**Love is…**

*4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails.*

**Whose church is it anyway?**

**Questions**

What contemporary issues might Christians divide over today?

What advice would you give to Christians brothers who are disagreeing?

Are we required to ‘like’ our brothers and sisters in Christ? How is ‘loving’ someone (in the Christian sense) different from liking someone?

What practical steps might we take to strengthen the fellowship at St. Peter’s, St. Mary’s, and St. John’s?

When does ‘love’ become conditional or cult-like?

Why do you think the Bible stresses ‘hospitality’ as a way of expressing Christian love?

**Personal application**

Who do you find it hard to love in the church family? Why do you find it hard? Can you forgive them? Pray for them.

So after a service on a Sunday, who are the people you gravitate towards? When was the last time you spoke to someone you didn’t know?

**THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE 4**

**HANDOUT**

**Loving the Family of God**

**Introduction**

**Marriage**

Husbands love your wives

*25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her* Eph 5:25

… a call to die to self

Gary Chapman: *The Five Languages of Love*.

Thoughtful words

Kind actions

Gifts

Quality time

Touch

We express our love in *words* – honesty, words of affirmation, communication.

We express our love in *actions* – gifts, quality time, acts of kindness, sex, etc

We express our love in *person* – trust, emotional sensitivity, spirit of unity, hope, patience, etc.

 KNOWLEDGE/ SPEECH

 (‘normative’)

ACTIONS THE PERSON

 (‘situational’) (‘existential’)

**The Church Family**

What do you value most about church life?

The 3 perspectives again!

We express our love in *words* – honesty, speech, truth, words of affirmation, communication.

We express our love in *actions* – works of service, pastoral care, time, acts of kindness, etc

We express our love in *person* – trust, emotional sensitivity, spirit of unity, hope, patience, etc.

 KNOWLEDGE/SPEECH

 (‘normative’)

 ACTION THE PERSON /FAITH

(‘situational’) (‘existential’)

*Love and Knowledge*

*2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge… but have not love, I am nothing.*

Should you eat food sacrificed to idols?

The principle of edification

*Love and Speech*

*… if I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.*

 *“Speak the truth in love”*

*Love and Faith*

*…and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.*

*Love and Action*

*3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

Peregrinus Proteus, the Greek cynic philosopher

**Loving as members of a Family**

*Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart*. **1 Peter 1:22**

The 6.45 from Paddington?

Cults and ‘love-bombing’?

**Loving through Conflict**

 Puritan ‘benefit of doubt’

Forgiveness breaks the spiral of sin

“*If you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”*

(Matt 6:15)

*"Forgiveness is to set a prisoner free, and to realize the prisoner was you."*

(Corrie Ten Boom)

*“Throughout life people will make you mad, disrespect you and treat you bad. Let God deal with the things they do, cause hate in your heart will consume you too.”*([Will Smith](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/598671.Will_Smith) - actor)