

Series Title: 'No Greater Love'

Primary Aim: *Our aim is to grow a deeper intimacy with the God of love and allowing that love to overflow through our lives. We would also like to wrestle with the following questions: (1) Is God's love conditional, unconditional or both? (2) How can we share God's love to a lost world? (3) What is it going to take for us to develop a better understanding of God's love at the level of our heads AND hearts? (4) How do we reconcile God's love with God's wrath?*

1. The Nature of Love: He first loved us

Passages: 1 Corinthians 13, 1 John 4:7-21 and Example: the Sinful woman in Luke 7

Blurb: It is God's nature to love because He is the source of Love. Spending some time thinking about what love is like (looking at Biblical usage and esp. Agape love) we will talk about what it means to love because God first loved us. A great example of this is the sinful woman who washed Jesus' feet with her hair – an act of love in response to the love she had received.

2. God's love never fails: The sufficiency of God's Love

Passages: Romans 5:1-11, 8:31-39 and Example: Hosea in Hosea 1-3

Blurb: The Bible is God's big love story and consistently shows us that God's love is unending and it endures for ever. God's love is seen in creation and in God's response to our repeated cycle of sin. Ultimately it is seen through Jesus' sacrifice for us at the cross and in eternity we will enjoy an intimate relationship with Himself and with one another. A fantastic picture of this is Hosea and the picture of God's love God asks him to live out through his own life.

3. Remembering our First love: Misdirected love and Self-protection

Passages: 1 John 2:15-17, 1 Tim 6:1-10, 2 Tim 3:1-9 and Example of Demas (2 Tim 4:10) or the Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10:17-31)

Blurb: In contrast to the Great Commandment to love God with all of our heart, soul, soul and strength and to love our neighbour as ourselves there are in fact many things that we 'love' (e.g. money, power, pleasure, ourselves, the best places to sit and the world). We will also think about what the Opposite of love is (i.e. self-protection) and how that impacts our ability to love others. Good examples of this are Demas "who loved the world" and the Rich Young Ruler who went away sad because of his love of the idols in his own life.

4. Searching for Love: The good news about Sex

Passages: Ephesians 5, Song of Songs and Example: Woman at the Well (John 4:1-26)

Blurb: Society often talks about a sexualised, me-centred notion of love that is often seen as the ultimate pursuit of life; All we need is love. The Bible presents Sex and marriage as a picture of the and relationship of love that we have with God. We will also consider the role of love in our wider relationships; e.g. Eph 4:2,15 & Gal 5:6, 13-14, 22. One example of this is the woman at the well who had invested herself in 6 men until she found what she was really looking for: Jesus.

5. The Triumph of Love: Overcoming fear and failure

Passages: Isaiah 41, 1 John 4:16-18, 1 Pet 4:8 and Example: Peter (Matthew 14:13-21 & John 21)

Blurb: There are many reasons why we struggle with fear but the Bible says that Perfect love drives out fear. So often we are motivated not by love but by fear. Sadly our daily experience is also one of failure as we wrestle with the desires of our sinful nature. Again the Bible is clear that love covers over a multitude of sins. These themes of fear and failure are beautifully illustrated in the life of Peter to whom Jesus asks three times 'Do you love me'.

6. Compelled by Love: Responding in action and obedience

Passages: John 14:15-31, 15:9-17, 1 John 3:16-20 and Example: The Good Samaritan (Luke 10)

Blurb: God's love always demands a response from us. We will consider what it might mean for us to remain in God's love and respond to such love in obedience. This kind of self-sacrificing agape love is always active, practical and outward looking. Such love reaches beyond our Christian communities to give itself to a broken and lost world. An example of such practical love is the good Samaritan who overcome cultural prejudices to respond to immediate need with love.