

Week 2: Walk in Love

1. What stood out to you from the message this past Sunday? Was there anything that seemed timely or relevant to you? Was there anything which made you uncomfortable, or with which you disagreed?
2. In Ephesians 1:1 the writer addresses their readers as “holy” (or “saints” in some translations). The meaning behind this word is “set apart.” How could a sense of being set apart have a positive impact on a community? How could it have an unhealthy impact? In what ways do you feel set apart and how does that play out in your own life?
3. Read Ephesians 3:14-19. What does this passage tell us about how to walk in the way of love? How could you practically participate in this more? Now read Ephesians 4:1-6. What does this passage tell us about how to walk in the way of love? What does it look like? How could you practically participate in this more?
4. In Ephesians 4:20-24 the writer talks about the “old self” and the “new self.” Some spiritual thinkers (like Thomas Merton) have used the terms “false self” and “true self” for these matters. Which of these terms do you find most helpful? What do they mean to you and how are they significant in your own life? How might verse 23 (“be made new in the attitude of your minds”) relate to what you read in Ephesians 3:14-19 above? How might verse 24 (“put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness”) relate to what you read in Ephesians 4:1-6 above?
5. Read Ephesians 5:21-6:9. What do you find inspiring about this passage and why? What do you find alarming or disturbing about this passage and why? How do you think an understanding of the first century cultural context of the writer should influence the way we interpret this passage? How does this make you feel about the way to approach scripture as a whole? In what ways is it helpful? In what ways is it uncomfortable?
6. Look more specifically at Ephesians 5:21-33. What evidence do you see for a positive dynamic towards inclusivity and equality? What evidence do you see of patriarchy, exclusion, and inequality? How might the positive dynamic influence and challenge us to respond to the patriarchy, exclusion, and inequality in the passage? How might this influence the way we approach scripture as a whole?
7. Take some time alone to reflect on the following personal questions:
 - What are you doing to consciously experience union with the risen Christ?
 - How does your view of self and others need to change?
 - With whom are you resistant to deference and why?
 - Where do you need to take the pain and hurt you carry?

Then break into smaller groups of 2 or 3 (or stay together as a larger group if that feels appropriate) and each share the one area where you feel most challenged to act. Then spend some time praying for one another.

Practice for the week: Walk in Love

Make a point this week of consciously walking in the way of love. Start each day by reading the scriptures below. Invite God's spirit to reset how you see yourself and others and to refocus you on opportunities to practice the way of love throughout the day. Specifically, look out for opportunities where you can use words and actions to bring unity and inclusion. Be aware of moments when you feel competitive, controlling, or the urge to get your own way. Intentionally adopt a posture of deference and generosity instead.

Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ephesians 5:1-2 (NIV)

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:1-6 (NIV)