



Session 3: Engage



We are loved by God. Because we are loved by him, we can engage with a hurting and lonely world.

We are called to roll up our sleeves and be the hands and feet of God – that we might be like Christ in our homes, our communities and our world.

Previous session review

- Recap on your experience of the previous challenge. How did it go? Was it helpful?
- If you weren't able to try the challenge, explore the question: Where and how did you experience God last week?

Read

Read the passage several times through, slowly and prayerfully. It might help to use your imagination to picture the scene. At the end of the text you will find helpful background information in our 'Setting the Scene' section.

As you read, look out for shockers and blockers.

Shockers – a phrase, word, image or something from the text that resonates, stands out or connects with you.

Blockers – something from the text that raises questions for you.

1 Corinthians 13.1-13

What if I could speak all languages of humans and of angels? If I did not love others, I would be nothing more than a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. What if I could prophesy and understand all secrets and all knowledge? And what if I had faith that moved mountains? I would be nothing, unless I loved others. What if I gave away all that I owned and let myself be burned alive? I would gain nothing, unless I loved others. Love is kind and patient, never jealous, boastful, proud, or rude. Love isn't selfish or quick tempered. It doesn't keep a record of wrongs that others do. Love rejoices in the truth, but not in evil. Love is always supportive, loyal, hopeful, and trusting. Love never fails!

Everyone who prophesies will stop, and unknown languages will no longer be spoken. All that we know will be forgotten. We don't know everything, and our prophecies are not complete. But what is perfect will someday appear, and what isn't perfect will then disappear.

When we were children, we thought and reasoned as children do. But when we grew up, we quit our childish ways. Now all we can see of God is like a cloudy picture in a mirror. Later we will see him face to face. We don't know everything, but then we will, just as God completely understands us. For now there are faith, hope, and love. But of these three, the greatest is love.

Setting the scene:

- Paul writes this magnificent chapter on love to a church in Corinth. Corinth was an unsavoury place – a place of excess, sexual license and dominated by the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love!
- This well-known chapter about love is often heard at weddings, but it is actually located in the middle of a lengthy discourse on spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12–14). Paul wants to remind the church that love, faith and hope will outlive the gifts and that the gifts are nothing without love.
- Paul is painting a picture of true love, one that is much greater and richer than our contemporary notions of romantic or erotic love. Agape is the highest form of unconditional love that transcends and serves others regardless of circumstances.

Reflect

After you have all had time to read the text, pause and be still to listen to God through the Scriptures.

Begin your reflection time by each naming your shockers and blockers. Listen carefully to each other, share your thoughts and reflect on this passage together.

You might also like to explore these questions:

Q1. How easy to you find it to be loved and to love others?

Q2. How can we begin to embody love and engage with the world?

“Let us not be satisfied with just giving money. Money is not enough, money can be got, but they need your hearts to love them. So, spread your love everywhere you go.”

Mother Teresa

Respond

Engage challenge: As a group, create a challenge to help you to develop a heart of love and compassion and to engage with your community and globally or choose from the following.

Challenge ideas:

1. Reconciliation

If you have fallen out with someone or are currently experiencing a difficult relationship with someone at work, home, church or other social context, why not make the first move towards reconciliation? It might be appropriate to say sorry, ask for forgiveness or simply to state that you want to work towards improving the current situation. If you know of others in this situation – could you be the one that could help bring them together and find a way to restoring peace?

2. Tune In and Pray

Make it a priority to watch the news this week and pray for the situations and people involved in the various stories. Bring the pain, suffering and tragedy you see to God. You might also take the time to contact your Member of Parliament or Assembly Member about local issues that are of concern to you, or contact a relief agency to find out how you can support their work.

3. Neighbours

In a society where few of us ever meet, let alone get to know our neighbours, find time this week to get to know the people you live next to. Invite them over for a drink, a meal or a BBQ. Spend time together and enjoy each other's company. Perhaps offer to help them out with decorating, babysitting or gardening as a way to build relationship.

Group Prayer

You might like to commit to praying for each person in the group this week as you explore ways to become more engaged with themes of compassion, love, peace and justice.