

Messy Grace Session 1: Love Leader Guide

Icebreakers

How have your ideas about love changed since you were a child?

What's your definition of love? What's the culture's definition of love?

Reflection #1

1. What did the video teach you about love?
2. In the video, Caleb shared how at LGBT pride parades where he marched, there were Christians with signs that read, "God hates you." How do you feel about that kind of portrayal of Christians?

Reflection #2

3. Jackie says, "You tell me you love me," but your actions don't show it. Compare Jackie's story to how we treat other people.

Read Together John 8:2-11 (NIV)

At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw the stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

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At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

“No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

4. What emotions do you think the woman experienced as she was dragged through town?
5. This woman was caught in adultery. In that society this was seen as an intolerable sin. How is the LGBT community often treated and viewed as the adulterous woman of our culture?
6. Other than the LGBT community, what kind of people or sins does our society label as scandalous?
7. Why do you think we tend to rank people and their sin? Why are we okay with some sins, but treat other sins so harshly?
8. How do you tend to react to people who are very different than you or whose sins are unbearable to you?
9. How does Jesus’ reaction to the adulterous woman challenge you when it comes to the treatment of the LGBT community?
10. How does Jesus live in the tension of grace and truth by the way he handles the woman’s sin? Why is this important to our understanding of God?



Reflection #3

11. Michael says, “We must hold the truth of God’s word alongside his mercy.” Do you lean more towards truth or grace? How does this impact your view on God?

Read Together Acts 2:39 (NIV)

The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off- for all whom the Lord our God will call.

12. Who do you think Luke, the writer of Acts, means by “for all who are far off”? How does this verse challenge your biases toward the LGBT community? How does it challenge your biases to others who are different from you?
13. We often view God as a judge, however the scriptures paint a picture of God as a loving father. How does viewing God as a loving father help us understand how he can love those who are really “far off”?

Read Together Ephesians 3:16-19 (NIV)

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

14. According to these verses, what leads to our grasping of God’s love? What does it mean to you to be “rooted and established” in love?
15. How does experiencing God’s love help us be more accepting of people who are really “far off”? Does it affect your desire for them to grow closer to God?

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Discuss Memory Verse

1 Peter 4:8 (NIV)

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins.

Discussion Notes

In order to be loving and gracious to others, we first need to experience God's love and grace ourselves. Think of three ways you feel and experience God's love the most.

Examples: worship, through friends, in nature, reading the Bible, serving

Now pick one of these activities that you can implement in your life this week. Go around and share with the group what activity you are going to take part in this week and ask them to hold you accountable to it.

Next, go around and share the name of one person who is going through a difficult time and needs to experience the love of God. Now go around and share how you plan on sharing God's love with them this week.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, you are the source of light and love. Please help us to love those who are different from us in a way that honors you and the example you've set for us. We confess how many times we have failed to do so. Lord, have mercy on us that we might grow in your abiding love and the ability to extend it to others in the power of your life-giving Holy Spirit

Amen.