



## A Higher Love 1 John 2 Small Group Plan

Consider this challenging thought by turn of the century spiritual writer Evelyn Underhill.

*The Gospel begins with "God so loved the world that He gave," and it closes on the wonderful note: "Having loved His own, He loved them to the end." It is the story of a ceaseless, unlimited giving that still goes on. And if the call of God to our souls is that we should be remade in His likeness, then it is a call to such a growth in generosity as shall make us able to cooperate with that self-giving act of Christ ... Generosity means that longing to bring joy, peace, and salvation, not to the loveable but to the unlovable and at one's own cost. It is to bring all this to the people whose views and beliefs we dislike or whose conduct we disapprove. It is to bring it to those who are tiresome, embittered, selfish, degraded, and whose whole being seems twisted out of shape. It means to desire the happiness of people who don't desire it. And it means longing to rescue these at our own cost.*

— From *Inner Grace and Outward Sign* by Evelyn Underhill.

### OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- What is your reaction to Evelyn Underhill's words?
- When is it most difficult for you to love people?
- How does God's undeserved love help you love the undeserving?

## LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

### — LOVE AS AN OLD COMMANDMENT —

1 John 2:7

<sup>7</sup> Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard.

- What is the “old command” (see Deut 6:5, Lev 19:18)?
- Read together and review how Jesus had already reiterated this “old” command — Matt 5:43-48; Matt 22:34-40; Lk 6:27-36)
- How do you answer those who like to contrast the “angry” God of the Old Testament with the “loving” God of the New Testament? Are they seeing God correctly?

### — LOVE AS A NEW COMMANDMENT —

1 John 2:8

<sup>8</sup> Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing, and the true light is already shining.

- How can God’s command be both old and new?
- Even though God’s command to love has not changed, how did the person of Jesus flesh out God’s love, making it “seen in him” ?
- How has Jesus given the old command new meaning (see Jn 15:12-13; 1 Jn 3:16)?

### — LOVE AS A WAY OF LIFE —

1 John 2:9-11

<sup>9</sup> Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. <sup>10</sup> Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. <sup>11</sup> But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.

- What is “hate” and why do people hate?
- Why does John say the hate puts me in the “darkness”?
- How can hate confuse and blind me — “does not know where he is going” ?
- How does love bring clarity — “there is nothing in him to make him stumble” ?

## USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- The command to love is not new (v. 7) because it is found in the Old Testament (Deut 6:5 & Lev 19:18). It is new (v. 8) in the sense that Jesus tied together two previously separate commands — Loving God & Loving People (Mk 12:28-31).
- Why is it much easier to love people who are like us, who are in our group, who meet with our approval?
- What steps can we take to make love a way of life?
- Close by asking God to guide you into the light.