individual curriculum to help you point people to Jesus. The *Purpose* and *Move* sections of the curriculum are for the leader to read or paraphrase to the group. The *Notes and Commentary* section is for the leader to get background information and go deeper into the passages before leading the life group. The curriculum was designed with your freedom in mind. Read through the curriculum and decide what will work best for your group. SOAP the passages with the group, use only certain questions, write your own questions, or use the curriculum verbatim. As the leader, you know what will point your people to Jesus.

Series Overview

During our *Deep Love* series we will be turning our intention inward to focus on the specific things God has for His followers as a collective group. Most of the New Testament writings and sayings of Jesus are plural and intended for a group of Christians to act on together. In other words, Jesus and His word put a lot of emphasis on followers living out the truths of the bible as a group, not just individually. Sadly, many Christians and churches barely scratch the surface of the gift from God that is community. What we will see in this series is that showing up on Sunday for service only is not what God has in mind for his followers. Instead, he wants people that love each other deeply, forgive always, are marked by hospitality, and serve endlessly. We hope this series will be a way for you to dive deeper into the community God has placed around you.

Life Group Overview

During the *Deep Love* series our life group curriculum will cover the same topic that was covered from stage but using a different passage or set of passages. Each curriculum will begin with an unpacking of the previous Sunday’s service to help the leader open up the topic for the study and also see how people responded to the Sunday teaching.

*Deep Love* Series Schedule

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Week** | **Sermon Date** | **Topic of sermon** | **Topic of life group** |
| Week 1 | 9/17 | Priority | Matthew 18:21-35 |
| Week 2 | 9/24 | Hospitality | Genesis 18:1-8 |
| Week 3 | 10/1 | Service | John 13:1-20 |

The Point Church Life Group Curriculum  
***Deep Love* - Week 3 - John 13:1-20**

Purpose of Study

Tonight’s study explores how *Deep Love* is expressed through serving one another. Rather than simply telling His disciples to serve one another, Jesus has a better idea. He takes the form of the lowliest servant and demonstrates the act of service by washing His disciples feet Himself. In doing so, He shows us that no one is too great to serve or to be served by another and He calls us to go and do likewise.

Flow of Study

**Optional Icebreaker:** Imagine knowing that you were about to die and leave your loved ones. What would you do in the little time you had left?

**Move #1:** Since the sermon series and life groups are covering the same topics, it might be a good idea (both for content and time) to begin the discussion with some unpacking questions from this Sunday’s sermon.

1. Did anything stand out to you from the sermon this weekend?
2. What is one thing from the sermon that you want to apply this week?
3. Why do you think serving one another is such an important quality for a Christian community?

**Move #2:** Like everything else in our faith, Jesus perfectly models what is expected from his followers. Serving each other is no different. In our passage tonight we will see Jesus unashamedly serve his disciples. This act of service will give us a model for what our service of each other should look like. Before we begin the passage, we will walk through the act of footwashing and how it would have been perceived during this time period.

**Background:** In Jesus’s time, middle-eastern roads were dusty and littered with human and animal waste. Even when a guest had bathed prior to entering a home, they could not escape the filth of the streets on their journey over. Their feet, protected only by sandals, were often the dirtiest part of the body. It was customary for the lowliest servant of the household to wash the feet of guests as they entered a home, so that the guests could recline in cleanliness and comfort.

The passage for tonight occurs on Jesus’s last night with His disciples. For this private gathering, there is no mention of servants and Jesus and His disciples are sharing the Passover feast with dirty feet. In full knowledge of His imminent betrayal by Judas, Jesus uses this remaining time to teach His disciples a few final lessons. Instead of standing up to preach, he gets down on His knees to perform one of the lowest tasks imaginable at the time. In doing so, he models the deep love expressed by a servant heart which every follower of Jesus must strive to imitate.

**Read John 13:1-11 (NIV)**

1 It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”

7 Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” 8 “No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” 9 “Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!” 10 Jesus answered, “Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” 11 For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean.

