

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE



**PRINCE
OF PEACE**
Called to Connect



Longing for Love

December 20, 2020

Loving our neighbor as ourselves doesn't come quite as naturally as it seems it should. Radical self-love is the starting place for us to love others and to love God. If we are longing for love on this fourth Sunday of Advent, let's begin by loving ourselves better, by being compassionate to ourselves and giving up judgement and self-loathing that causes us to live in shame.

SCRIPTURE TEXT: MATTHEW 22:34-40

Read the scripture text together as a group.

BACKGROUND INFO

Jesus was constantly compared to religious leaders and he did not fit their image as one of their kind, so they sought to entrap him with tough religious questioning. They didn't seek to know his heart but only looked at how he was so different than them. One question they asked to entrap him was about the greatest commandment. Jesus answered by quoting the Old Testament from Deuteronomy 6:5 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your mind and all your soul." And then he added this, "The second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these." This command is repeated at least 8 times in the Bible.

I remember being taught this verse as a way to have joy. I was always told that if you want to have joy you need to put Jesus 1st, others 2nd, and yourself last. Jesus, Others, You...in that order. I certainly wanted joy so I sought to live by this order. I was really confused as I studied this scripture in later years. As I read this greatest commandment it occurred to me that the last part, love your neighbor, as yourself, sounded as if that was something easy, something simple and that just came naturally. But I often wonder if I am able to love myself no matter what? I don't think it's that easy and I don't believe the command is a literal 1st, 2nd, 3rd thing to do. Loving God, loving my neighbor, and loving myself works altogether.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Share about something you do for self-care.
- How does loving yourself change your ability to love others?
- Why do you think Jesus says that loving our neighbor as ourselves is the 2nd most important command?
- How can we share love with others, especially this year in the midst of a pandemic?

APPLICATION: This week, practice dwelling in God's Word through *Lectio Divina*. What is God speaking to you during this sacred reading time? How is He revealing His joy in your life?