"The New Community People"

John 13:34-35

STRENGTH for the Journey with Joe Stowell
Part of the RBC family of Ministries

Group Study Introduction

Use the following questions and exercises as your group time allows. Feel free to skip one or more questions in each section as necessary. If you have less then thirty minutes for group discussion, we recommend skipping the "Getting Started" section. Be sure to save time for prayer at the end of your meeting, using the "Strength through Prayer" section.

Getting Started:

Joe Stowell begins this series of messages with the words to a well-known song: "What the world needs now is love, sweet love; it's the only thing that's there's just too little of."

- What was your favorite love song when you were a teenager?
- What is your favorite love song now?
- Do you even care about love songs?

Strength through Scripture:

Open your Bibles to John 13 and have a volunteer read verses 34–35 out loud.

1. What is the added significance of the fact that Jesus gave this new command to love one another right before He went to the cross?

2. What is the difference between the world's love and the new community's love? How would you describe the difference?

3. If you're really honest, does the command to love others feel like just another heavy rule in your life?

Notes:

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. John 13:34

© 2006 Strength for the Journey

"The New Community People"

John 13:34-35

STRENGTH for the Journey with Joe Stowell

Part of the RBC family of Ministries

4. What difference does it make to see the command to love one another as one of the boundaries in our lives that comes from God?

5. What is it about your church that makes people feel safe? How do you contribute to that sense of safety?

Digging Deeper:

If your group has enough time (i.e., you've listened to the audio on your own), answer one or more of these optional questions.

1. What is the significant difference between the old commandment—"Love your neighbor as you love yourself"—and the new commandment—"Love one another, as I [Christ] have loved you"?

2. Joe states that the new central ethic of love runs consistently through the whole New Testament. What other New Testament passages come to your mind? If you need some suggestions, look up Matthew 5:43–48; 1 Corinthians 13; and John 21:1–17.

3. Have one member of the group read Matthew 22:34–40 out loud. What does Joe mean when he says that if we love, everything else takes care of itself?

Strength through Sharing:

1. Joe notes, "There's something settled, something comfortable, something take-a-deep-breath-and-relax about the word safe." How "safe" do you feel in your spiritual community?

2. How would you answer the question in the "Call to Action" below?

Notes:

© 2006 Strength for the Journey

"The New Community People"

John 13:34-35

STRENGTH for the Journey with Joe Stowell

Part of the RBC family of Ministries

Strength through Prayer:

Spend a few moments as a group in silent, personal prayer. Thank God that being a new creation person also makes you a new community person.

You may want to begin your prayer with these words:

"Thank You, Lord Jesus, that instead of this world's cheap, degrading 'love' that actually brings harm, I can receive Your pure, undefiled, liberating, all-encompassing love. May I drink deeply of Your love, and share it with others. May my church be a body of believers who love one another as You have loved us—a place where people sense that something is different and where every person can feel safe."

When you are finished with this time for silent, personal prayer, you may want to move into a time of group prayer, praying for one another.

Closing Call to Action:

In what way could you today, and in the next week, take the love of Jesus to someone in such a way that they feel safe with you, feel that they can trust you, and feel that you are an anchor to their soul? Pray about it and ask God to give you an experience of sharing the love of the new community that Jesus has designed for those of us who are new creation people.

The love of Christ for us has made us feel safe with Him for perfect love casts out all fear.

Notes:

© 2006 Strength for the Journey