

# SMALL GROUP

## SESSION 3 INTRO

*Dogs vs. Cats*

*iPhones vs. Androids*

*Republicans vs. Democrats*

*Alabama vs. Auburn*

*Superheroes vs. Supervillains*

*You vs. \_\_\_\_\_*

Rivals. Enemies. Opposites.

Each of the pairings above lists two entities that have been historically opposed to each other. There aren't too many dogs asking cats if they want to go fetch sticks. You won't find too many Republicans lining up dinner dates with Democrats. And you won't find Superman hanging out in his Fortress of Solitude and watching YouTube with Lex Luther. Nope. With few exceptions, these folks just plain don't like each other.

And in a few of these cases, there's even a right side to be on (Dogs, iPhones, Superheroes) and a wrong side (Cats, Androids, Supervillains). But you already know that—unless you're a cat-loving Android user, and then we pretty much already know that you're a Supervillain.

**All kidding aside, we do play favorites, don't we?** We pick sides. We have people we like, people we don't like, and people who seem to try really hard to be unlikeable. Look at that last pairing: is there a name or a particular group of people that comes to mind? Are you picturing someone right now who has wronged you? Hurt you? Someone who seems out to make your life miserable? Or just plain drives you insane?

How much do you love that person? *"SAY WHAT?!?"* Yeah, that's right. Love. Do you love him or her? Or is it the opposite of love? Is it something similar to how Darth Vader might feel about the Obi-Wan Kenobi?

In this session, we're about to explore one of the tougher exchanges to make, but one that Jesus Himself said is one of the most important.

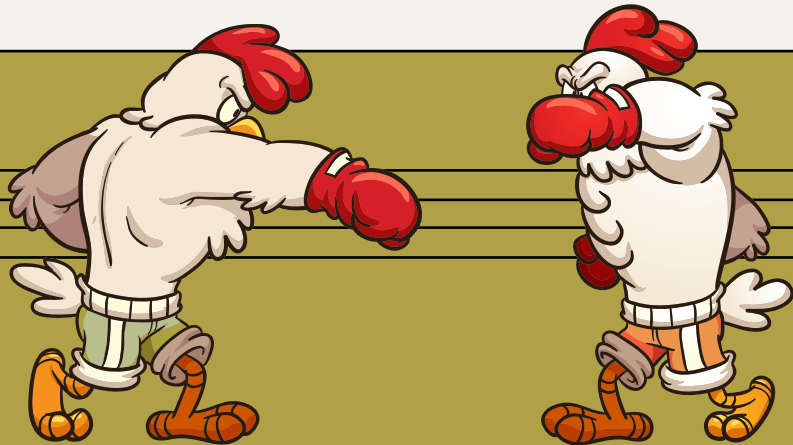
**Get ready to face up to a very uncomfortable *Exchange* . . . But one you can and should embrace.** Let's get started!

# SESSION 3

## GETTING STARTED

*Time to pick a side! After listening to the story of the Battle of the Chicken Sandwich, follow your leader's instructions and get ready to square off.*

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST RIVALRY YOU CAN THINK OF? WRITE ANSWER IN BOXES BELOW.



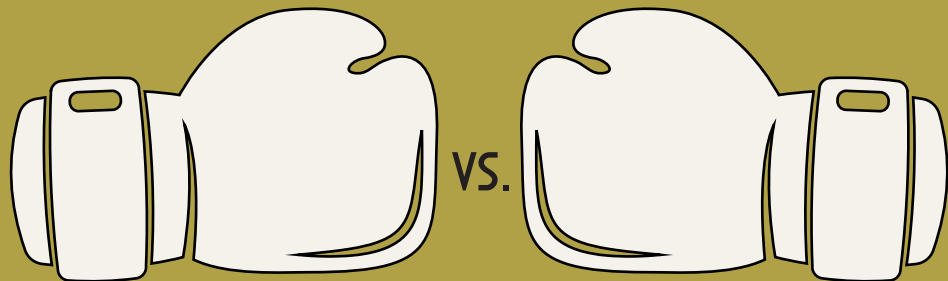
Students will write "Side #1" of their greatest rivalry here.

VS.

Students will write "Side #2" of their greatest rivalry here.

