



Group Life Leader's Discussion Guide

Date: 5/25/2025

Sermon Title: What does sacrificial love look like in action?

Scripture: John 15:12-17

Gathering:

As you gather with one another be sure to greet each other and check-in. Ask and inquire from group members how their week has gone? Share that we will close with prayer requests at the end of group today.

OPENING PRAYER (Group leader or someone prays this prayer to open or create a similar prayer.)

Gracious and loving God, You are the source of all love, and You have shown us the depths of that love through Jesus Christ, who laid down His life for us. As we gather in Your presence, open our hearts and minds to understand more fully what it means to love sacrificially. Guide our conversation, deepen our faith, and help us to reflect Your love in our actions each day. - Amen.

Opening Question:

1. What barriers do you face in cultivating deep, Christ-centered friendships, and how can you overcome them?

Digging into the Word:

1. Read aloud John 15:12–17 (NRSV). What initial insights or thoughts do you have?
2. In verses 12-13, Jesus says to “love one another as I have loved you.” What do you think He means by “as I have loved you”?
3. Verse 13 describes “laying down one’s life.” What forms might that take today beyond literal death? In the context of that time of Jesus and now in our modern context?
4. How does Jesus redefine the concept of friendship in verses 14-15? Is that a new perspective for you?

Further Reading:

5. Read Philippians 2:5–8, Romans 5:6–8, and 1 John 3:16-18. How do these supporting scriptures help expand or clarify your understanding of Jesus' sacrificial love?

Wesleyan Perspective:

John Wesley wrote in his *Notes on the New Testament* about John 15:13: "To lay down one's life: this does not merely mean to die, but to live wholly for others, with no regard to oneself." He also taught that **perfect love**—the goal of sanctification—"is the love of God and neighbor ruling the heart and life."

6. Wesley believed that Christian perfection meant growing in love. What does it mean for you to grow in love that is self-giving and sacrificial?

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7. How does our Methodist emphasis on both personal holiness and social holiness challenge us to live out sacrificial love?

Sermon Questions:

8. Pastor Allison mentioned a server who said, "We choose to practice our faith at home." What are your thoughts on practicing faith in isolation versus in community? What are the benefits and challenges of a solo faith or community centric faith?
9. How does Jesus' command to 'love one another as I have loved you' challenge our modern concepts of friendship and community?
10. How have you experienced competition or comparison in your faith journey? How has this affected your relationships within the church community?
11. The sermon mentions "church hurt" as a reason some people avoid faith communities. Have you or someone you know experienced this? How can we, as a community, address and heal from these experiences?
12. Jesus called his disciples friends and modeled sacrificial love. How does this impact your understanding of friendship within the context of faith?
13. Jesus chose to have friends during His earthly ministry. How does this impact your view of friendship's role in spiritual growth and discipleship?
14. Pastor Allison stated, "Friendship is essential for a life of faith." Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Applying it:

15. What does it mean to you personally to 'lay down one's life for one's friends' in everyday contexts?
16. How has technology impacted our ability to form and maintain authentic friendships? Are there ways we can use technology to enhance rather than hinder our faith-based friendships?
17. In what ways can we create spaces and opportunities within FUMCR for deeper, more vulnerable connections to form?

CLOSING PRAYER (Be sure to share any prayer requests or praises and have someone close in prayer.)

Holy and gracious God, Thank You for the love You have shown us in Jesus Christ—love that gave everything. Help us to walk in that love, to live it out in the choices we make and the relationships we hold dear. May our lives reflect the love that lays itself down, not only in words but in deeds. As we go from this place, empower us by Your Spirit to love as Jesus loves. In His name we pray, Amen.

WAYS TO RESPOND (or challenges for you this week)

1. Take time to examine any competitive or comparative thoughts you have about others. Journal about how you can shift these thoughts to be more loving and supportive.
2. Make a list of your close friends. Reflect on how these friendships support your faith journey. Are there areas where you could deepen these connections?