

“A community marked by love” – Romans 12:9-21**NOTE FOR LEADERS:**

If you can, try to plan to do some sort of game together – something fun and light-hearted – or spend some time catching up post-Christmas break (as there may be a lot of similar people in your group from last term). There is a lot of good discussion to be had (all of the notes to help below!) but we are all about community and growing together spiritually but also relationally – there might be a lot of new people in your group, so take some time to introduce each other and what this term will look like for your group (If you weren't able to make the leader training or if you need more info then please contact Si Munsie or one of the office team for practical details).

Introduction

Over the past year we have been faced with many challenges that have impacted the way we grow individually and together as a community, you may feel like you're in 'damage limitation mode' with regards to your faith in God and your relationships with family or friends. (You're not alone!)

Dave kicked us off on Sunday with a this statement:

“We will not know God, change deeply, nor win the world apart from community”

With our practical ways of building community forced to change this year, this might feel like a doomed cause! **To what extent have you experienced this? Have you seen this become more/less apparent over the past year? If so, in what ways?** Take heart – community isn't dead!

Read Romans 5:1 – *how does this verse encourage us in the face of these challenges? We have been justified through faith in Jesus! Whilst the challenge is tough, we have assurance that our 'performance' as a human Christian doesn't discount our salvation.*

Digging In

Read Romans 12:9-21 together. *Does anything stand out to you from this passage?*

On Sunday Dave unpacked 6 different key elements of how we live out the 'cure' for all of the challenges we face in building a core of love in our community. Discuss through each of these as they relate to each verse from the passage.

For each discuss/unpack:

- What might this look like in life group?
- What might this look like in the wider church community?
- How do we show this love in our communities outside the immediate church family?

1. Verse 9: Genuine love

- a. Our love should be honest and should spur one another on in faith and good deeds. Pointing each other to our bigger purpose!

2. Verse 10-11: Honourable love

- a. Our love should make others feel honoured and valued. *Are we more concerned about our rights or our responsibilities? What does it mean to have 'spiritual fervor'?*

3. Verse 13: Practical love

- a. Love in real ways - contribute to the needs of others – give! *Have national/local needs changed your views on what your priorities are? How might your giving and serving grow during/after lockdown?*

4. Verse 14: Generous love

- a. Love without 'payback' – Bless others without bitterness. There is no debt to be fulfilled – GRACE. (This also means accepting others grace-filled giving when we want to be self-sufficient!)

5. Verse 15: Outward love

- a. Share your heart – rejoice/weep together – love with empathy.

6. Verse 16: Wide love

- a. Love people unlike you – do not be 'haughty'. What does this mean? **How can we love people we do not naturally like? What traps can we easily fall into? God's kingdom is unique and diverse – God's grace is for everyone – we need to be prepared to set aside feelings of self-wisdom/self-righteousness and be generous to those we may judge unfairly.**

Growing together

From working through this passage in Romans - **what practices make a good, strong, healthy Christian community?** Discuss practical ways by which your own group can deepen it's life together as a community. **Read Romans 12:21.**

Reflect: In which areas that we've discussed, **where do you personally and as a group, tend to be the weakest, why might that be? What practical steps could we take to improve? How can we better build the 'good'?** (Good overcomes evil!)

Pray together as a group:

- For ourselves. Pray through the reflections discussed – that the generous love and grace of Jesus would grow our spiritual fervor/passion for our community.
- For the ways in which we can improve and grow as a community to better share the love of Jesus
- For our city and wider community – that our love for others would reflect Jesus's love and shine out as different and take hold in people's hearts.
- **Pray for Alpha!** This is a major way that we 'win the world' for Jesus through our church community - That hearts would be won for the kingdom – that those who attend will have their eyes opened to the vast love of Jesus.