

LEADER GUIDE — FORMED BY THE GOSPEL

SESSION 2:3 | LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Overview for Leaders

This session centers on John 13:34–35 and Jesus’ command to love one another as He has loved us. The video contrasts cultural definitions of love often reduced to acceptance, approval, or avoiding offense with the love Jesus embodied through service, patience, truth, restoration, and sacrifice. John 13 places the command in the context of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet, including Peter, Thomas, Matthew, and Judas. The session then connects Jesus’ command to the New Testament “one another” commands that describe how gospel-formed community actually practices love. This session guards against three dangers: 1) defining love outside of Jesus, 2) reducing love to the areas where we are strong, and 3) avoiding people when love starts to cost us something.

Big Idea

Gospel-formed community loves one another as Jesus has loved us: a costly, serving, patient, truthful, forgiving love that reveals we are His disciples.

Your Role as Leader

Create space for honest reflection without letting the conversation become vague or sentimental. People may have strong assumptions about love, judgment, offense, forgiveness, truth, or church relationships. Keep returning to the source: Jesus defines love by His own life, death, and resurrection. Help the group see that the “one another” commands are not optional personality traits; they are the spokes that give structure to life together. Your goal is to help people name where they naturally love well, where their love is selective or partial, and what one concrete act of Christlike love looks like this week.

Session Flow – *Adjust as Needed*

- Icebreaker
- Scripture Engagement (reading + context)
- Discussion (10 questions) — 40–45 min
- Application Challenge — 5 min
- Prayer & Reflection — 10 min
- Announcements — 2 min

Key Scriptures

- John 13:34–35
- John 13:1–17
- Matthew 22:37–40
- Colossians 3:12–14
- Romans 12:9–10
- 1 John 4:7–12

LEADER NOTES, GROUP QUESTIONS, & COMMENTARY

(Use these notes to frame discussion and connect themes)

Icebreaker Purpose – Surface assumptions about love, acceptance, offense, sacrifice, and what people expect from community. Suggested options:

- What is a small act of love you have never forgotten?
- When people say “love means...,” what definitions do you hear most often in our culture?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jesus Defines Love – Read: John 13:34–35

Question: Jesus calls us to love one another “as I have loved you.” What makes His definition of love different from cultural definitions built mainly on acceptance, approval, or avoiding offense?

Leader Insight: Not all definitions of love are equal. Jesus does not let culture, preference, or fear of offense define love; He defines love by Himself.

Cue: Start with the source. Ask: “Who gets to define love for disciples of Jesus?”

2. Love Takes the Form of Service – Read: John 13:1–17; 13:34

Question: Why does Jesus give this command right after washing the disciples’ feet? What does His example show us about love?

Leader Insight: Jesus’ command is not abstract. He kneels, serves, and gives a tangible picture of the cleansing and sacrificial love He will complete through the cross and resurrection.

Cue: Keep this concrete. Love is not merely a feeling; it moves toward people in humble service.

3. As I Have Loved You – Read: John 13:34; Romans 5:6–8

Question: How does Jesus’ sacrificial love shape the way believers are called to love when it becomes costly or inconvenient?

Leader Insight: Jesus loves at great cost. He moves toward the weak, the doubting, the sinful, and even His enemy. Gospel love is not shallow, convenient, or self-protective.

Cue: Let people name where love costs them something: time, pride, comfort, forgiveness, or control.

4. The Mark of Discipleship – Read: John 13:35

Question: Why would love among believers be the mark by which the world knows we are Jesus’ disciples?

Leader Insight: The world should be able to see the love of Jesus embodied in His people. Our love is not the Gospel itself, but it is meant to make our discipleship visible.
Cue: Avoid image-management answers. Ask what our actual relationships reveal.

5. Bearing With and Forgiving – Read: Colossians 3:13; Ephesians 4:32

Question: Where is it hardest to bear with, forgive, and show compassion to one another when love starts to cost us something?