WHAT WOULD  DO IF THEY SAW  ?

WRITE DOWN THREE TO FIVE WORDS INSIDE THE GLOVES THAT DESCRIBE THE RIVALRY



☐ CHECK THE BOX TO SAY WHICH SIDE YOU ARE ON. ☐

# DIGGING IN

Let's take a closer look at this whole love/hate thing. Follow your leader's instructions to work through these verses and questions together.

## WHY DO WE NEED THIS EXCHANGE?

READ ROMANS 1:18-28

- According to Paul, who is God revealing His wrath to and why?

God's wrath (His righteous anger at sin) is aimed at human ungodliness and unrighteousness. This is a problem for all humankind since we all, due to our sin nature, are ungodly and unrighteous. We have enough evidence around us to recognize that there is a God and know what is true about Him. However, many ignore or resist God so that we can go on living in self-centered sinfulness. In short, many don't believe because they don't want to.

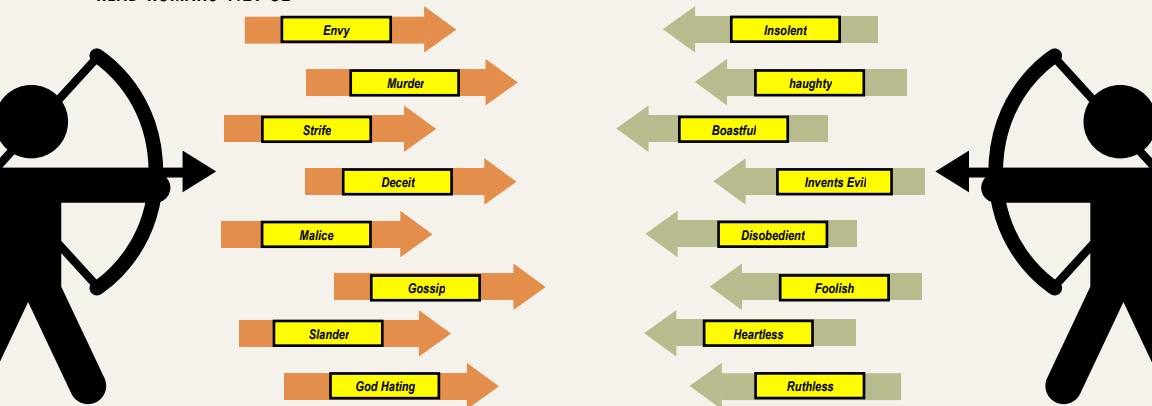
- What is Paul saying happens when we willingly choose to ignore or resist God?

Paul is saying that when the creation (human beings) tries to live as if God is not our sovereign Creator and provider who is worthy of worship, it only leads to disaster. It starts with the way we think and reason. In our attempt to ignore God, dismiss God, or explain away all the ways He has revealed Himself to us, we go to great lengths, which include twisting our minds and even worshipping other created things (including ourselves) instead of the Creator. As a result, while we think of ourselves as "wise," we're actually just becoming more foolish, and our hearts become darker and darker.

- How does Paul say God responds to our choosing to ignore Him, resist Him, worship things other than Him, and become more and more invested in our self-centered sinfulness?

Paul says that God responds to our choice to ignore or acknowledge Him as Creator and our foolish worship of created things instead of the Creator by giving us over to our own lusts, passions, and sinful thoughts/desires. In other words, God allows us to choose sin, rebellion, and full indulgence of our desires with and against each other, including dishonoring the very bodies He made and gave to us.

READ ROMANS 1:29-32



- Have you ever found yourself on the receiving end of any of these awful actions/emotions? Has someone been envious of you? Has someone caused strife in your life? Has anyone spread lies about you? Or lied to you? How did you feel?

ANSWERS WILL VARY

- Time to be honest and transparent. You've probably done some of these things to others, right?

ANSWERS WILL VARY

- Explain why you think people act this way toward others. In other words, what's at the root of all of these things?

Answers will vary, but lead students to think of sin in general, not specific, case-by-case stuff. Ultimately, our ungodliness and unrighteousness caused by our sin nature is what causes people to treat each other this way.

- Think about your relationships with family and friends—at school, at home, on teams, and at church. How often do you encounter these types of negative emotions? What kind of impact do they have on your day-to-day life?

