Normal

AUTHENTIC LOVE

COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE
WEEK FOUR: "MERCY IS NORMAL" | 1 JOHN 3:16-20

SERIES OVERVIEW
Christians sometimes give an impression that they are not to be bothered, even amongst fellow Christians, by things that seem to mess up their put together worlds. However, God's people have been changed by his Spirit and what was once abnormal—loving sacrificially—is now normal. It is a love that acts, sacrifices and desires the highest good for others. It is the mark of which Jesus said others would know we are his followers. This love is the authenticating mark of a Christian. This love is normal.

THIS WEEK
Part of being a Christian is the privilege and duty we have to live out our faith actively. Love is a verb. It motivates us to act. It also causes us to act with compassion and justice. Timothy Keller, in his book, *Generous Justice,* points out that our justification by faith in Jesus should *cause* us to extend justice. Those actions of justice have to be motivated and filled with love. Because of the gospel, mercy is normal for the one who claims to follow Jesus.

ICE BREAKER
> **It's often been said that mercy is not getting what you deserve. Was there ever a time in your life that someone withheld punishment from you that you deserved (e.g. your parent, a teacher, or principal withholding punishment for some wrong you committed as a child)? If so, what happened and did that mercy cause you to act differently?**

READ
1 JOHN 3:16-20

BACKGROUND INFORMATION
In first John, John writes the first two chapters as a setup: First, he encourages us to remember Christ is the Incarnate (God wrapped in flesh) Word of Life and second, the Great Advocate/High Priest/Intercessor. John urges his audience to not love the things of this world but to look to the mercy that God has shown us through Christ. Because of this mercy first shown toward us, we then ought to show it to one another. Particularly here in chapter three, John seems to be writing exclusively to believers and what our Christian duty is to one another. It does not mean we are not to look beyond the walls of the church, quite the contrary, but that we have a duty first to take care of those on the inside.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders, encourage your group members to spend time considering and answering the following questions before coming to the group, as this will produce a more lively discussion time.)

1. **Take a look at Psalm 145:8-9 and think back to Bible stories you might have heard as a child or stories God has shown you recently in his word: Briefly list some people that God showed his mercy toward in the past.**

2. **Read 1 John 3:16 again. At The Chapel, we want to proclaim Jesus wherever he leads us. According to this verse, how do our acts of service toward each other reflect this mission?**

3. **Describe ways that the gospel, the good news of Jesus, has motivated you or your church to show mercy to others?**

4. **Read 1 John 3:17-20 again. When are you most tempted to "close your heart" to a brother or sister in need and what does that reveal about the gospel in your life?**

5. **What are ways you can personally remind yourself of the gospel in your daily life in order to show mercy more regularly to those in need?**

6. *In what ways can our community group be involved in showing mercy to someone or a group of people in need?*

APPLICATION
- **Remind yourself of the Gospel by memorizing scripture:** Commit to memorizing one Bible verse or passage this week that reminds you of God's mercy.
- **Show mercy as a group:** Identify someone or a group of people in need and make a plan with your group to meet their needs
- **Participate in "The Giving Tree" at The Chapel:** This upcoming holiday season, we have an exciting opportunity to bless families in need. This year, The Chapel will be stepping up our gift giving at Christmas time. We not only want to help families purchase Christmas gifts, but we want to get to know their stories and build lasting relationships with them. Stay tuned over the next several weeks to learn how your group can participate in The Giving Tree.