

Possible Open Question to get us started

- What's one small thing someone has done recently that made you feel loved or cared for?

Invite everyone to think of a time when someone made them feel cared for or loved. It doesn't need to be a big gesture!

(People can also pass, or share a general example rather than something personal)

Key thought: *Grace received becomes love expressed.*

Today, we'll reflect on the love God has shown us in Jesus and how receiving that love can shape the way we love others.

Love lies at the heart of the rhythms of grace. We begin not with what we do for God, but with what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. Jesus gave himself for us, bearing our sin and death so that we might be forgiven and brought into peace with God.

God continues to pour his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. His love assures us that we belong to him, holds us through difficult times, and gives us hope for the life to come. As we receive this love, it begins to shape the way we love others.

Read Romans 5:1–8 *Loved before we could earn it*

In the reading, notice a word or phrase that stands out to you.

- What do you notice about what God gives us through Jesus?
- Which part of this passage feels especially encouraging or challenging today?
- Paul says God's love is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. What might that mean in everyday life?
- How does knowing Christ died for us "while we were still sinners" shape the way we see ourselves?

Paul describes the gifts we receive through faith in Jesus: peace with God, access to his grace, hope, and the presence of the Holy Spirit. God's love has been poured into our hearts, and its clearest expression is that Christ died for us while we were still sinners.

Before moving to the next reading, take a minute or two in quiet. Let this question speak to you personally. There's no need to share your response; simply make space to listen for God.

Where might you need to receive God's love more deeply at the moment?

1 John 4:7–21 — Love that flows from God

Notice what John says about where love begins and where it leads.

- What do you learn about God's love from this passage?
- What difference does it make to hear that God loved us first?
- John connects loving God with loving others. Why do you think he sees these as inseparable?
- What can make it difficult to love someone in practice?

John takes us to the source of love: "God is love." God showed his love by sending Jesus so that we could have life through him. We don't love in order to earn God's love; we love because God loved us first. That love becomes visible in how we treat one another.

As before, take a minute or two in quiet. Let this question speak to you personally. You don't need to share your response; simply make space to listen for God.

How might receiving God's love help you take one small step towards someone you find difficult to love?

Bringing it together

Grace is God's love received as a gift. Love shared is one way that gift takes root and bears fruit in us.

- What is one small, practical way you could share God's love this week: with a friend, family member, neighbour, or someone in need?
- Is there a person or situation you would like the group to pray for?

Closing prayer

Loving God,
thank you for loving us first and for showing your love in Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us. Pour your love into our hearts by your Holy Spirit.
Help us to trust your grace, to know that we belong to you, and to live with hope.
Teach us to receive your love with gratitude and to share it with patience, kindness and courage.
Show us one step we can take this week to love the people you have placed around us.
Keep us in your care and keeping caring.
Amen.