ANSWERS WILL VARY

# WHAT DOES THIS EXCHANGE LOOK LIKE?

READ 1 JOHN 4:7-12

**IN THIS IS LOVE, NOT THAT WE HAVE  
LOVED GOD BUT THAT GOD LOVED** ...

Students  
will write  
the word  
"US" here.

HOW DO WE KNOW? WHAT'S THE PROOF?

God sent His only Son, Jesus, into the world as a sacrifice for our sins.

**IF GOD SO LOVED US,  
WE OUGHT TO LOVE** .

Students will write the word  
"ONE ANOTHER" here.

WHY SHOULD WE LOVE OTHERS?

Because God loves us, we must love others.

# HOW DOES THIS EXCHANGE IMPACT ME?

READ JOHN 13:34-35

Then, walk through the following questions with your group.

- Jesus said all people would know that we were His followers because of our love for whom? **One another.**
- How seriously does Jesus take His followers loving one another? **Notice that Jesus gave this as a commandment, not a suggestion.**
- In what way are we commanded to love others? **This commandment is being given in the larger context of Jesus' washing of His disciples' feet. After the foot washing demonstration, Jesus doubled down on this idea of His followers loving others by setting His own physical act of selfless love as the standard to which all who claim to follow Him should live out.**
- What does love for your friends in your faith community look like in your life today? **ANSWERS WILL VARY**
- Think about the way you and your Christian friends act toward one another or toward those who are difficult to love. Would people recognize you as Jesus-followers by how you actively and selflessly love? **Answers will vary, but help students understand what a big deal this is. The way they treat each other is meant to be a primary (if not the most powerful) sign of our faith in Jesus and the ways Jesus said others would recognize them as His followers.**

READ LUKE 6: 27-36

Then, walk through the following questions with your group.

Sum up in your own words what Jesus is saying about how we are to treat our "enemies."

Answers will vary but may include: Love them; do good to them; treat them better than they treat you; bless them; pray for them; do to them what you would want done to you.

According to this passage, what is the difference between loving those who love you and loving your "enemies?"

Answers will vary but may include: It is easy and makes total sense to love or do good to those whom we know will reciprocate. Even those who do not follow Jesus will do that. What makes no sense from a worldly perspective is to demonstrate love and do good for those who don't seek our interests. It's especially shocking to do so for enemies who are actively seeking to cause us harm.

You might not have "enemies," but all of us have people in our lives that we find hard to like and even harder to show love towards. How are you supposed to treat them according to Jesus?

Answers will vary. The goal isn't to make students recite the same list of potential random acts of loving kindness. The point is to guide them to understand that Jesus commands His followers to treat all people with a son/daughter of the Most High kind of love—a love so out of the expected that people can't help but notice something is different about you. A son/daughter of the Most High kind of love towards the people that are hard to like. A son/daughter of the Most High kind of love towards the people you have reason to find difficult to love. And yes, even a son/daughter of the Most High kind of love towards people who don't deserve it. Why? Because God loved us first, even when we are hard to like, when He has reason to find us difficult to love, and even when we didn't deserve it.

Is it just your actions Jesus is referring to? Or do you think there's more to it? Explain.

Answers will vary, but help students see that this Exchange of hate for love has a lot less to do with their circumstances and a lot more to do with the condition of their hearts and their surrendering all to live this exchanged life as followers of Jesus.

# WRAPPING SESSION 3



*Who do you love? Follow your leader's instructions to work through the following activity. As you do, take time to reflect on what it would look like to take the initiative to Exchange hate for love, and to love others in such a way that your life, your actions, and your reactions boldly proclaim the difference Jesus has made in your life.*

First Name:

Demonstrated Jesus-Centered Love By...



First Name:

Demonstrated Jesus-Centered Love By...

First Name:

Demonstrated Jesus-Centered Love By...



First Name:

Demonstrated Jesus-Centered Love By...

First Name:

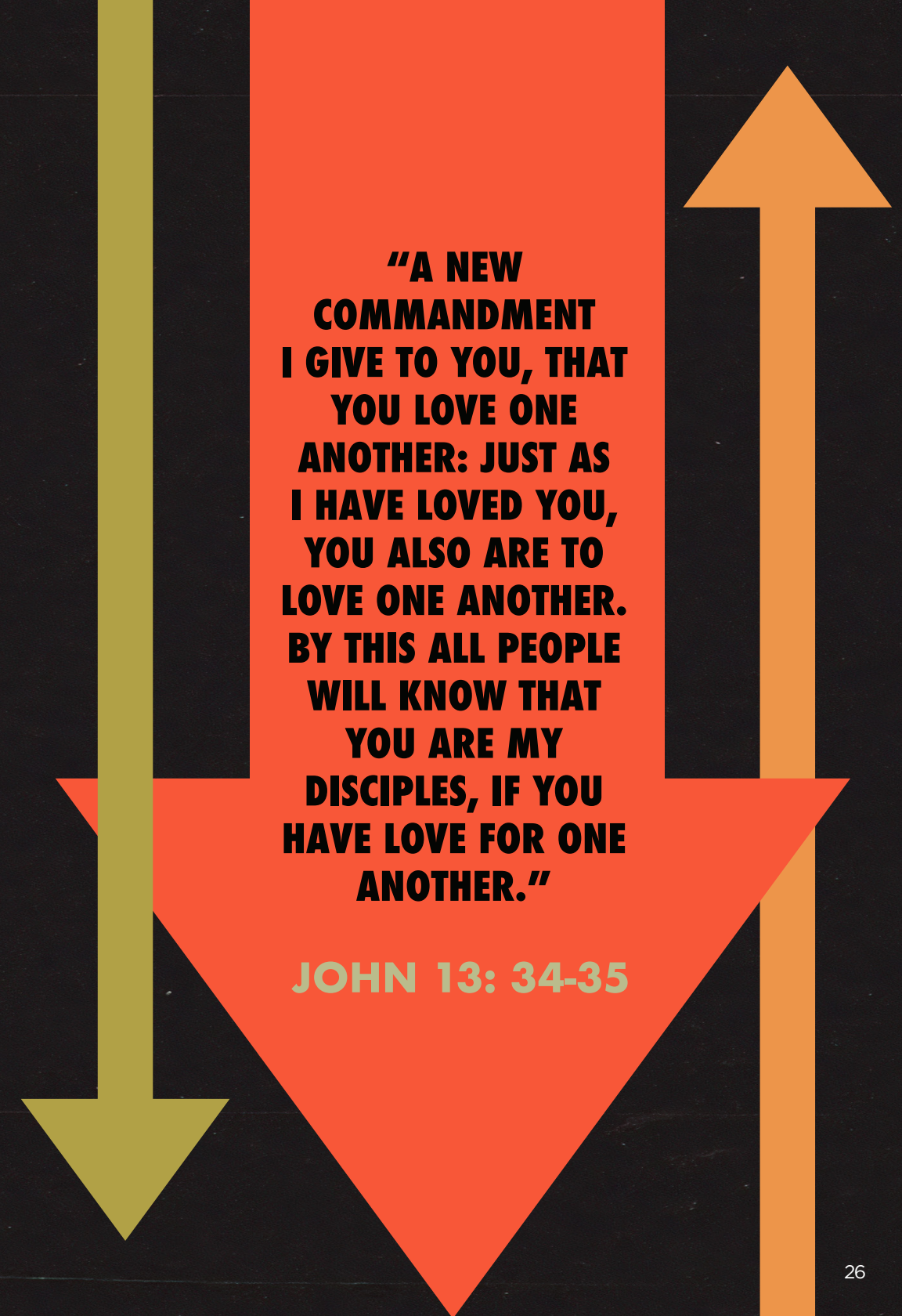
Demonstrated Jesus-Centered Love By...



First Name:

Demonstrated Jesus-Centered Love By...





**"A NEW  
COMMANDMENT  
I GIVE TO YOU, THAT  
YOU LOVE ONE  
ANOTHER: JUST AS  
I HAVE LOVED YOU,  
YOU ALSO ARE TO  
LOVE ONE ANOTHER.  
BY THIS ALL PEOPLE  
WILL KNOW THAT  
YOU ARE MY  
DISCIPLES, IF YOU  
HAVE LOVE FOR ONE  
ANOTHER."**

**JOHN 13: 34-35**