

# LOVING PEOPLE...

## 1 John 4:7-21 // The Greatest Action

*Next to the great commandment to love God with all of our being is the great command to love one another. 1 John reminds us that we can never get past the gift of God's love for us in Christ and how that is lived out in one another. We experience the love of God when we love others. Here are some materials to help you create your own worship service.*

MAIN THEME: *Who is my neighbor and how do I show them the love of God?*

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## CHOOSING MUSIC // FOR SINGING

- 🎵 **All the Poor and Powerless**  
Text and Music: Leslie Jordan and David Leonard  
© 2011 Integrity's Praise! Music and Integrity's Alleluia! Music
- 🎵 **Glorious Day (Living He Loved Me)**  
Text and Music: Michael Bleeker and Mark Hall  
© 2008 Word Music, LLC (a div. of Word Music Group, Inc.)
- 🎵 **God of Justice**  
Text and Music: Tim Hughes  
© 2004 Thankyou Music
- 🎵 **Love Diving, All Loves Excelling**  
Text and Music: Charles Wesley  
Public Domain
- 🎵 **They'll Know We Are Christians**  
Text and Music: Peter Scholtes  
© 1966 F.E.L. Publications. Assigned 1991 Lorenz Publishing Company  
(This can be found in a hymnal, but we like the new arrangement by Jars of Clay, track #13)
- 🎵 **With Every Act of Love**  
Text and Music: Jason Gray and Jason Ingram  
© 2013 Centricity Music Publishing, Nothing Is Wasted Music (Admin by Music Services) Sony-ATV Timber Publishing, Open Hands Music (Admin Sony ATV)  
[consider using this as a solo in worship rather than a congregational song]

## CREATING DRAMA // FOR HEARING

Check out this great video produced by the Forum for Theological Exploration: "Love God, Love Neighbor." Show this video after reading 1 John 4 and put worshipers in small groups for guided discussion on the points in this video. This discussion might take place in small groups first, then in large groups, and it might even take the place of the sermon in this worship gathering.

Lectio divina is an ancient way of reading scripture. In lectio divina, we hear the scripture passage multiple times and reflect on it together. Consider using this practice with the 1 John passage. Below, you'll find a script that introduces this practice, and helps you use it in your worship service.

### **LECTIO DIVINA // 1 JOHN 4:9-11**

To reflect on tonight's scripture passage, we will use Lectio divina, an ancient Christian practice that invites us to hear the scripture passage multiple times for the purpose of reflection. As you prepare to hear the scripture passage, get into a comfortable position, close your eyes, and listen to the whole passage as a unit. I'll leave a few moments of silence after each reading. On the second reading, begin to listen for a word or group of words that shimmer or draw you in. On the third reading, allow yourself to focus on a word or group of words, then begin to think about what God might be wanting to say to you through those group of words.

#### **A reading from 1 John 4.**

Close your eyes and listen to the passage and take in the passage as a whole unit. Begin to listen for a phrase or particular part of the passage that stands out to you.

"This is how the love of God is revealed to us: God has sent his only Son into the world so that we can live through him. This is love: it is not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son as the sacrifice that deals with our sins. Dear friends, if God loved us this way, we also ought to love each other."

*Provide a few moments of silence, then say:*

#### **A reading from 1 John 4.**

Begin to listen for a word or group of words that shimmer or draw you in.

"This is how the love of God is revealed to us: God has sent his only Son into the world so that we can live through him. This is love: it is not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son as the sacrifice that deals with our sins. Dear friends, if God loved us this way, we also ought to love each other."

*Provide a few moments of silence, then say:*

#### **A reading from 1 John 4.**

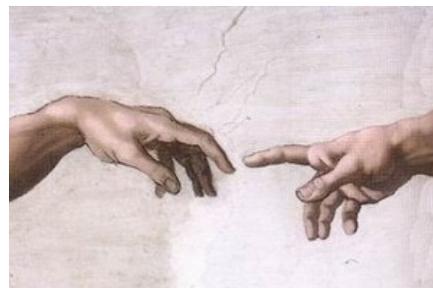
Allow yourself to focus on the word or words that stood out to you. Think about what that might mean to you right now, in your present circumstance. What is God saying to you through them?

"This is how the love of God is revealed to us: God has sent his only Son into the world so that we can live through him. This is love: it is not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son as the sacrifice that deals with our sins. Dear friends, if God loved us this way, we also ought to love each other."

*Read the scripture reading and provide a few moments of silence. Then, invite worshipers to share with their neighbor what God might be saying to them through the scripture passage. Conclude by singing a song that relates to the scripture passage.*

## FINDING ART // FOR SEEING

Display “The Creation of Adam” from the Sistine Chapel ceiling. This artwork reminds us that love begins with God reaching down to humanity, first teaching us to love.



## LIVING WORSHIP // FOR DOING

Consider calling worshipers to action in this worship service. You might introduce them to various ministries or non-profit organizations where they can tangibly show their love for neighbor on a regular basis. Set up an “action table” so that after worship, worshipers can sign up for more information about a ministry or organization in or near your church. You might even enlist leaders and have service times pre-organized for worshipers to put love in action in the following week or weeks.

