

Live Love(d) Revisited

Post-Gathering Bible Study



Leader's Guide

Note to the leader:

This study is designed to help your youth group do three things:

- (1) Recall their unique experience of the Gathering, including the personal highlights that impacted them most;*
- (2) Review the major themes and points made in the Bible studies at the Gathering; and*
- (3) Spur participants on toward living a life of love in tangible, everyday ways.*

There is a lot of material in this study, so you might want to consider breaking it up into two sessions—especially if your group likes to share a lot.

*In order to enhance this study, play some of the music from the Gathering as another means of recalling your actual experience as a group. Most of the songs led by the Gathering band can be found at www.lcmsgathering.com/music. Several of the questions in this study will identify specific songs that fit with specific parts of this study. They are marked with an *asterisk.*

At the end of the study we will revisit the postcards the participants were invited to fill out. If you have not mailed the postcards to the participants, either bring them to this study, or mail them afterwards.

Leader's notes throughout the study are printed in red.

Introduction

It's been several weeks since we gathered together with 25,000 Lutheran youth, adults, and volunteers in San Antonio, Texas for the 2013 LCMS National Youth Gathering. As you think about your experience during those five days, what comes to mind when you hear these words?

Invite participants to share specific conversations, observations, and experiences. Encourage them to talk about speakers who impacted them, music that inspired them, new friends they met, information they learned, etc.

NOTE: *Don't rush through this part of the study. It is important for the youth to have time to process their experience.*

The River Walk
The Convention Center
Gathering News
Bands/music
Your hotel
Thursday morning worship in the Alamodome
Speakers
Friends/relationships

A Mountaintop Experience

Sarah, the emcee for the Mass Events, described the National Youth Gathering as a "mountaintop experience." What does this mean? What moments felt like this for you? What might be some ways of recalling this Gathering experience when you feel uninspired in your faith?

Encourage youth to think about how this single event can serve them throughout their lives—especially when doubts, fears, and boredom arise.

During the opening Mass Event we imagined what the disciples experienced on the day of Pentecost. This was certainly a "mountaintop experience" for them. Read Acts 2:1-4 and recall how the opening Mass Event tried to portray what happened on Pentecost.

The large white banners and sound of wind symbolized the wind blowing.

The red flash lights and the flames symbolized the tongues of fire.

The flash mob forming in the aisles symbolized the unity of the message proclaimed by the disciples even in the midst of what seemed to be chaos.

Remembering Pentecost was an appropriate start to the Gathering because, without Pentecost, none of us would believe in Jesus. Why was Pentecost necessary for us?

At Pentecost God sent his Spirit so that all people might hear the Word of Christ and receive the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit also brings us together as the body of Christ. He "gathers" us as the church, and he "gathered" us together for the National Youth Gathering.

It's All About Love

At the heart of "Live Love(d)" is Jesus. During the Wednesday evening Mass Event, we remembered His birth, ministry, suffering, death, and resurrection. As a group, recall some of the scenes from Jesus' life portrayed that night.

Love Born	<i>Live nativity</i> <i>Joy to the World all sung together</i> <i>*Play the acoustic version of "Joy to the World"</i>
Love Sent	<i>Jesus healed a lame man</i> <i>Jesus cast out the demon</i> <i>Jesus raised the widow's son from the dead</i> <i>Jesus calmed the storm</i> <i>Jesus forgave the sinful woman</i>
Love Died	<i>Jesus hung on the cross in our place</i> <i>Jesus was carried to the tomb constructed by our sins</i>
Love Lives	<i>At the end of the event on Wednesday night we saw Jesus open His eyes</i>

With these scenes in mind, read 1 John 4:9-10. How is Jesus **real** love?

His entire life, from birth to resurrection, was a self-sacrifice so that we can be forgiven. Dan, the Bible Study leader, made the point that God showed his love by more than simply thinking about us. He came down to us to sacrifice himself for us on a cross.

**Play "Our God is Love" by Hillsong. Point out how the refrain defines love:*

*This is love
Jesus came and died and gave His life for us...
Our God is love*

We entered the scene on Wednesday night when, responding to God's Word of Law, we confessed our sins by writing a specific sin on a sheet of paper and passed them down our rows. These sins were then dumped at the foot of the cross. Read 1 John 1:8-9. What did God do with these sins?

He forgave them completely. Remind the participants that they never need to confess that specific sin again. It has been completely forgiven!

As the papers were dumped at the foot of the cross, the band played a song called "Lay 'Em Down." This song was upbeat—almost joyful. How is it possible that confessing our sins can be joyful?

