

## WORSHIP

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

And Can It Be, Your Love Awakens Me, Your Love Never Fails, How Great is The Love, Beloved

## WELCOME

How would you describe a “lovable” person? How about a “difficult” individual? Which person would YOU rather be, and why?

## WORD

### LUKE 6:27-35

<sup>27</sup>But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup>bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. <sup>29</sup>Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. <sup>30</sup>Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. <sup>31</sup>Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. <sup>32</sup>If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. <sup>33</sup>If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. <sup>34</sup>If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. <sup>35</sup>But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.

### 1 JOHN 4:7-8

<sup>7</sup>Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

It's the “love month”, but do we really know how to LOVE? We go through various stages of “love”, like crushing on someone, infatuation, puppy love, romantic love — but all these are based on feelings. A COMMITTED kind of love is different, and that is what we all need and need to learn. We have learned that the ONE THING of JESUS is to love God, and to love others (**Matthew 22:36-38**). According to Jesus, if you love God and your neighbor, you basically have obeyed the entire Bible! **Galatians 5:13** reminds us that “*through love, serve one another*”. Christ has set us free, but for most of us there is bitterness, anger, and other secret sins still imprisoned in our hearts. We are called to freedom, but we cannot use that freedom to indulge the flesh. If you love God and if you love others, you have fulfilled the whole Law! We usually measure our maturity by knowledge, sacrifice, zealotry for God or the things of God. But the real measure of Christ-like maturity is our love for God and all kinds of people — both the lovable ones and the difficult ones!

Now there are different kinds of difficult people – the short-tempered ones, the attention-seekers, and then there are those who have a negative outlook and are always sad, while others are just so full of pride. Most of us just withdraw from these kinds of people to avoid pain. But as C S Lewis said, **to love at all is to be vulnerable**. To love difficult people is not an option for God's people and love is defined this way:

*Love is an unconditional commitment towards imperfect people to seek their highest good, which often requires sacrifice, for the glory of God.*

### 1. LOVE IS FROM GOD

1 **John 4:7** tells us that LOVE IS FROM GOD! It is because of our encounter with God's love that we are transformed. Further in **v.19**, it tells us that we love because He first loved

us. Once you realize how our perfectly holy and good God can love a sinner like you and me, you will begin to appreciate God's love more and practice loving other “sinners” the same way also.

### 2. IT IS AN UNCONDITIONAL COMMITMENT

True love is not a feeling, it is a commitment. Think of a mother's love – giving birth was a painful experience, then taking care of the baby especially in the first few months is very challenging. Mothers wake up at all times of the night to feed their babies, etc., and yet moms love their children even if all they do is cry and demand attention. This is the kind of LOVE that shows a real, unconditional commitment! It transcends feelings! If love is dependent on feelings, then it is a shallow kind of love. Look at how God loved his people (**Deuteronomy 7:7-8**). He chose Israel not because they deserved it, but simply because the LORD loved them. That is a commitment that is not dependent on anything else – the choice was made to love, without any conditions waiting to be met.

### 3. TOWARDS IMPERFECT PEOPLE

Some people are “loved” because they are valuable. But God loved us, and that makes us valuable. True love is loving people “as is, where is”, just as God loves us. But because He loves us, He will not allow us to remain “as is, where is”. He wants our character to develop to be more Christ-like! **Romans 5:8** shows us that God loved us even while we were yet sinners. This is the kind of love that Jesus commanded us to give in **John 13:34-35**, to love others the way Christ loved us. This is the standard of how we are to love one another.

# WORD (cont'd)

It's easy to look at the fault of other people whom we consider as difficult, but we must be reminded that we can also be difficult to love at times. **Luke 6:31-35** reminds us that God's people ought to be different in how and who we love! Arthur Brooks at the US National Prayer Breakfast said "**Civility and tolerance are low standards. Jesus did not say tolerate your enemies, He said love your enemies. Answer hatred with love!**" **Luke 6:27-28** commands us to do good even to our enemies. LOVE is an ACTION WORD! Some people even defend their refusal to act loving towards "enemies" by saying they "don't want to be hypocrites". But the biblical definition of hypocrisy is knowing the right thing but refusing to do it. Do not allow your emotions to control you. Make the choice not to be governed by feelings. The WILL must direct your love. Choose to love no matter what!

## 4. TO SEEK THEIR HIGHEST GOOD

How do we do this with difficult people? It is impossible to do this on our own strength, but God provided supernatural help through the Holy Spirit. **Galatians 5:22-23** shows us that love is a fruit of the Spirit, and it is Him who enables us to love intentionally.

## 5. OFTENTIMES REQUIRES SACRIFICE, FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

When we do all of these, it may require sacrifice on our part, but it will always be worth it. In **John 13:34-35**, we are told that the best way to testify for Jesus is not by our words, because people judge us not by what we say but by what we do. The first disciples of Jesus, and the early church, changed the entire Roman Empire from the inside out. It is through their love for one another shown in their actions, that they became the best arguments for Christianity. Oh, what change we will all be able to do in the world, if we just learn to love difficult people for God's greater glory!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

*(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)*

1. **Self-Check.** Am I patient, kind, not envious or boastful, not arrogant, not rude? Am I not insistent on getting my way, not irritable or resentful? Do I not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoice in the truth? Do I bear, believe, hope and endure in all things? Does my love never end (1 Cor. 13:4-8)? Based on honest self-assessment, are you a loving person, or are you difficult to love?
2. **Setting It Right.** How have you treated those you find difficult to love? Think of family, co-workers, your authorities in church, work, government. Do you need to repent of a wrong attitude towards them? What will you do to show your repentance?
3. **Living It Out.** How do you think can you become a more loving person at home, at work, in church, in your city/community/country?

# WORKS

## PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray for at least one difficult person you find hard to love. Extend God's love to that person this "month of love" by doing something kind and gracious to them without expecting any thanks or anything in return. Find a way to share the gospel of Christ with them through words and deeds.

## WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

### I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

### II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of Public Servants
- A God-centered Philippines
- Repentance and Salvation

### III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

### IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

### V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends