

the seventh step

Begin to see people, whoever they are and whatever they have done, through the eyes of Christ – as precious to God and worth any sacrifice

people...

There are some people in this world who appear to enjoy making life miserable for others. Maybe they are selfish, or devious... they could even seem just plain nasty. There is, of course, a far larger section of humanity which goes about its business causing little or no offence - and perhaps these may be thought of as average, ordinary people. A third 'category' (along these lines) might be those whose personal qualities make them a blessing to all who come into contact with them.

Though there is nearly always some overlap (few people are *wholly* wonderful, reasonable or unpleasant) there is a natural inclination to categorise others as 'good', 'indifferent' or 'bad'. There is also a very 'human' tendency to respond to them according to which category they are deemed to belong...and so, a person might *love* people they think are good, be *indifferent* to those they consider indifferent, and *hate* the ones who seem bad. It is likewise often true that people will love those who love *them* - and also respond *in kind* to hatred and indifference. It is entirely natural, entirely 'human'...and also, entirely wrong.

From the Christian perspective - from *our* perspective - hatred *and* indifference are always wrong. They are wrong for any number of reasons, but let's begin by looking at them in the context of this programme: We have chosen the best way - a dynamic, fulfilling and life-changing relationship with our creator. We have chosen to allow our heavenly Father to turn us into the people we were always meant to be...people like Jesus. In Christ, there is only *love*. In relationship with him there is no place for hatred or indifference, because *he* has no place for them. If Jesus had ever felt that way about people, there would have been no cross, no forgiveness and no mercy - only the inescapable certainty of the 'wages of sin'. But God has always been passionate about those he created, and the only thing he hates is the sin which separates people from him. Discipleship - following Christ - means (among other things) freedom from hatred, but it also means an end to indifference: It means *seeing people through the eyes of Christ*.

Why is it so important to see people through the eyes of Christ? *Because, to have a quality relationship with God we must share his point of view!*

God's point of view is very straightforward: The only thing that matters is love. Love was the motivation for creation, and for the cross. It is the defining characteristic of God himself - God *is* love. In giving *us* the capacity to love, God shared with us part of the divine nature. Love is the highest and most noble attribute the human race can aspire to, it is what we were designed for - it is *the meaning of life*.

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ love those who love them.” (Luke 6:32)

God loves *everybody*. Seeing people through the eyes of Christ is just embracing that concept - agreeing with God and acting upon it. Loving others is so essential in our relationship with God that he *commands* it... In response to the question “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied “*Love the Lord your God with all your*

heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matthew 22:37-40)

it's all about *being* a neighbour

"Love the Lord your God" ...and... "Love your neighbour as yourself". The Jews have the ten commandments (and hundreds of other laws) but Jesus sums them all up with just these two. Jesus always wants people to succeed - he likes to make things as simple as possible - and he knew if they kept these, they would automatically be keeping the rest. Essentially, he is saying that the whole of the Law and the Prophets (much of our Old Testament) comes down to 'love God and love people'.

What does that mean to us? It means that through love (and the actions that express love) we can fulfill everything God asks of us. Love of God and our 'neighbour' maintains us in harmonious relationship with our heavenly Father - with all that implies for this life and beyond. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), Jesus states plainly that keeping these two commandments brings eternal life - "*Do this and you will live*" (verse 28). Interestingly, the man to whom Jesus said this then questioned who his neighbour was, in an attempt to justify himself. The parable that Jesus told defined 'neighbour' in a completely different way than the man had obviously hoped for. Jesus spoke about *our* responsibility to be a loving neighbour to others. The message of the parable is that being a neighbour is about showing God's love and mercy to anyone and everyone who has need of it. It is the opposite of *indifference*. It is taking every opportunity to demonstrate Christ's love in action.

It is easy to see hatred as the opposite of love. Hatred is death to the Christian, which is why we must always forgive... but *indifference* is also the opposite of love, just as *nothing* is the opposite of *something*. Like forgiveness, love is not primarily a response to other people, it is a response to God. It does not depend on what people do, or what they are like - it is unconditional. And just as Christ paid the price of sin for everybody and loves everybody, we are called to love them too, even our enemies! (Matthew 5:44).

Seeing people through the eyes of Christ, therefore, is about loving others unconditionally. As we are called to love, we may be sure that God will empower us to fulfill this command. Our *willingness* to love, and our practical *application* of simple principles, are an invitation for our heavenly Father to work dynamically in us by his Spirit.

the importance of love

Love is the defining characteristic of Christ, and the hallmark of his followers. Being at the very heart of God, it is not surprising that it is the most important attribute we can possess. The bible - God's 'love letter' to us - obviously has much to say on the subject, but one of the best passages on the importance of love is found in 1 Corinthians, - "*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.*" (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

These poetic words of Paul the Apostle carry profound implications for the Christian. Without love, we are nothing. No ability, no knowledge, nor any sacrifice has *any* value

without it. *Love is the only context for the Christian life.* It is love which gives significance and meaning to everything we do, and everything we are.

the qualities of love

Having established it as the one thing that *really* matters, Paul goes on to describe the *qualities* of love: *“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”* (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

These qualities (or some of them) are a normal part of close human relationships - though it may be very hard to find one in which, for example, *no* record of wrongs was *ever* kept, or where patience and perseverance *never* failed. At first sight, it may seem that Paul was setting impossible standards. After all, if people struggle to love their nearest and dearest to such a *consistently* high degree, how can they hope to love their neighbours like that?

Well of course, only people who know Jesus would *want* to love their neighbours like that. The rest of the world are happy to love, hate or be indifferent to others on the basis of how they see them - according to which *category* they seem to belong. Being outside of a relationship with God, they have neither the incentive nor the power to love their neighbours as they love themselves. Paul, though, was writing to Christians - who certainly have every incentive to love as Christ loves. As for the power to carry out this second commandment, it is freely available to us all. If “the God who wants us to succeed” has set us another ‘impossible’ goal, we can be absolutely sure that he will enable us to achieve it - as we rely on him. We can and must see people through the eyes of Christ, because it is fundamental in our relationship with God *and* to the course of our lives - there is no limit to what God can accomplish through us if we have love. God wants us to be people of real love, people who will be at the very heart of his plans and strategies. Our small part in this (as ever) is just willingness and application, and we will later see how God will take this input and empower us to experience heart-felt love for others *and* his best plans for ourselves.

understanding Christ’s second commandment...

Sometimes it seems easier to obey a command if we know why it was issued - though when the order comes from Christ himself, that should be reason enough! But in the case of ‘love your neighbour as yourself’, a few moments consideration of *why* Jesus said it should be very helpful. It will give us a valuable insight into *how* we are going to fulfill it.

The obvious reason Jesus gave us the second commandment is that he wants us to love one another. He wants us to share his point of view - to see people through his eyes. But the second commandment has another important function... *it tells us how we are doing with the first commandment!*

The “first and greatest commandment” is *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”* As we draw close to God and spend more time in his presence, our love for him grows. Through worship and prayer, through quiet contemplation and study of his word, the relationship flourishes. His Holy Spirit works within us - teaching, nurturing and revealing more of the Father’s heart. Yet we do not touch the eternal and remain unchanged: Our very nature is being transformed, and we start to reflect the character of Christ himself. We are becoming the people we were designed to be - people like Jesus. It is new life, and the dominant characteristic of this new life is love... *because it is the dominant characteristic of God himself.* 1 John puts it like this:... *“God is*

love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him." (1 John 4:16-17)

"In this world we are like him" is about *his* character, attitude and motivation developing (and being revealed) within *us*. We are committed to pursuing that relationship with him in which this will happen, and a deepening love of others will flow naturally from this. Our primary means of fulfilling that second commandment, therefore, is our continuing response to the first one. It is loving God which allows us to see others through the eyes of Christ.

In important respects, love is very similar to *faith*: It is essential in our relationship with God; it has limitless potential, and (just as with faith) the more we use it - the more we seem to have! Both love and faith are meant to be *expressed* - they are not notional, they are *practical*. Jesus' ministry was *love in action*, and as his nature develops within us, so our desire and ability to demonstrate his love will grow. But this is not just a process we happily embrace, it is one we can *accelerate*.

We don't have to wait on God's love to so fill our lives that it flows out to others, nor should we. We are far enough along the path of discipleship to begin loving our neighbours straight away. If we don't yet *feel* love for them, that's O.K. - the feelings will follow the actions. It is often said that *'love is not a feeling, it's an act of the will'*, but actually, it is both: We are *choosing* to love, as Christ loves us and as he has commanded...and where there are *actions* associated with love, the feelings won't be far behind.

Love in action can take many forms, and will be tailored to the individual needs of our 'neighbours'. It may include such things as prayer, emotional support, befriending and forgiveness, or perhaps just some practical assistance. Whatever form it takes, if it is a response to God and to the leading of his Holy Spirit, it will be the *right* action. The purpose of this session is not to suggest some of the many ways in which we can show God's love to others, but rather to come to a point where we are ready, willing and able to take every opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ. More than that, to a point where we will *want* to do it, and we will *enjoy* doing it.

people... from God's perspective

We began with some thoughts about *people* - what they are like and how others relate to them. God, of course, doesn't have to form an opinion about what people are like because he knows each one intimately and individually... he has precise knowledge of everyone's heart, mind and thoughts and *still* loves them. But let's take a moment to consider the *individuality* of each person: When God called the prophet Jeremiah to service, he did so with these words, *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."* (Jeremiah 1:5)

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you..." Human life is planned and created by God - nobody is here by chance, even when conception seems accidental from the human perspective. We are known in advance, and the circumstances and timing of our births are likewise known. *They are the explicit choices of God*. We are individually created expressly for eternal relationship with God and, like Jeremiah, we all have specific acts of service to perform. Ephesians sums it up like this: *"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."* (Ephesians 2:10)

agreeing with God

If we are not here at this time by 'chance', we can be sure no-one else is either. So life shouldn't be seen as a series of chance meetings or chance acquaintances - we are **given opportunities**, *prepared in advance, to show the love of God!* Just as the most important thing about any of our circumstances is how we respond to Christ in them, so the priority in dealing with others is that we respond to them with his love. It's a simple process we can start right now... we just **agree with God** and **act upon it**.

What do we agree with God about? We agree that every person we meet is "God's workmanship" individually created for eternal relationship with him. We agree that he has a purpose for them *now*, that he loves them now, and that we should love them now. When we have contact with someone (if only for a little while) they have become our *neighbour*. If there is an opportunity to show God's love for them we should take it, not least because - in demonstrating God's love - we will *experience* that love.

We also agree with God that people are worth putting ourselves out for - that *they are worth any sacrifice*. Real love may sometimes involve a cost, perhaps in time, effort or resources. We can see this in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, where time, effort *and* resources were used to help a stranger. This quality of sacrificial love invites disproportionately great spiritual blessings from our heavenly Father. Often, when love is 'costly', the Christian will experience God's presence profoundly and find joy in a situation others might consider a burden. But if it is an opportunity to be blessed, it is not optional one: We are *commanded* to love. Also, *"in this world, we are like him."* (1 John 4:17) We are starting to reflect the nature of God, in attitude and action, and he has already given us the supreme example of sacrificial love. As Romans, *"But God demonstrated his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* (Romans 5:8)

We agree with God, we adopt his point of view and we see people through the eyes of Christ. *Acting upon it* - loving others - ceases to be a tall order, it becomes just a matter of taking and creating opportunities to express the attitude we now share with God. Love will completely change how we relate to people, and we will enjoy the blessings that it brings. Though it comes from our relationship with God and from adopting his view of humanity, there is (as ever) some input from our side. Our part in the process is to ensure that we *always* have the attitude of love, and we can achieve that with a little application...

practising love - the 'First Thought' principle

It is a fact that the first thought people have when they see someone is likely to dictate how they respond to them. Generally, if they know them, that first thought will be the product of previous encounters - they will instinctively remind themselves of 'where they stand' in relation to that person. Their response will be in keeping with that previously established attitude. If they have never met before, their first thought might be about the other's manner or dress, or something else that makes an impression, but it is still likely to affect their response. Let's consider an example to help us grasp the truth of this: *John* doesn't have a relationship with God. During the course of one day, he meets the following people...

- *Alice*, who he is hoping to 'go steady' with...
- *Mike*, his demanding boss...
- *Bill*, who still hasn't returned his mower...
- *Pete*, a drunk beggar in the shopping mall...
- *Iris*, his mother...
- and *Jane*, the town gossip.

John's first thought on meeting all these people will be predetermined - except in the case of Pete (who he does not know), whose appearance produces a negative response. As he meets them in turn, he will take the same attitude towards them he always has, and his actions will reflect the attitude. And so he will be charming to Alice, polite to Mike, short with Bill, dismissive of Pete, nice to Iris and wary of telling Jane anything he doesn't want the world to know.

Is there anything wrong with having a predetermined 'first thought' about people, and then acting upon it? That all depends on what that first thought *is!*

John's first thoughts - and his responses - are all based on judging people the way the world does. He cannot see these people through the eyes of Christ, because he doesn't *know* Christ. Consequently, he doesn't know what is *really* important about all these people. Alice, for example, was created especially for a relationship with *God*; somewhere in 'Pete the drunk' there lies buried the image of the Almighty - and Jane, for all her faults, is so precious to the Father that Jesus gave his life for her.

"So precious to the Father that Jesus gave his life for her"... or him. If that is our predetermined first thought when we meet someone it changes everything. We are agreeing with God, we are placing his value on the people we meet and we will be able to relate to them as Jesus would - we will be able to *love* them.

taking a 'captive'...

The bible talks about "*taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*" (2 Corinthians 10:5) When we meet others, it is often our first thought that sets the tone for everything that follows - and so it is especially important to make this one worthy of Christ. It needs to reflect *reality*, not the superficial judgment of the world. "This person is so precious to the Father that Jesus gave his life for them" puts people in the only context that matters - it identifies them as people like ourselves, made and loved by God. They are no longer labelled by their job or their actions and so, for example, it is not just the pastor or the taxman or the guy who throws trash over our garden wall that we are looking at... they are far more significant than that. They are unique, custom-designed, purpose-built creations, and their presence on the planet at this exact moment in time is no accident!

This first thought - that a person is so precious to the Father that Jesus gave his life for them - gives even routine meetings a new potential, because it has such positive implications. God loves them, whoever they are and whatever they have done. In consciously thinking about that, we will naturally look for opportunities to express that love...and our own!

Taking that first thought 'captive to Christ' may need a little practice, because we've probably spent most of our lives judging how the world judges. We want the best results, so we should also keep returning to that first thought during our dealings with others - it is, after all, the most important fact about them, whoever they are! It will be richly rewarding : We will relate to people so much better (more like Jesus would) and identify real opportunities to be a blessing to them. For ourselves, we may also find that love in action is the key to *feeling* the love of God flowing through us...and that in embracing the principle *and* the practice of love we, too, are greatly blessed.

Love in action , of course, can take very many forms. It may be something as simple as just having a chat and a cup of coffee with an elderly neighbour. It could mean befriending someone with problems, or perhaps giving practical assistance in whatever ways are necessary. There is probably no limit to the opportunities to 'be a neighbour', especially as

we don't have to stop at those people we already know...we have our whole community to work with!

As people who share Christ's viewpoint, we have much to offer to our wider community. We can bring *his* perspective into a range of voluntary activities - anything from serving on school and hospital boards, through youth-club work and local radio, to citizen's advice and helping to feed the poor. Volunteering will always bring opportunities to represent Jesus to others, but it may also allow us to influence how things get done in our neighbourhood...and any service that is influenced by Christ's love is going to be a *better* service!

Putting it all together - the concepts of step seven

1. Relating to others on the basis of whether they seem good, bad or indifferent (or on the basis of how they feel about us) may be natural, but it is not the Christian response. Neither hatred nor indifference are options for those who follow Jesus, because they have never been options for him. Christ's way is always love, even for those who hate and reject him.

2. Love is the defining characteristic of our heavenly Father, and the hallmark of those who know him... "Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God." (1 John 4:7). Love is also the 'currency' of the kingdom of God as the Apostle Paul tells us, everything we do in Christ's name derives its value from it. Put simply, love is the only meaningful motivation for Christian activity.

Christian love, of course, is more than just a feeling - we choose to love; we choose to **agree with God** and we act upon it. Everybody (whether they know it yet or not) is precious to God, and individually created to experience his love. As Christians, we have already acknowledged that for ourselves, and part of our purpose - our 'good works prepared in advance' - is to demonstrate that love to others.

Jesus is our role model in this, as in everything else: Christ's love is love in action. It does not depend on what response he gets, and it is amazingly and wonderfully indiscriminate - no-one is exempt, not even those considered unlovable by the rest of the world. When it needed to be (and it did) it was **sacrificial** - no cost was too high. This is the quality of love we are called to have for others. We know enough about how God works by now to realise this **isn't** something only 'special' Christians can achieve: For one thing, all Christians are special, and for another, it is **so** achievable God **commands** all of us to love like this!

3. The two commandments. Loving God and other people are really the only requirements for a fulfilling and eternal relationship with our heavenly Father... but they are required! Jesus tells us to love our neighbour, which is anyone we have the opportunity **to be** a neighbour **to** - even those who consider themselves our enemies! The second commandment - 'love your neighbour as yourselves' - tells us how well we are doing with the first commandment - to 'love God...'. We are able to keep the second because we are committed to the first.

As we spend time in his presence and our relationship with God deepens, so we increasingly take on his character as our own - "In this world we are like him." We will **naturally** begin seeing others through the eyes of Christ, we will naturally want to express his love for them... His love, **our** love - they are interchangeable: Any distinction becomes meaningless as we grow into the people we are meant to be - people like Jesus.

Primarily, then, our ability to love others comes from loving God, and allowing him to

transform our attitude towards them. The 'worldly' point of view is replaced by the 'Godly' point of view... we love them because of their creator, not because of their 'performance'. Aside from pursuing our relationship with God, the most significant contribution we can make to this process is to consciously identify people with his love - The 'first thought' principle.

4. Taking the first thought captive. The first thought people generally have when they see someone is either the product of previous meetings (if they know them) or a judgment based on appearance or manner (if they don't). Either way, it is likely to be a major factor in how the encounter develops. 'Capturing' our first thoughts - reminding ourselves that a person is precious to God - is hugely rewarding. As we do this, we are rejecting the world's way of judging people, and we are agreeing with God. We will be open to opportunities to bless them, and to show them God's love. When dealing with those who have been difficult, we will be free of the 'baggage' of the past, because - right at this moment - we are talking to a priceless and unique example of our Father's 'workmanship'. And we want to seize the moment...we want to represent the risen Christ to this person, because God loves them **now**.

Step seven:

Begin to see people, whoever they are and whatever they have done, through the eyes of Christ - as precious to God and worth any sacrifice

- is a major milestone on the path of discipleship. We have seen that loving God really means loving those he has created as well, and that only in the practice of love do we truly fulfill God's requirements. But if love has eternal implications, it also has immediate ones - for those we meet and for ourselves. We want a dynamic faith, and to be eligible for all God has for us - we want Jesus to make a difference *in* us, and *through* us. Let's commit ourselves to the principle - and the practice - of *love*.

A prayer of commitment

Heavenly Father,

I thank you for your love. I thank you that Jesus died for me personally - yet not just for me, but for each person you have created. Father, I want to love as he loves... as *you* love. I want to love passionately and indiscriminately, not judging as the world does. I want to love even when it is costly. I am already committed to my relationship with you, but I choose now to extend my love to those I meet, even as you love them. I ask for your power to do your will in this matter, for your help in remembering that each person is precious to you, and for opportunities to be a blessing to my neighbours. I ask for the power to faithfully represent your Son in my community.

In his name, Amen.

comments and questions for the group meeting

the journal...continued

Morning Prayer

Before doing anything else, a short time of prayer containing the following elements: Thanks to God for who He is, what Jesus has done, and for His love and provision (including the new day). Commit the day to Him, asking for His protection and presence.

Through the day

Involve God in your daily life, seeking His guidance in situations as they arise, and endeavour to respond to people as you believe Jesus would.

In the evening

Set aside a little time, every evening, to pray, complete your journal and consider the readings. Prayer should include thanksgiving, repentance, prayer for others and for yourself - particularly that God's perfect will should be completely fulfilled in your life. Pray for each member of your group (by name). Matters arising through the day, personal situations or difficulties should also be brought before God. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you in your prayers, and be open to His leading.

