

# FACTORS OF FAITHFULNESS

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR SMALL GROUPS

### LESSON SEVEN: FAITHFUL IN FRIENDSHIP

#### JOHN 13:34

##### MAIN POINT

God's people are called to be faithful in friendship by loving, receiving, and forgiving one another as God has done for us.

##### INTRODUCTION

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

- How do you think our culture would define love?
- What are some of the main ways we show our love for one another in community?
- If you are comfortable doing so, describe some instances in which the love shared in our community has been meaningful to you?

Love is the defining mark of biblical community, and everything else flows from it. Our God is love, and He commands us to show His unconditional love to the watching world by modeling Jesus' love for us. Our society is often confused when it comes to love, so it's up to us to show true love by the way we interact with one another. We can do this by supporting one another, sacrificing for one another, sharing with one another, and submitting to one another.

##### UNDERSTANDING

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.*

##### **Have a volunteer read John 13:34.**

- Does it surprise you that love is something Jesus had to command? Why or why not?
- Who is our "one another"? How does our love for God and our love for one another go hand in hand?

- Read Leviticus 19:18 and Matthew 22:34-40. What was new about the commandment to “love one another,” which Jesus gave in John 13?

The biblical command to love our neighbors as ourselves is not a new commandment. (See Lev. 19:18.) By the time Jesus spoke John 13:34-35, He had already cited love for neighbors as one of the two greatest commandments. (See Matt. 22:34-40.) Jesus even taught us to love our enemies. (See Matt. 5:43-48.) So what was new about the command in John 13:34? The answer is in Jesus’ words: “just as I have loved you.” The disciples were to love one another according to Jesus’ model.

**Have a few volunteers read Romans 15:7; 1 Corinthians 16:20; and 1 John 4:20-21.**

- What do these verses tell us about how we are to interact with one another?
- How might living this way together mirror the way God interacts with us?

How are we to love? We’re to love as God loved. How are we to receive? We are to receive as God received. We are to make people feel loved and welcome in the Church. We are also called to receive one another. These verses also show that we are to greet one another. This may not look like a holy kiss, as it did in Paul’s time, but we are to extend warm fellowship to others in the Church.

**Have two volunteers read Ephesians 4:32; 5:18-21; and Colossians 3:12.**

- What comes to mind when you think of submitting to others? Is the concept of submission positive or negative in your mind? What has shaped your thinking on this subject?
- What does it look like, on a daily basis, to “bear with others” in the Church?
- Why is forgiveness crucial in the Body of Christ? Who might you need to forgive? How does Christ’s forgiveness of us make forgiveness of others possible?

We are to submit ourselves one to another. What is biblical submission? It is one equal willingly and lovingly placing him or herself under another that God may therefore and thereby be glorified. Just as with a human body, the various members of the body at various times have to submit to the other parts of the body.

What does it mean to bear with one another? Bearing with one another means graciously enduring and putting up with the displeasing, offensive, or sinful

attitudes or actions of other people. The basis for this forbearance is the way that Christ has endured with us. No one will ever sin against or offend another more than we already have sinned against and offended Christ.

Finally, we are called to forgive one another. Through the death of Christ on our behalf, there is a legacy of forgiveness for every one of us, but it never becomes ours until we claim it by repentance and faith. Yet in the great, loving heart of God, He died for every one of us. And that's the spirit we've got to have in the Church. As the Body of Christ, we're to care for one another. We're to love one another. We're to receive one another. We're to bear with one another. We're to greet one another. We're to confess to one another. We're to forgive one another. And when we begin to really live that way, our church will become an outpost of Heaven on Earth.

### APPLICATION

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.*

- How might faithfully participating in our group help each of us to be intentional in the way that we love other believers?
- What are some practical ways we could demonstrate love for one another in our group? How might our group express love for the larger Body of Christ at our church?
- How is loving one another in the Church essential to our witness to those outside the Church? What needs to change about the way you love others so that you might be a better witness for Christ?

### PRAYER

Close by asking God to perfect His love in each member of your group and to help your group members better appreciate Jesus' sacrificial act of love on their behalf. Pray for the opportunity to put Christ-like love into action this week. Pray for love to become the mark for which your church is known in your city.