

## Love Always All Ways | 1 Corinthians 13:6-7 Sermon Discussion Participant's Guide

**Purpose of Discussion:** To know you are loved with an infinite love that can overcome cynicism with the greater truth of love.

**Sermon Refresher:** We come to the end of this passage on love, learning that love is protecting, trusting, hopeful, and persevering. When we forget this, we become cynical, the opposite of love.

**Icebreaker:** What are your plans for Easter? Do you have any Easter traditions?

**Transition:** Cynicism is the spirit of our day. Yet God wants us to delight and rejoice in the greater truth of His infinite love. Let's learn how we can resist cynicism and grow in a love that rejoices in the truth.

### **Discussion:**

#### 1 Corinthians 13:6-8a

<sup>6</sup>Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup>It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. <sup>8</sup>Love never fails."

1. Love is rejoicing with the truth. Dave said the opposite of love is cynicism. How would you describe cynicism?
2. Paul Maxwell, Desiring God contributor, says:  
"Cynicism is so undetectable because it is so justifiable. It wears a mask of insight and godliness, but it hides festering wounds of harbored bitterness against God and neighbor. We need to understand cynicism, because it will tell us about the wounds we hide and point us to the Savior who yearns to mend them."

Do you have cynicism toward God, the church, a movement, a group of people, or an individual? What wounds could this reveal?

3. Dave said the cynic is right, in that people are selfish and have sinful motives, but so does the cynic. Read Romans 3:10-12

### Romans 3:10-12

"As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

### John 2:23-25

<sup>23</sup>Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. <sup>24</sup>But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. <sup>25</sup>He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person."

4. In 1 Corinthians we read that 'love trusts'. In John, we see Jesus loving but not necessarily trusting. Should you always trust the one you are called to love?

5. (Optional) Digging Deeper: Andrew Byers in *Faith Without Illusions*:

"There are biblical models for expressing corrective voices alternative to the approach of cynicism. Scripture vividly portrays the people of God as a community prone to wander and ever in need of renewal and reform. Scripture also offers guidance on the proper means of promoting that renewal and reform. I'm convinced that those prone to cynicism actually have much to offer the church. But there are alternative models of critique, rather than cynicism, such as the biblical examples of the prophet, the sage, and of those tragic poets behind the biblical lament literature. *Since no voice is more pressing to hear than the voice of the One who loves the church enough to die for it, we need to look at how Jesus himself addressed misconceptions and wrestled with his own disappointments with his followers—and also with his Father. The resurrection of our Lord makes possible for us to embrace hopeful realism instead of cynicism.* Paul avoided cynicism (while serving dysfunctional local churches) because of his keen awareness that resurrection changes everything. We may live on the dark, eastern edge of Eden, but new creation awaits, and for the hopeful realists who have eyes to see and ears to hear, it keeps bursting into the present."

How can we turn from cynicism to hopeful realism?

6. Jesus willingly surrendered himself to the pain and shame of the cross out of sacrificial love, something cynicism will never achieve. Jesus's sacrificial love on the

# THE **crossing** **small groups**

cross broke through the other side of death and rising again, he is bringing his kingdom of love forever. Read the scripture below:

## 1 Corinthians 13:12 (NAS)

"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known."

7. What is the future for the believer? How does this shape how you view your cynicism?

### Sharing and Prayer:

Consider having a silent time of confession for your cynicism:

Ask God to reveal where you have held onto prideful self-righteousness? What do you need to humbly submit to the Lord?

### Digging Deeper:

If your cynicism is from anger in response to an evil done, consider this recommended prayer from Paul Maxwell on *Putting off Cynicism*:

"Cynicism is not merely disapproval — it is the need to continually disapprove of "them." And this incessant desire to reject "them" can come from a lack of processing pain that was experienced. In the case of suffering, the imprecatory prayers are a huge help.

The cynic can pray, "[\_\_\_\_] did this to me, and it was wrong. I hate [\_\_\_\_] for it, I hand over my curses, my ill-wishes, and my disapproval to your omnipotence to curse, to ill-wish, and to disapprove, O God. I stand with you in your disapproval of that evil. Thank you for standing with me" (Psalm 5; 69; 109; [Matthew 26:23–24](#); [2 Timothy 4:14](#)). The imprecatory prayer relinquishes the power to punish over to the Righteous Judge. In a sense, in this case, Christ not only redeems the cynic, but affirms the validity of the original cynicism as well."