Day One

The Main Event

What event during the day stands out in your mind, and why?

What do you think/feel about that 'event'?

Were you able to involve God in what was happening?

How did your relationship with God affect your reaction to this event?

Did you respond as you think Jesus would have, in a similar situation?

Is there anything, on reflection, you might have done differently?

You and God

Have you spoken to God at times through the day?

Have you been aware of His presence with you?

In what way has being a Christian made a difference to your day?

Bible Reading - Matthew 22:36-40

What do you think/feel when you read these words?

Something to think about... *God is love. In giving us the capacity to love, God shared with us part of the divine nature. Love is the highest and most noble attribute the human race can aspire to, it is what we were designed for - it is the meaning of life.*

Day Two

The Main Event

What event during the day stands out in your mind, and why?

What do you think/feel about that 'event'?

Were you able to involve God in what was happening?

How did your relationship with God affect your reaction to this event?

Did you respond as you think Jesus would have, in a similar situation?

Is there anything, on reflection, you might have done differently?

You and God

Have you spoken to God at times through the day?

Have you been aware of His presence with you?

In what way has being a Christian made a difference to your day?

Bible Reading - 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

What do you think/feel when you read these words?

Something to think about... *God loves everybody. Seeing people through the eyes of Christ is just embracing that concept - agreeing with God and acting upon it. Loving others is so essential in our relationship with God that he commands it.*

Day Three

The Main Event

What event during the day stands out in your mind, and why?

What do you think/feel about that 'event'?

Were you able to involve God in what was happening?

How did your relationship with God affect your reaction to this event?

Did you respond as you think Jesus would have, in a similar situation?

Is there anything, on reflection, you might have done differently?

You and God

Have you spoken to God at times through the day?

Have you been aware of His presence with you?

In what way has being a Christian made a difference to your day?

Bible reading - Romans 12:14-18

What do you think/feel when you read these words?

Something to think about... *Sacrificial love invites disproportionately great spiritual blessings from our heavenly Father. Often, when love is 'costly', the Christian will experience God's presence profoundly and find joy in a situation others might consider a burden.*

Day Four

The Main Event

What event during the day stands out in your mind, and why?

What do you think/feel about that 'event'?

Were you able to involve God in what was happening?

How did your relationship with God affect your reaction to this event?

Did you respond as you think Jesus would have, in a similar situation?

Is there anything, on reflection, you might have done differently?

You and God

Have you spoken to God at times through the day?

Have you been aware of His presence with you?

In what way has being a Christian made a difference to your day?

Bible reading - Matthew 7:1-2

What do you think/feel when you read these words?

Something to think about... *'Capturing' our first thoughts - reminding ourselves that a person is precious to God - is hugely rewarding. As we do this, we are rejecting the world's way of judging people, and we are agreeing with God.*

Day Five

The Main Event

What event during the day stands out in your mind, and why?

What do you think/feel about that 'event'?

Were you able to involve God in what was happening?

How did your relationship with God affect your reaction to this event?

Did you respond as you think Jesus would have, in a similar situation?

Is there anything, on reflection, you might have done differently?

You and God

Have you spoken to God at times through the day?

Have you been aware of His presence with you?

In what way has being a Christian made a difference to your day?

Bible reading - John 3:16-17

What do you think/feel when you read these words?

Something to think about... *We have seen that loving God really means loving those he has created as well, and that only in the practice of love do we truly fulfill God's requirements. But if love has eternal implications, it also has immediate ones - for those we meet and for ourselves.*

Day Six - The weekly review

In your relationship with God, what has been the highlight of the week?

What have you found most challenging or difficult?

Have you been aware of God's care for you this week?

Has God intervened in your life - answers to prayer etc.?

Have you been able to pray consistently throughout the week?

Can you think of any areas in your relationship with God that could be improved and, if so, how are you going to tackle them?

In times of trouble or temptation, how easy is it for you to seek the help of

a) God

b) other Christians?

What has been the most encouraging aspect of this past week?

PREPARATION FOR THE EIGHTH SESSION

Please prepare for the eighth session by *prayerfully* reading the next chapter, noting down any comments or questions that you'd like to bring up in the group.