



Theme: Love

2. Loving our Neighbour is Loving Jesus

Objectives:

Explore Jesus' example of active love and what "neighbour" means

Understand how following Jesus' example means taking responsibility for the wellbeing of others

Reflect upon what it means to love a neighbour and how your actions affect them

Before you begin:

Create a reverent, quiet and comfortable space for the group. Ensure that all relevant materials are printed and readily available for the group and that the sacred space is set up ready for the closing liturgy.

Each reflection point should include:

- Reading a passage from the New Testament
- Exploration of the Church's Story (teachings of the church and examples from the lives of Amazing Christians)
- The opportunity for the participant to reflect on their personal experience
- An activity
- A time of prayer and worship

You will need:

- Print-outs of the chosen scripture passage/church's story for participants
- Instructions from the chosen activities
- For the time of prayer and worship:
 - Bowl(s) of water
 - Small jug(s) or cup(s)
 - Small towel
- Reflective music
- Candle
- Scripture

Welcome, Introduction & Opening Prayer

Gather the group together.

Briefly introduce the theme for this reflection:

Jesus lived a life of love and service for his neighbours. But who were his neighbours? When Jesus was asked this, he told the story of the Good Samaritan, in which two strangers are thrown together and one looks after the other when people who should have known better just pass by. Following the example of Jesus means that we can never just walk by when we see those in need. This is a big challenge because it is not always as simple as helping individuals. We have the responsibility to help build a society that looks after all the poor, marginalised and disadvantaged. This is a journey we embark on for life.

Say the Faith in Action Prayer together:

God our Father,

We thank you for the gift of your love which you give to every person in the world. We thank you that because of your love we are never alone and should never feel afraid. We thank you for the gift of faith which allows us to know you, one God three persons. We thank you that because of that faith the whole of our lives are directed to living for other people. Through your son, Jesus Christ, our friend and brother, you show us how to love. Give us the strength we need to live lives of love and faith, so that the world might come to know your son more and more through our actions and words as we seek to live lives which help to build your Kingdom here on earth.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. AMEN

The Good News

Choose a passage from scripture that will help the group to reflect on the theme.

Below are some suggestions followed by discussion points:

Matthew 25:31-46

The Sheep and the Goats

When the Son of Man comes in glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All nations will be assembled before him and he will separate sheep from goats.

He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my father has blessed, take as your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you made me welcome,

lacking clothes and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me.”

Then the upright will say to him in reply, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome, lacking clothes and clothe you? When did we find you sick or in prison and go to see you?” And the King will answer, “In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.”

Then he will say to those on this left, “Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you never gave me food, I was thirsty and you never gave me anything to drink, I was a stranger and you never made me welcome, lacking clothes and you never clothed me, sick and in prison and you never visited me.”

Then it will be their turn to ask, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or lacking clothes, sick or in prison, and did not come to your help?” Then he will answer, “In truth I tell you, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me.” And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the upright to eternal life.

Luke 10:25-37

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

And now a lawyer stood up, and, to test him, asked, “Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the Law? What is your reading of it?” He replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.” Jesus said to him, “You have answered right, do this and life is yours.”

But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?” In answer Jesus said, “A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of bandits; they stripped him, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him, and passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan traveller who came on him was moved with compassion when he saw him. He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him onto his own mount and took him to an inn and looked after him. The next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper and said, “Look after him, and on my way back I will make good any expense you have.” Which of these three, do you think, proved himself to be a neighbour of the man who fell into the bandits’ hands?”

Pointers for discussion

Can I love someone I don't know?

Who is my neighbour?

How well do you know your physical neighbours?

When did you last show love to your neighbour?

Am I responsible for the well-being of people I don't even know?

Does the way you love your neighbour affect your school/local community/ the world?

When did you last see Jesus in your neighbour?

Today, what stopped you from loving your neighbour?

The Church's Story

To help reflect and explore the Good News further, share some of the church's teachings from important texts and the work of great theologians.

Mother Teresa:

Known for her work among the poor and marginalized, Mother Teresa often highlighted the importance of love and service. She said, "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love." This quote inspires us to recognize that even small acts of kindness towards our neighbours are significant expressions of love.

John Wesley:

John Wesley was the founder of Methodism. He emphasized the importance of love in his teachings, stating, "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can." This underscores the idea that love should motivate our actions toward others in every aspect of life.

C.S. Lewis

In his book *Mere Christianity*, Lewis discusses love as a fundamental Christian virtue. He wrote, "Love is not merely a feeling; it is an act of the will." This reminds us that loving our neighbor is a deliberate choice that can manifest through our actions, even when we don't feel like it.

Bishop Stephen Cottrell

The current Archbishop of York has spoken about the call to love our neighbors, particularly in times of division and crisis. He emphasizes that "The call to love our neighbour is not just about those we agree with; it's about reaching out to those who are different from us, and even those we find challenging." His teachings remind us that love is inclusive and must extend beyond our comfort zones.

The 1988 Lambeth Conference, Resolution 44 states:

"The church is called to serve the needs of others, to promote justice, peace, and the integrity of creation, in accordance with Christ's teaching of love."

"The Church of England and the Common Good" (2006)

asserts: "The Christian tradition has a compelling vision of what it means to love one's neighbour, emphasizing justice and compassion as essential expressions of that love."

