



Discussion Guide

Date: 12/21/2025

Sermon Title: Where is the love?

Scripture: John 1:1-5

This discussion guide is a layout to be used with a group or class. We have included opening and closing prayers to start and end your group. The guide may be used for personal or family reflection as well.

OPENING PRAYER

Loving and faithful God, in this season of waiting and wonder, we confess that the world can feel heavy with darkness of division, fear, grief, and weariness. Yet we come trusting your promise that your Light still shines, and that your love has entered the world in Jesus Christ. Open our hearts and minds as we reflect on your Word. Help us not only to see your Light, but to live it, share it, and trust it. May your Spirit guide our conversation, our listening, and our response. Amen.

Opening Question:

1. What is your favorite Christmas song and why? What does it say about the meaning of Christmas to you?

Wesleyan Theological Reflection of Love as Light:

John Wesley understood God's love as active grace, always moving toward humanity before we ever move toward God. Prevenient Grace: God's love shines before we recognize it is the light already present in the darkness. Incarnation: In Jesus, God's love is not abstract but embodied. Sanctifying Love: God's light continues to shape us so that we become people who reflect Christ's love in the world.

Wesley wrote: "God's love is the source, the means, and the end of salvation." For Wesley, Christian faith is not only believing in the Light; but walking in it, allowing divine love to transform both heart and life.

Digging into the Word:

Read John 1:1-5 (NRSV). Try a few different versions prior to digging into these questions.

1. In this text in the Gospel of John, what does it mean for Jesus to be both Word and Light?
2. How does this passage expand our understanding of love beyond emotion or sentiment?
3. Verse 5 says the darkness did not overcome the light. What kinds of "darkness" do you see in the world today? And where do you see Christ's light still shining?
4. Why do you think John begins his Gospel with creation language rather than the Christmas story? How does knowing that Jesus is present from the beginning shape how we understand God's love?

Other scriptures to consider:

first united methodist church
Richardson

Isaiah 9:2; John 3:16–21; 1 John 1:5–7; 1 John 4:7–10; Romans 8:38–39

Sermon Questions:

1. The pastor Clayton contrasts the message of Christmas music with current headlines. What examples of "where is the love?" have you noticed in your own community or world recently?
2. Have you ever caught yourself participating in divisiveness or "name calling" - even in subtle ways? What prompted that, and how did you feel afterward?
3. In the sermon there is reference to John 1:1 of Jesus being the "Word" or the Greek word is "Logos". What does it mean to you that Jesus is the "Logos" - the very essence and mind of God?
4. Eugene Peterson translates verse 14 as "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood." How does this translation change or deepen your understanding of the incarnation?
5. Pastor Clayton states: "There is not one person who has ever been made that Jesus didn't make." How should this truth affect the way we treat others.

Applying it:

1. Where have you experienced God's love before you even knew to name it (prevenient grace)?
2. How does Jesus as "Light" challenge a faith that stays private or inward?
3. When have you found it most difficult to see someone as created in God's image? What would help you in those moments?
4. Jesus is described as "the light that illumines our pathway." Where do you most need His light in your life right now?
5. In what ways might the Church be called to shine Christ's love more boldly in this season? What can you as an individual, your group, or our church community do?
6. How does the promise that "darkness does not overcome the light" shape your hope; not just for eternity, but for today?

CLOSING PRAYER

Light of the world, we thank you for the love made known in Jesus Christ. Your love that enters our darkness, love that refuses to give up, and love that shines even when hope feels thin. As we move toward Christmas, help us to carry your light into the places we live, work, and serve. Shape us into people of love, grounded in grace, and bold in compassion. May your light shine through us, until all the world knows your love. Amen.

WAYS TO RESPOND

Choose one or more of the following practices this week to grow in love.

1. This week, intentionally show respect and dignity to someone you typically dismiss or disagree with.
2. Each day this week, when you encounter someone difficult, pause and remind yourself: "This person was created by Jesus in God's image." Notice how this changes your response.
3. Identify someone in your circle who is experiencing darkness (grief, loneliness, struggle) and be Christ's light to them through a specific action.