



Dear LifeGroup Leader,

This weeks LifeGroup Note gets a little personal.

This week is about loving each other. While it sounds flowery and nice on the outside, the truth is, healing love takes some pretty intense work.

I often see married couples for therapy, and let me tell you - it's no walk in the park to help people love each other deeply. In fact, it's some of the hardest work I've done is to help them overcome their patterns to connect in a more genuine way.

Why is this? Well often we assume that a lack of love is just that: a LACK. Let me tell you, there's no "lack" of anything. In fact many many chaotic emotions and meanings and thoughts are present. There's an awful lot of gunk in the way that keeps us from connecting in a direct way.

The same is true of your LifeGroup. Sometimes in group we bump up against (not a lack of, but) the presence of pretty old and powerful emotions that can have a life of their own. When someone is asked a personal question, instead of leaning into their small, sad feeling, they divert and tell their husband to share. When someone is overwhelmed, they skip group to come back when they're more collected.

That's why I suggest for you to talk about your "tells" with each other. My hope is that by talking about the ways we hide, we're able to open up space for healing love.

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## Imagination

### Imagine the Possibilities

Imagination is our ability to clearly envision a specific reality. Without imagination, we're caught in "the way things are", the status quo, the cultural milieu. But what if we were to allow ourselves to clearly envision a new way of being, a new way of relating, a new way of living in our world together? John asks us to imagine a new and radical way of loving others, which involves being aware and empathetic to circles of relationships around us. When we are deeply aware of ourselves and our friends, we open up the possibility of deep relationship and healing love.

**FOCAL POINT:** Awareness opens ourselves to healing relationships.



### Getting Started

Catch up together about how your week has been, possibly also revisit last week's meeting.

- ▶ When was a moment you realized the world was bigger than you thought?



### Exploring Scripture

Read the following passage together.

1 John 4:7-12

- ▶ Where do you hear God's heart in this passage?
- ▶ What words or phrases stick out to you?



## Reflection

Take time to reflect together about the passage.

- ▶ John makes bold statements about what it means when we love others, and what it means when we don't. How is this different from other ways you've learned to think about faithfulness and the Christian life?
- ▶ What obstacles are currently in your life that keep you from loving others more or from living in greater love?



## Praxis

With the understanding that we gathered here are the body of Christ, let's allow the truth from today's scripture to impact us as a LifeGroup.

- ▶ As Dave spoke about on Sunday, one foundational component of love is the ability to be situationally aware - the ability to empathetically read others and their emotional state, and to respond with care. For many of us, this is difficult, not just because we have trouble being aware, but because there is a strong tendency for us to conceal our emotional or spiritual state from others. Let's talk about this component as an effort to learn to read each other more lovingly.
  - ▶ What "tells" do you have when you're anxious or overwhelmed? How would we know if you are? What about when you're angry or sad?
  - ▶ What usually keeps you from sharing more difficult emotions in here? What do you fear would happen if you did?
  - ▶ In the effort to help us practice loving each other, is there anyone who would like to share something difficult that happened this week that we could care for together and lift up in prayer?



## Moving Outward

Challenge each other to live out God's truth this week.

- ▶ Ask a family member what their "tells" are when they have a difficult emotion.

## 1 John 4:7-12

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Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.