

# **CROSSROADS COMMUNITY CHURCH**

## **Core Values Lessons for Neighborhood Gatherings**

**Mission:** The mission of Crossroads Community Church is helping people on their journey back to God. We will do this by becoming a spiritually mature community of Christ-followers, equipping ourselves to impact the world as the presence of Christ, in order that lives may be transformed, God's purpose in the world fulfilled, and our Creator honored and glorified.

### **LESSON 2: ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE**

**Value: Relationships** — We seek to be in loving relationship - with God, each other, and the larger community around us. We also desire to be in catalytic relationships with ministry partners.



#### **Breaking the Ice (10 minutes)**

- Where did you feel warmest and safest as a child?
- Who is your most favorite relative? Why?
- What do you value most in a relationship?



#### **Discovering the Truth (20-25 minutes)**

**Mark 12:28-31; NRSV**

<sup>28</sup> One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; <sup>30</sup>you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' <sup>31</sup>The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

One of the basic theological premises resulting from biblical revelation is that God has revealed God's self as the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A significant part of what this means is that *God exists in loving relationship*. Loving relationship is fundamental, core, bedrock to God's very being. Loving relationship is as gut-level as one can get to the heart of God.

Indeed, the very mission of God in the world is to reestablish broken relationships with those whom God has created God's own image.<sup>1</sup> We, in turn, upon the restoration of our broken relationship with God, are invited to participate

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. John 1:10-12; 3:16-17.

in this same divine mission.<sup>2</sup> Further, as God's mission comes to fruition in the world and in our lives, we are called to exist, have our being, in the same manner as does God, in a Trinitarian relationship: God, neighbor, self.

The incident in Mark 12:28-31 (//s Mt. 22:34-40; Lk. 10:25-28) occurs in a portion of the Gospel where we see Jesus in conflict with the religious leaders of Israel. The conflict occurs during Passion Week<sup>3</sup> and stems from *contrasting convictions concerning how God's people are to be in the world*. At issue is Jesus' authority. The goal of the religious leaders is to find fault with his teaching in order to discredit him in the eyes of the people and, ultimately, justify their own rejection of him. For the spiritual leaders of Israel, the law and the keeping of the law had displaced that which is core to God and God's mission: loving relationships.

*Loving relationships are ultimately founded upon a willingness to focus one's life outward rather than inward, a willingness to serve rather than be served, a willingness to die to self and live to God and others.* It is easy to overlook this truth. We can go to church, study the Bible, memorize and quote scripture, know a lot about theology, perhaps even be involved in ministry, and yet, isolate ourselves from authentic, loving relationships other than with a closed circle of family and close friends. The loving relationships of which the Bible speaks require an investment of time, energy, and resources with God and those whom Christ came to reconcile to God. When we exclude, whether by intent or by default, choosing to give ourselves to something smaller than these relationships, we are deceiving ourselves. Our worship of God, as did Israel's, becomes vain, meaningless hypocrisy. In such cases we value something else more than the relationships (God/neighbor) which Jesus says have ultimate priority in the life of God's people.

*God calls us above all else to be in authentic, loving relationship with God and with each other.* There is no higher calling. There is no substitute. Such a relationship takes all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength, the giving of one's whole self. It requires personal sacrifice.

Back in 1967 a rock group called the Beatles performed a song for the first live global television link. It was broadcast simultaneously to a then unheard-of 26 countries. The song is thought to have been written specifically for the event by John Lennon. It was entitled "All You Need Is Love".

All you need is love, all you need is love,  
All you need is love, love, love is all you need.

There is perhaps no other subject about which so many songs, poems, and stories have been written — love. It is said to make the world go 'round. It is that which is of paramount importance: love for God; love for our brothers and sisters of the human race. *Jesus said so.*

1. What does it mean to love "with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength"?
2. Is the love of which Jesus speaks more feeling oriented or more action oriented?
3. Who is our neighbor?
4. How does your lifestyle reflect the greatest commandment? Should your life look differently?



### **Embracing the Truth** (15 minutes)

In Mark 12:28-31 Jesus assumes there is no divided loyalty between God and humankind, no tension

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<sup>2</sup>Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:16-21.

<sup>3</sup>Some faith traditions refer to this week as "Holy Week". It begins on Palm Sunday and continues through the Saturday immediately preceding Easter Sunday.

between loving God and loving persons created in God's image — our neighbor. Rather, the two are flip sides of the same coin. Our relationship with God is in some sense defined and circumscribed by our relationships with persons (cf. 1 John 4:20-21). Hence, Jesus taught “when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift” (Mt. 5:23-34). *One cannot love God without loving one's neighbor; one cannot be in loving relationship with God without being in loving relationship with one's neighbor.*

1. *Get Real* — What aspect of Mark 12:28-31 is most difficult for you to live out?
2. *Seeing as We Are Seen* — How is our love of God and our fellow human beings, or lack thereof, made visible to those around us?
3. *Jesus People* — How does a church body reflect the value it places on loving relationships?
4. *Witnesses* — How does the issue of loving relationships impact our prayer life, our family life, our social life?
5. *Partners* — What significance do loving relationships have for partnering with other groups and organizations in kingdom work?
6. *Truth for Life* — If time permits, have one or more group member share a *truth for life* from one of the scripture passages in **For Further Study**.



#### **Connecting** (10-15 minutes)

Connecting with those around us requires a willingness to make ourselves vulnerable. Recognizing when others offer us such a gift and valuing it with the care and respect it deserves is part of the love of which Jesus spoke and modeled. Let us truly connect with one another and treat those relationships like the fragile, costly, extravagant offerings they are.

One of the goals of this group is also connecting with the larger community of people who are in our sphere of influence. Pray for these persons, that members of this group might recognize opportunities to “connect” with them. Pray for each other and any special concerns shared during this time. You might want to spend as much time listening together as praying out loud together. Silence (though it's difficult for most groups to accommodate) provides an opportunity for God to speak to individual hearts. As always, pray that God might be glorified in all we do together.

1. Praises from group members
2. Concerns from group members
3. Share these in conversation with God

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#### **For Further Study**

##### **John 13:33:35**

<sup>34</sup>I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

**1 John 4:7-12**

<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. <sup>9</sup> God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

**Philippians 2:1-8**

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, <sup>2</sup> make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

<sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God  
as something to be exploited,  
<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.  
And being found in human form,  
<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself  
and became obedient to the point of death—  
even death on a cross.

**Romans 12:9-21**

<sup>9</sup> Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; <sup>10</sup> love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup> Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. <sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. <sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup> Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." <sup>20</sup> No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**2 Corinthians 5:18-21**

<sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup> that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. <sup>20</sup> So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

**2 Corinthians 8:16-24**

<sup>16</sup> But thanks be to God who put in the heart of Titus the same eagerness for you that I myself have. <sup>17</sup> For he not only accepted our appeal, but since he is more eager than ever, he is going to you of his own accord. <sup>18</sup> With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his proclaiming the good news; <sup>19</sup> and not only that, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us while we are administering this generous undertaking for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our goodwill. <sup>20</sup> We intend that no one should blame us about this generous gift that we are administering, <sup>21</sup> for we intend to do what is right not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of others. <sup>22</sup> And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found eager in many matters, but who is now more eager than ever because of his great confidence in you. <sup>23</sup> As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker in your service; as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. <sup>24</sup> Therefore

openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.

**1 John 1:3**

We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

**1 John 4:16b-21**

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. <sup>17</sup> Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. <sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. <sup>19</sup> We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup> Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. <sup>21</sup> The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.