Leader Insight: Love often breaks down when people are difficult, wounds are real, or offense lingers. The Gospel forms us into people who forgive because we have been forgiven in Christ.

Cue: Handle carefully. Forgiveness is not pretending sin did not happen; it is refusing to let offense become lord.

6. Honor Above Self – Read: Romans 12:10; Philippians 2:3–4

Question: What does it look like to honor one another above ourselves instead of defining love by our own preferences?

Leader Insight: Selective love often centers our own comfort and preferred strengths. Christlike love moves us to value others, consider their good, and refuse to make preference the measure of love.

Cue: Invite ordinary examples from group life: listening, scheduling, serving, celebrating, yielding, or initiating.

7. Truth and Love Together – Read: Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 4:15

Question: How can teaching, admonishing, or speaking truth become unloving? How can love become shallow without truth?

Leader Insight: Truth without love becomes harsh and self-protective. Love without truth becomes thin and sentimental. Jesus forms His people to live both grace and truth together.

Cue: Challenge both ditches. Do not let truth-tellers excuse harshness or peacekeepers excuse avoidance.

8. Serve and Carry Burdens – Read: Galatians 5:13; Galatians 6:2

Question: What does it mean to serve one another and carry one another's burdens in ordinary church and group life?

Leader Insight: Love is visible in practical weight-bearing. The "one another" commands move love from intention to embodied action.

Cue: Push for concrete examples: meals, rides, prayer, showing up, childcare, listening, generosity, follow-up.

9. Confession, Prayer, and Acceptance – Read: James 5:16; Romans 15:7

Question: Why do confession, prayer, and acceptance require courage and humility in a gospel-formed community?

Leader Insight: We need to receive love from one another, not only give it in the areas where we feel strong. Confession and prayer expose our need; acceptance reflects the welcome of Christ.

Cue: Protect safety. Encourage honesty without forcing public vulnerability beyond wisdom.

10. What Does Your Love Reveal? – Read: John 13:34–35; 1 John 3:16–18

Question: The manuscript asks, “What does your love for one another reveal?” Where might your love be selective, partial, or shallow, and where is Jesus inviting growth?

Leader Insight: Jesus gives a complete picture of love. We do not get to pick only the parts that fit our temperament. Gospel formation keeps growing us into the love of Christ.

Cue: Land the plane with one specific “one another” practice for this week.

APPLICATION

(Leader Version)

Application Focus: This application is about helping people examine whether their love is shaped by Jesus or by personal preference, fear of offense, comfort, or strength areas. The goal is not to make people feel generally guilty; it is to help each person name one “one another” command where Jesus is inviting growth and then take one concrete step of costly, visible love.

Leader Tip: Ask: “Which one another command comes least naturally to you right now, and what is one concrete way you will practice it this week?”

Examples:

- Service: Moving toward someone with practical help instead of staying comfortable
- Forgiveness: Bearing with someone rather than rehearsing offense
- Honor: Choosing another person’s good above your own preference
- Truth and Love: Speaking honestly with humility, patience, and grace
- Prayer: Confessing need and praying with someone instead of staying hidden
- Burden-Bearing: Following through with presence, encouragement, or practical care

Group Prayer Time at End:

- A deeper understanding of Jesus’ costly love for us
- Repentance where our love has been selective, shallow, or self-protective
- Courage to forgive, serve, confess, pray, and carry burdens
- Wisdom to hold truth and love together without arrogance or avoidance
- A visible love that shows the world we belong to Jesus

Close with: “Jesus, teach us to love one another as You have loved us. Make our love patient, costly, truthful, forgiving, and visible so the world can see that we belong to You. Amen.”

Leader Follow-Up Midweek

1. Name the One Another: Ask which command they are practicing and what is making it difficult.
2. Encourage Costly Love: Invite one concrete act of service, forgiveness, prayer, honor, or burden-bearing.
3. Gospel Reframe: Remind them that we love because Jesus first loved us and is forming us into His kind of people.