Ask worshipers to use social media to connect worship with all of life. Take a picture of their neighbors this week with the hashtag #lovingpeople.

## MAKING SPACE // FOR WORSHIPPING

Whether you are using this worship service as part of the four-week series or as a stand-alone service, place pictures of people all around the room. These pictures might be of family, friends, church members, prominent leaders from your city, state, and country, as well as strangers who might need to know the love of God.

As a pre-worship activity, have a space set up against a wall for a photo booth. Have fun props, and encourage worshipers to have a photo made with their “neighbors.” Try to gather a diverse assortment of photographs: young and old, teachers and students, ministers and congregants, and on and on the list goes! Find a way to use these pictures creatively in the coming weeks: mail them, display them, or if you can find a polaroid camera, give them away instantly!

## WRITING POETRY// FOR PRAYING

Two different guided prayer activities might be options for you in this worship service. We don't suggest that you use both, but choose one. You might consider using the one you don't use this week in Week 4 of this module: Change the World.

The first prayer activity is a prayer of confession, “God gave us hands.” This prayer asks God for forgiveness for those times we don't use our hands – and lives – for the benefit of our neighbors in the world. (Below)

### GOD GAVE US HANDS

*[Consider an introduction to this prayer of confession, especially if confession isn't a regular part of your community's worship tradition.]*

Have you ever had to say “I'm sorry” to someone you have hurt? I suppose it's something we all have to say throughout our lives. We say it when we've done something we aren't supposed to do. We

might be mean to someone or we might damage someone else's property. And eventually, we have to apologize to those people we hurt by saying the words, "I'm sorry." Have you ever said those words to God? Have you ever told God, "I'm sorry"? We often thank God and tell God we love him, but how often do we tell God we're sorry? Tonight, we are going to do just that. We are going to tell God that we're sorry for the times we have done things that might have hurt God, our family, our neighbors, and the world around us. As we do that, I want you to read the bold print that is projected on the screen.

*[Leader reads non-bold, worshippers read bold]*

**Leader:** God, you gave us hands to build,  
**All: but sometimes we tear down.**

**Leader:** God, you gave us hands to care,  
**All: but sometimes we hurt.**

**Leader:** God, you gave us hands to give,  
**All: but sometimes we take.**

**Leader:** God, you gave us hands to welcome,  
**All: but sometimes we push away.**

**Leader:** God, for times we mess up, you sent Jesus as our example.  
**All: Jesus's hands build and care.**

**Leader:** His hands give and welcome  
**All: His hands pray and bless.**

**Leader:** God, you sent Jesus to earth so that we can learn from his way of living. You sent Jesus to earth so that we can have forgiveness for all the times we mess up. No matter how many times we mess up, God, we know that you will continue to love us and extend grace to us. Help us to love others just like you love us. Amen.

*The origin of this call to confession is unknown. It has been used by African Christians and Hungarian Christians, and it was used at the 2011 closing service of the Calvin Symposium on Christian Worship. We have shortened it for this worship gathering.*

The second prayer activity is more extended, but it calls worshipers to pray for their neighbors. In this exercise, worshippers are reminded that one way we care for others is to pray for them. Worshippers are invited to pray for various communities in their world and in the world at large: family, friends, church, city, and world. At the conclusion, they ask Christ to be the center of their individual lives and the lives of these communities. See below.

## COMMUNITY PRAYER CIRCLE

### Materials Needed

- Card or piece of paper
- Writing Utensils
- Space in worship to collect drawings (optional)

### **Overview**

In this exercise, worshippers are reminded that one way we care for others is to pray for them. Worshippers are invited to pray for various communities in their world and in the world at large: family, friends, church, city, and world. They will ask Christ to be the center of their individual lives and the lives of these communities.

Consider having a leader do the activity up front with a live video feed on screens. This will serve as a helpful tool for worshippers who might be confused about the nature of the instructions.

### **Instructions to be given by leader:**

For tonight's guided prayer, you will need paper and something to write with. Take these out now, and draw a circle in the middle of your paper.

*[Allow time for worshippers to complete this task. Consider using soft music during this exercise.]*

Tonight we are going to pray for five groups of people that we encounter in our lives each day: our family, friends, church, neighborhood, and world. We will use drawing as a way to help us pray. With a pen or pencil in your hand, think about the first group I just named: your family. Who is in your family? Does it contain your mom, dad, brother, sister, grandma, grandpa, aunt, or uncle? Around one outside corner of the circle, draw stick figures to represent three or four members of your family. As you draw figures that represent your family, thank God for each of them.

*[Allow time for worshippers to complete this task]*

Now, think about a second group: your friends. Who are your friends? Are they your age? Are they younger or older than you? Do they like the same things you like? Do they help you when you need help? Do they make you laugh? In another outside corner of the circle, draw a few stick figures to represent three or four friends of yours. As you draw figures to represent your friends, thank God for each of them.