Pope Francis

"Each time life puts the option in front of us to serve inclusively or to take advantage by excluding others, between washing another's feet or washing our hands of someone else's troubles, let the image of Jesus and the joy of service come to mind."

Anglican Consultative Committee resolution 2005

states: "We are called to engage in the world with love, advocating for those who suffer and promoting peace and justice in our communities."

Lives of Amazing Christians

Cuthbert of Lindisfarne

Cuthbert (c. 634-687) was a monk, bishop, and one of the most revered saints in the Church of England. He is best known for his work in the Northumbria region and his role in spreading Christianity among the Anglo-Saxons. Cuthbert's life was marked by a deep commitment to pastoral care and service. After becoming a monk at Melrose Abbey, he dedicated himself to prayer and the well-being of his community. He later became the prior of Lindisfarne, where he continued to minister to the people, providing guidance, comfort, and support.

One of Cuthbert's most notable acts of love was his care for the poor and sick. He often travelled to remote areas, bringing food, healing, and spiritual nourishment to those in need. His compassion extended to animals as well; he is famously known for his love of nature and wildlife, which he regarded as part of God's creation deserving of care and respect. Cuthbert's life serves as an inspiring example of loving one's neighbor through selfless service and compassion, emphasizing the importance of community and caring for all of God's creation. His feast day is celebrated on March 20th.

George Herbert

George Herbert (1593-1633) was a Welsh poet, orator, and Anglican priest known for his heartfelt religious poetry and his deep commitment to pastoral care. He served as the rector of St. Andrew's Church in Bemerton, England, where he lived a life devoted to serving his parishioners with love and compassion.

Herbert's poetry often reflects themes of love and the relationship between God and humanity, emphasizing the importance of loving one's neighbours. His famous poem, "Love (III)," presents a dialogue between the speaker and Love, symbolizing God, emphasizing acceptance and the necessity of love in human relationships. Herbert wrote, "Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back, guilty of dust and sin," illustrating the struggle to accept God's love and extend that love to others. His life and works encourage us to express our faith through acts of kindness, humility, and service to others, reinforcing the message to love our neighbours as ourselves.

Shane Claiborne

Shane Claiborne is a contemporary Christian activist and author known for his radical commitment to living out the message of love and compassion in a modern context. He is a prominent figure in the New Monasticism movement, which emphasizes community living, social justice, and a return to the teachings of Jesus.

In his book *Irresistible Revolution*, Shane writes, “The greatest thing we can do is to love our neighbors, which often means loving our enemies.” His work encourages Christians to embody the call to love in everyday life, challenging societal norms and advocating for those often overlooked.

- Create a publication which explains to your peers the example of love Jesus sets us
- Mind-map the different examples of love Jesus set. Highlight the challenges and the effects
- Read a Bible story where Jesus showed love. Imagine you are the recipient of this love.
- Select a quotation from the Bible . Annotate the section you have chosen, pointing out
- where there are calls for us to love our neighbour.

Personal Story

During this time, the young people should be encouraged to think about their FIA journey so far, and share with the group how the acts of service they have participated in have been examples of showing others God’s love.

You can at this point, review the acts of service young people have participated in thus far, and give them the opportunity to reflect in their journal the acts of service they have done, if they have not done so already.

Activity Suggestions

Reflection

- Research a project undertaken by Christian Aid. Make a power-point to show how the work of Christian Aid had a direct effect on someone’s life
- Write a piece of creative narrative which explores what the world would be like if no one ever took responsibility for the wellbeing of others.
- St Paul wrote: “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbour as yourself”.” (Galatians 5:13-14) Can you be free and responsible for others at the same time?
- Go on the CAFOD website and search for “Who is my neighbour?”

A time of prayer and worship

Begin with silence, or a piece of appropriate music.

Scripture

Play a clip of Jesus washing the feet of the Disciples. Alternatively, read John 13:1-17.

Reflection

Play quiet and reflective music

- Invite young people to sit in a circle barefoot.
- The first person is to wash the feet of the person sitting beside them. As one pours a little water over the feet, they say: "You have taught me that love is an action."
- As they dry the person's feet with the towel, they say: "My actions show Your love in the world."
- The next person then repeats this symbolic action to the person beside him/her until all have been washed.

If you think feet-washing may be difficult, you might find video of foot washing from a Maundy Thursday service, or think of another way in which young people can express their service one to another.

A time of prayer

Response: loving my neighbour is loving you, Lord.

Lord, you created each one of us in your image and likeness. You love us all equally; help us to recognise that we are your cherished and beloved children and that each one of us is deserving of your love. **Response.**

Lord, you teach us that loving our neighbour goes beyond the boundaries of loving those nearest to us. Help us to see our neighbour in those who are far away, in the stranger, the marginalised, the disadvantaged, the poor and the vulnerable. **Response.**

We are stewards of the earth, the builders of your kingdom. We are called to love, care and take responsibility for all of your creation. **Response.**

Concluding Prayer

Let us pray,

Jesus, You taught us that love is far more than an emotion or feeling.

Love is an action.

Help us to be humble instruments of your love in all that we do.

Let others experience your love in the world through our service.

Amen.