1. What stands out to you from this passage?
2. Re-read v. 1. Imagine knowing that you were about to die and leave your loved ones. What would you do in the little time you had left? How does this compare to what Jesus did in this passage? How did Jesus love us to the end?
   1. **Note to leader:**  The first part of this question repeats the icebreaker. If you already answered the icebreaker, move directly into comparing your answers from before to what Jesus did.
3. Re-read v. 8. Why do you think Peter initially refused to let Jesus wash his feet? Is refusing to be served an expression of humility or pride? When someone offers to help you, is your response to deny that help? If so, why?
   1. **Hint:** When someone freely offers to serve you, it is often a blessing to allow them to do so. It honors their offer of service to accept it as you would a precious gift, with sincere gratitude. When Peter refuses Jesus’s gift of service, he thinks he is being humble by refusing to put his master in the place of a servant, but in fact his pride is refusing to accept the precious gift of Jesus and his pride refuses to admit that he needs to be cleansed.
4. How is accepting and affirming service from others an act of deep love? How does it bring greater intimacy to the relationship? What are some examples from your own life of accepting service deepening a relationship?
5. Continuing in v. 8. What did Jesus mean when he said, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.”? Can we follow Jesus if we refuse to let Him wash away our sin? Do you rely on Jesus to make you clean? How so? Does this stop with the bath of baptism or does it continue throughout our walk with the confession of and repentance from our sin?
6. How do Jesus’s actions here mirror what he was about to do on the cross?
7. Re-read v. 11. Jesus knew that Judas would betray him. Yet, he washed Judas’s feet just the same. What does that tell us about how we ought to love and serve those who mistreat us? Is there a limit to who we should love?

**Read John 13:12-20 (NIV)**

12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. 13 “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16 Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. 18 “I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: ‘He who shared my bread has turned against me.’ 19 “I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am. 20 Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.”

1. What stands out to you from this passage?
2. Christ shows his Deep Love for us through service. In this, he set an example for us follow (v.15). We are not only to accept His service, but we are to seek out ways to serve one another. How does *serving* someone else bring greater love and intimacy to the relationship? What are some examples from your own life of *service* deepening a relationship?
3. Jesus teaches us by example that no one is too great to serve. God put all things under Jesus’s power (v. 1) and Jesus is rightly called our Lord (v. 13). If He is not too great to serve, then none of us are. Few of us, if asked why we don’t serve, would say: “I’m just too important.” However, many of us do say, “I’m just too busy.” Is this the same? When has the business of life become a barrier for you to a deeper commitment to Christ and serving His mission?
   1. **Note to Leader:** This question is not meant to challenge those who are already serving to stretch themselves even further. Rather, it is meant to encourage self-reflection regarding our priorities and whether these line up with Jesus’s priorities.
4. Another way we act like we are too important to serve is by denying certain types of service even in the face of desperate need. Will you sing in the choir but refuse to clean a toilet? Will you be in fellowship with the rich but avoid the poor? Will you serve in the care pantry but avoid talking with the people you serve? Will you give of your finances but not your time? Compare our attitudes about service with Jesus, who found no job too disgusting and no need too extreme to warrant his efforts.

**Move #3:** In this passage, Jesus demonstrates the importance of accepting Him and serving one another. None are too great to serve or to be served. Sometimes we want to serve, but don’t know where to begin. We feel like a problem is too big for us to make a dent in it. What did Jesus do? On His last night before being arrested, He did not run around town frantically trying to solve as many problems as He could. Instead, He chose to bring His closest disciples together and show them how to love one another in service. That choice has had a lasting impact to this day. So in service, we must both *reach out* to those far from God and *reach in* to build one another up as disciples, this is Deep Love. In this last move and Next Steps we will look at ways to put this into practice.

1. What is something that stood out to you tonight that you are going to take with you?
2. We cannot serve everyone but we can serve someone. What would it look like for a life group to serve one another like Jesus serves (to do for few what we wish we could do for all)?

**Next Steps:** The following are things you could challenge your members to do in order to take what you studied in this curriculum farther. **Note to Leader:** Share these next steps with your communications person. Add them to the weekly lifegroup email.

