

the
truth
about
loving

CONNECT GROUP
DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Truth About Loving: Your Friends



RENAISSANCE
CHURCH

Read

On Sunday Pastor Christian spoke about loving our friends using John 15:12-13.

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Reflect & Discuss

1. Tell us about one of your best friends, either now or from when you were growing up. Do you have a story to share? Why are they such a good friend?
2. What qualities do you look for in your closest friends?
3. Why do you think having close friends can be so challenging? What are some of the obstacles we face?
4. Read John 15:12-13 (see above). Jesus says we should love one another as he has loved us. Talk about his love for us. What do you think that kind of love would look like in your friendships?
5. Pastor Christian said that mutual love includes four elements:
 - See – See your friends and allow them to see you as you really are.
 - Hear – Listen to your friends and tell them what's going on inside you.
 - Help – Help your friends and allow them to help you.
 - Enjoy – Do these things joyfully, and you will enjoy your friendships.

For each of these elements of mutual love:

- Discuss with your group what that element looks like.
- Share an example of how you've seen it in one of your friendships.

Personalize It

Let's personalize and apply what we've been discussing.

1. Which of the four elements of genuine love do you most need to work on? What step(s) would you like to take to grow in that area?
2. Pick a close friend. What would you like to do this week to strengthen your relationship with that person?
3. How can we pray for you?

Reflecting on Scripture

In John 15:13 Jesus says, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” We’re rarely in the position of dying for a friend, but we often can sacrifice ourselves for them in less-dramatic ways. The passages below record the three other times when the Apostle John mentions laying down one’s life. Using the *Reflecting on Scripture* guide available on the Connect Groups page on our website (www.renchurch.com/connectgroups), set aside at least ten minutes three days this week to reflect on these passages. Our goal is to understand what laying down our lives for our friends might look like when it doesn’t involve physical death.

John 10:11-18

¹¹ “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

John 13:36-38

³⁶ Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered, “Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow afterward.” ³⁷ Peter said to him, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” ³⁸ Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times.”

1 John 3:16-17

¹⁶ We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. ¹⁷ How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?