



It's What You Do
1 John 4
Small Group Plan

In her book, **Listening For God**, Renita Weems has written:

Rituals are routines that force us to live faithfully even when we no longer feel like being faithful.

We have all been there ... knowing what needs to be done ... and knowing that we need to do it. It isn't a question of is it the right thing to do ... it is. The question is, do we want to do it? Perhaps we are upset by something that has happened to us, or maybe it will require more effort or energy than we want to give, or, if we are honest, we simply don't feel motivated to act right now.

But still, it is the right thing to do ... and we made a commitment to ourselves and to God that we will live faithfully even when we don't feel like being faithful. It's what we do.

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- There has been quite a bit of discussion about the weaknesses and even dangers of rituals, but what are the benefits and values?
- As a group, list some helpful synonyms for the word "ritual."

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— WHAT LOVE DOES —

1 John 4:11-16a

¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. ¹³ We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

- What has God taught you about loving people?
- How could you rewrite verse 12 making it into a practical ministry principle?
- Why are you thankful for the Holy Spirit?
- How does God’s Spirit help us to “do what needs to be done?”

— WHAT LOVE WILL DO —

1 John 4:16b-21

¹⁶ God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. ¹⁷ In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

- Explain the power of fear. Why does “perfect love” drive out fear?
- Why have some world leaders chosen fear as a leadership style? Why is it a poor leadership style?
- Do you think most Christians are afraid of God or comfortable with God? Give reasons for your answer.
- How is love outward and giving? How is fear inward and withholding?
- What is really happening when people profess their love for God while they harbor hatred for their brother or sister?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- In his book, **Making Things Right When Things Go Wrong**, Paul Faulkner wrote:

*It is sometimes easier
to act yourself into a better way of thinking
than to think yourself into a better way of acting.*

- How do you respond to his thought?
- Why is love a better motivator than fear?
- Close by asking God to shape us into people who will do what is right whether we feel like it or not.