



theme: What is Love? (1 John 2:28-29, 3:1-24)
materials: Candles, matches, bibles, carol sheets

The theme for this month of cells is belonging. How does one belong to a group? To a church? To Christ? Are there those in your midst who feel that they do not belong? Do you need to believe anything or behave in any way in order to belong to a Church or cell group?

welcome

Have everyone give their best definitions of "love". Are there different types of love?

interact

This time you will be lighting the candle you lit last week, along with a new candle. Before you do, have someone read out Luke 1:26-56. This is a passage that demonstrates great faith. Mary's acceptance of the gift of Jesus, and her song of blessing to the Lord, show an incredible trust in her God.

As you light the 2 candles, have everyone ask the Lord to increase their faith and their expectancy for what the Lord can and will do in their lives and in this world. And thank Him for the gift of Christ to you and to the world.

read

Read 1 John 2:28-29, 3:1-24.

Do you find it difficult to avoid sin?

How does the first part of this chapter make you feel? (Especially verses 6, 8-10).

Does this mean you no longer belong to the family of God if you sin? Does that mean that none of you are Christians? (This may be a good time to re-read 1 John 2:1-2 from last week, and to look at the two passages together).

Why is it so important in this passage to love your brother? (Not just your relations. All believers were called "brothers")

What is love, according to this passage?

How should we be loving each other, according to this passage? Are we doing that? If not, why not? And how will we change our behaviour?

How can we know for sure if we belong to the truth, according to verses 18-20.

Are you confident that you are obeying the Lord's commands and loving each other well?

think

Go out Christmas carolling with your cell group. Remember that these songs are not just about Christmas, they are worship songs about Christ, the one who showed us what love is, and gave us the ability to love each other.



live & pray

Re-read 1 John 3:14-20 every morning, and ask yourself how to live them out during each day. This passage is a very succinct description of what a Christian life should look like, regardless of their culture, age, etc... What would it look like if even just the people in your cell started really taking these instructions seriously?

useful resources

Movie: *Romero* – A look at a man who tried to take the instruction of loving his brothers very seriously.
Website: <http://www.bibletexts.com/terms/agape-c.htm> --a helpful, and brief, commentary on Christian love, or *Agape*.

leader's guide

Last week's leader's guide gave a summary for the themes of 1 John as a whole, and would probably be useful re-reading. This week's passage focuses at first on not sinning as a characteristic of belonging to Christ, and then moves on to a more in-depth look at what it means to love your brothers.

The first part of this passage seems to suggest that anyone who sins does not belong to Christ, in fact never has. This seems to be a very, very high standard of holiness, and it certainly is a passage that emphasises how essential holiness is to the Christian life. But it must also be combined with 1 John 2:1-2, which says we should not sin, but if we do, we have one who speaks in our defense. This is our only hope for salvation – not our pious behaviour. Having said that, this passage makes clear that we should be living in obedience because this is what is due to God, and habitual, deliberate sin does show that one belongs to the world and not to Christ. It is explained here that you cannot say you love God if you hate your brother. Living like this is living a lie. Last week the liar was one who has material possessions but does not help the brother in need, and the murderer is one who hates his brother. Loving not just with our words, but in action and in truth – as laid out in this passage – is the way to have confidence before God and to put our hearts at rest.