1. For further reading, consider meditating this week on another story of foot washing: **Luke 7:36-50.** In this story Jesus’s feet are washed by a ‘sinful woman’ and we see Jesus praising the great faith and love she showed through her service.
2. Commit to service. If you are already serving, great! Re-dedicate yourself to those efforts and be at peace in the knowledge that you are following Jesus’s example. If you are not currently serving, commit this week to pray about ways God can use you to further His kingdom. Consider adding one of these to your connect card on Sunday or speaking with your life group leader or an elder about ways you can serve.

**Prayer:** End your study with a time of prayer where people can share prayer requests and be prayed for before they leave. If possible, please steer some prayer towards what your group talked about during this study.

Notes and Commentary

The following are pieces of commentary, facts, and links based on the passages of this study in order. Use them to help supplement your group time or for your personal preparation.

* **Vs. 1 -** The opening verse of chapter 13 sets the scene for the whole of chapters 13--17. *Love* is one of the key terms in chapters 13--17, occurring thirty-one times in these five chapters as compared to only six times in chapters 1--12. Jesus now shows his disciples *the full extent [eis telos] of his love. Full extent* could also be translated *to the last* (cf. NIV note). The ambiguity is probably intentional, for the two meanings are related. Love is the laying down of one's life, and therefore to love completely means to love to the end of one's life (cf. 1 Jn 3:16). The love that has been evident throughout continues right up to the end. At the end, in the crucifixion, we will see the ultimate revelation of that love, that is, its *full extent.* (IVP New Testament Commentaries)
* **Vs. 13:6** - Slaves were looked down upon in the ancient world (cf. Rengstorf 1964b), and Peter cannot stand the thought of his teacher doing the work of a slave (13:6). It would have been appropriate for one of the disciples to have washed Jesus' feet, but the reverse is intolerable. In the Greek both pronouns, *you* and *my,*are emphatic. This response expresses Peter's love (cf. Chrysostom *In John* 70.2), but his is a defective love. It lacks humility, which is one of the essential attributes of discipleship according to this Gospel. Indeed, humility is the very thing illustrated in Jesus' present action. In Peter's response we see the pride and self-will that is at the heart of all sin and that is the very thing for which the cross will atone and bring healing. Peter is working from a worldly point of view, and not for the first time (cf. Mt 16:22 par. Mk 8:32). (IVP New Testament Commentaries)
* **Vs. 13:10** - What does this washing refer to? Some think it is a reference to his death, which will make possible a sharing in eternal life with Christ. The footwashing would then be a symbol of the cross (cf. Brown 1970:566). Others think that the bathing (v. 10) is the cleansing from sin on the cross and that the footwashing would refer to the forgiveness of one's daily sins (Carson 1991:465; Talbert 1992:192). Many, both in the ancient church (cf. Brown 1970:566-67) and today (for example, Oepke 1967a:305-6), note that the word *wash (louo)* is from a word family commonly associated with baptism (Acts 22:16; 1 Cor 6:11; Eph 5:26; Tit 3:5; Heb 10:22) and thus take this washing as baptism.
* But how can these disciples be said to be clean when the sacrifice for sin has not yet been offered and the Spirit has not yet been given (Chrysostom *In John* 70.2)? Perhaps Jesus is speaking as if the crucifixion and resurrection have already been accomplished (see comment on v. 31). Or perhaps Jesus is referring to being made clean by his word (cf. 15:3). Such cleansing would refer to their receiving the light of revelation that Jesus has offered, accepting him and his teaching as having come from God (cf. 17:6-8) and thereby becoming one with him to the extent that this is possible before the cross, resurrection, ascension and coming of the Spirit. They are "with him" (cf. v. 8) as members of his community, though Peter's attitude in this very passage shows they are not yet fully of Jesus' spirit. The footwashing would then symbolize further teaching. Indeed, the footwashing would itself convey something of the further teaching of which it was the symbol: they have received him as the one come from God, and now he reveals more clearly the love that characterizes the Father. (IVP New Testament Commentaries)