



The 4Cs Kingdom Life: Christ, Connection, Care, Community
Care: “Compassionate” - I John 3:11-24
Week of October 24, 2021

Opening Questions

- Tell about a time when the Body of Christ met your need in a specific way. Or share a time when you were able to meet someone else’s need in a particular way.
- Why is it important to be able to receive as well as to give?

Prayer (from Colossians 1:9-12)

God, as we come together to study your Word, we ask you to fill us with the knowledge of your will. Thank you for the Holy Spirit who is here with us to help us understand how to live a life that pleases you in every way. Show us the good works you have for us to do and strengthen us with power to live as your holy people. We pray in the name of Jesus who redeemed us and brought us into your kingdom. Amen.

Introduction

Rachel Held Evans, before her untimely death in 2019 at age 37, had become a celebrated author and a voice for those struggling with many aspects of traditional evangelical Christianity. In a Sunday morning blog post from July 2012, she writes from the perspective of her own struggle with the local church. As she notes various issues and wonders about whether she will again find a worshiping community where she can belong, she keeps coming back to this question, “Who will bring casseroles when I have a baby?”

At first glance, this might seem trivial to us. People’s needs, even those in our own faith community, can be deep. And yet, it is a most profound observation about what the people of God are meant to be for each other. We are the casserole-bakers who see a need and seek to meet it as a response of love for God and for one another.

The author of I John (most likely the same John who wrote the gospel) makes it clear that no one can say they love God and hate their brother at the same time. True love of God works itself out in community with fellow believers. John also makes it clear that this love cannot be in words only, but must be demonstrated in practical, material, physical ways.

And this is how we know that God lives in us. We lay down our lives for one another. And sometimes we make and deliver casseroles.

Read I John 3:11-24

Exploring the Text

- John begins this passage with the difficult illustration of Cain who murdered his brother Abel. Then he goes on to say that anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer. This is a harsh condemnation, but one that echoes Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. Look at Matthew 5:21-24. What can we learn here about how to deal with a broken relationship with a fellow believer?
- What is the quality of the love that Jesus Christ has for us and the kind of love we are to have for one another?
- What does it mean to "lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters?"
- How would you define what it means to practice compassion? If it is more than just a feeling towards another person, what actions might it prompt?
- John talks about our hearts being at rest in God's presence. He says that this comes from keeping God's commands and doing what is pleasing to God. And what pleases God is that we believe in Jesus and love one another. Sounds simple, right? Then why is it so hard sometimes? What can help guide our hearts to greater love for one another?
- What are some practical ways our faith community can practice greater love?

Closing Prayer

Depending on the needs/desires of your group here are some options:

- Ask one or two group members to close the group in prayer.
- Pray the Lord's prayer together aloud:

"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen."

Preparation for next week:

Make a plan for your time together next week. Brainstorm some ideas for caring in our own faith community. Who needs some special attention? How can we collectively respond to that need? Think about gathering materials and working on something together next week.

Sources:

- <https://rachelheldevans.com/blog/sunday-morning>
 - Johannine Letters: 1, 2, and 3 John, The New Testament In Its World, N.T. Wright/Michael F. Bird, 2019
-