

Week 4: God's Love with Skin On

Key Verses:

John 1:14

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Ephesians 3:16-19

¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Idea:

[Jesus'] incarnation provides us with the clearest possible picture of what God's love looks like in human form. Have you ever wondered why Jesus didn't simply turn up to Earth as an adult human and immediately go to the cross to die for our sins? Why did he bother to be born as a frail baby and live among us for 33 years before carrying out his ultimate mission? The answer is that his substitutional atonement was only part of his mission (albeit the most important component). Another key part of his mission was to show us what a life of love and obedience looks like – and he took 33 years to do it! Jesus is the literal embodiment of God's love in human form, and he calls us to follow in his footsteps. [Page 39-40]

Significantly, as Jesus' earthly ministry neared its end, he gave this exhortation to his followers: "Love one another as I have loved you." (John 13:34) It is a well-known verse, often quoted. But have you ever stopped to consider how profound it is? It infers that love was the predominant characteristic of Jesus' life. He does not say, 'lead as I have led you.' He does not say, 'teach as I have taught you.' He does not say, 'remain pure as I have remained pure'. He says, "love as I have loved you". It is a bold statement to make. In Jesus' mind, love is the thing that has most strongly characterised his life and ministry. [Page 41]

Reflect:

- When you think of everything that Jesus did during His time on earth, what particular things stand out most to you? And Why? Was it things he said, things he did or something about him (character and nature)?
- Have different members of the group read the following passages: Colossians 1:15 then 19-20; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Hebrews 1:3. What primary description of Jesus is given in each of these passages and what does it mean? What act of Jesus do each of these passages point to as the supreme example of this? What does this say about the character of the Father and Jesus?

- Read Matthew 14:6-14. What does this teach us about the compassion and love of Jesus? What is particularly remarkable about the compassion of Jesus on this occasion? What implications does this have for us, as we seek to emulate the love of Jesus to a needy world?
- Can you think of a time when you most clearly experienced 'God's love with skin on' – a time when the love of God was most clearly demonstrated to you through the actions of others? How significant was this for you? Take a moment to thank God for that person.
- Bec introduced a Jewish practice called 'Dayenu'. Translated: "It would have been enough". It's a song of gratitude in response to what God has done. At the centre of our faith is Jesus' incarnation, death and resurrection which has atoned for sin and provided the opportunity for us to experience a relationship with God. You may like to write your own version of Dayenu or song of gratitude. Jesus, if you had only done X and not done Y for me "it would have been enough".
- As we reflect with gratitude on the love that God has shown us in so many areas, we reminded in John 13:34 that we are called to love one another as Jesus has loved us. Is there someone who you can embody Jesus' love to? Someone that you can be God with Skin On in a moment of need?

Pray:

Share prayer needs. Are you or someone you know in need of God's compassionate love at the moment? Pray for them. Give thanks for the extraordinary sacrificial love of Jesus for us. Ask that we might better reflect God's compassion and love to others.