*[Allow time for worshippers to complete this task]*

Now, think about another group: your church. Who goes to your church? Do you have family there? Are your friends also part of your church? Does your church contain leaders such as a pastor or musician? Does it contain an adult friend? In another outside corner of your circle, draw a few stick figures to represent people in your church. As you draw figures to represent your church, thank God for each of them.

*[Allow time for worshippers to complete this task]*

When you finish praying for members of your church, think about people in your community - your neighborhood. This might include school teachers, city officials, police men and women, a waiter or waitress at a restaurant, or other people you know from the town where you live. Draw a few stick figures to represent these people in your community. As you draw these figures, thank God for each of them.

*[Allow time for worshippers to complete this task]*

Finally, think about people around the world. Do you know anyone from around the world? If so, who might that be? Perhaps you have family or friends that live in other parts of the world. You might not know anyone around the world, but you might have studied about different parts of the world in school. You might have heard about people around the world on the news or learned about them on the internet. Take a moment to draw stick figures representing these people around the world. Thank God for them, and ask God to be with them in whatever they are doing now.

*[Allow time for worshippers to complete this task]*

Jesus is the person who holds all of the world together, and Jesus reminds us that apart from him we cannot do anything. With that in mind, draw a stick figure that represents Jesus in the middle of your circle. As you draw this stick figure, ask Jesus to help these communities live together in love and unity.

*[Allow time for worshippers to complete this task]*

Pray: God, we thank you for each group of people that you put in our midst: our family, friends, church, city, and world. Help us to keep you at the center of each of these groups of people, and help us to love each of these communities just like you love us. Amen.

*[Sing an appropriate song to conclude]*

# SAMPLE WORSHIP SERVICE

*Loving People... // 1 John 4:7-21 // The Greatest Action*

## PRE-WORSHIP ACTIVITY

Have a space set up against a wall for a photo booth. Have fun props, and encourage worshipers to have a photo made with their “neighbors.” Try to gather a diverse assortment of photographs: young and old, teachers and students, ministers and congregants, and on and on the list goes! Find a way to use these pictures creatively in the coming weeks: mail them, display them, or if you can find a polaroid camera, give them away instantly!

*[Sing the first stanza of “My Jesus I Love Thee” quietly to draw worshipers into the worship space and call them to a time of worship]*

## WELCOME

Say hi to other worshipers and welcome them in the name of Christ

## SONGS OF PRAISE

*Glorious Day (Living He Loved Me)*  
*Love Divine All Loves Excelling*

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION

“God Gave Us Hands”

**Leader:** God, you gave us hands to build,

**All:** **but sometimes we tear down.**

**Leader:** God, you gave us hands to care,

**All:** **but sometimes we hurt.**

**Leader:** God, you gave us hands to give,

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**Leader:** God, you gave us hands to welcome,

**All:** **but sometimes we push away.**

**Leader:** God, for times we mess up, you sent Jesus as our example.

**All:** **Jesus’s hands build and care.**

**Leader:** His hands give and welcome

**All:** **His hands pray and bless.**

*[Leader invites worshipers to open their hands for the closing of this prayer.]*

**Leader:** God, you sent Jesus to earth so that we can learn from his way of living. You sent Jesus to earth so that we can have forgiveness for all the times we mess up. No matter how many times we mess up, God, we know that you will continue to love us and extend grace to us. Help us to love others just like you love us. Amen.

## ASSURANCE OF PARDON

**Leader:** *Hear this promise from God.*

*“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him won’t perish but will have eternal life. God didn’t send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him.”*

*John 3:16-17 [CEB]*

## SONG OF JUSTICE

*God of Justice*

## SCRIPTURE READING

1 John 4:9-11

## VIDEO REFLECTION

Love God, Love People

*Download and show this video from the Fund for Theological Education, displayed on The Toolbox Resource page, after reading 1 John 4. Put worshipers in small groups with discussion questions formed by a minister. This discussion might take place in small groups first, then in large groups, and we suggest it take the place of the sermon in this worship gathering.*

## SONG OF SERVICE

“Community Prayer Circle”

*[Each worshiper will need a blank piece of paper and something to write with. Download complete*

*instructions on the Resource page of our website.  
[samford.edu/go/cwa](http://samford.edu/go/cwa)*

### **Instructions to be given by leader:**

For tonight's guided prayer, you will need paper and something to write with. Take these out now, and draw a circle in the middle of your paper.

*[Allow time for worshippers to complete this task.  
Consider using soft music during this exercise.]*

Tonight we are going to pray for five groups of people that we encounter in our lives each day: our family, friends, church, neighborhood, and world. We will use drawing as a way to help us pray.

With a pen or pencil in your hand, think about the first group I just named: your family. Who is in your family? Does it contain your mom, dad, brother, sister, grandma, grandpa, aunt, or uncle? Around one outside corner of the circle, draw stick figures to represent three or four members of your family. As you draw figures that represent your family, thank God for each of them.

*[Allow time for worshippers to complete this task]*

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## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **BENEDICTION**

**One:** Go in peace and share the love of Christ.  
**All:** With God's help, we will.