**Play "Lay 'em Down" by NeedtoBreathe.*

Confessing (or "laying down") our sin can be done with joy because of God's promise to forgive. When we come before God in confession, we are sorry for our sin. But we are also full of hope and expectation that our heavenly Father will graciously forgive us!

On Thursday morning, the Divine Service was a celebration of Jesus' resurrection. Why is Easter so important for our lives as Christians?

Without His resurrection, we have no hope for life after death. (See 1 Corinthians 15:14-19.)

**Play "In Christ Alone" and invite the youth to consider how Christ alone is our hope and strength and life. The final two verses are particularly helpful in thinking about Jesus' resurrection.*

There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave he rose again!
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine -
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath.
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, which becomes ours at baptism, we are forgiven and restored children of God. How does this affect the way you look at yourself?

We are God's beautiful creation, restored by his forgiveness and love.

**Play "Beautiful Things" by Gungor.*

You make beautiful things
You make beautiful things out of the dust
You make beautiful things
You make beautiful things out of us

The LCMS National Youth *SENDING*

The theme for the 2013 LCMS National Youth Gathering was "Live Love(d)." Did you figure out why the "d" was in parentheses?

Because we are loved by God in Christ, we live a life of love for others. We live loved, and therefore we live love.

We gathered together in San Antonio, but we didn't stay there. Like He sent His people at Pentecost to bring His love to the world, so also God sent us back home to share His love with the people in our communities and congregations. Read 1 John 4:19-21. What is God's command to us?

God calls us to love others because He has loved us.

Loving others is not easy. Read 1 John 4:13-16. How does God enable us to love others?

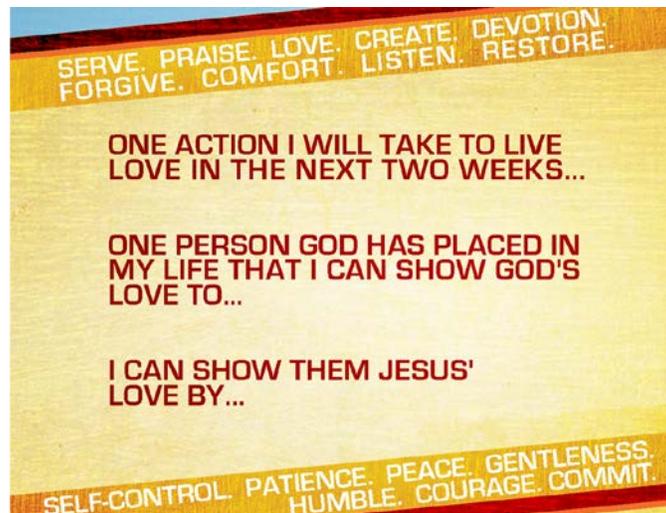
He gives us His Spirit (verse 13), much like gave the disciples His Spirit at Pentecost.

He lives in us (verse 16).

Dan, the Bible study leader, said: "God loves us and then we love God and we love each other...God first pours His love into us – unconditional love in Jesus – and in grateful response, we love God and we love others." Fill in the blank: God loves us, and God loves through us

During the final Mass Event, you had the opportunity to fill out a postcard with a concrete idea about how you can live love in a very tangible way back home. Have you received it yet? If not, do you remember the idea you had?

Allow participants to share what they wrote, but do not require it. Some of their ideas may be personal. The image below is the back of the postcard they received. If they have trouble thinking of something, encourage them to use the words in the gold bar along the top and bottom of the image to spur their thinking.



Sarah described herself as a "boring Israelite." Like her, most of us don't make the front page of the newspaper. Many of our acts of love go relatively unnoticed. But imagine what would happen if 25,000 people returned home and lived love for others. What kind of difference would this make?

Allow for discussion.

Real love is never alone. It always involves God, and it always involves others. How can you, as a group, live love(d) in your congregation? In your community? How can your group make a difference in this broken and dying world?

Come up with 2 or 3 specific new ways your youth group can live love in your congregation AND in your community.

Consider applying for a Eutyches Grant that supports outreach ministries by youth groups. For more information, see <http://gatheringgrants.lcms.org/>

Closing Prayer

O God, it was such an incredible blessing to gather with so many other believers to learn and grow and experience Your immense love for each of us. But we have now returned home, where sometimes it is hard to feel excited about living love(d). So we ask that each day You help us recall our baptism – remembering we are made new each day through You. Each time we gather for the Lord's Supper, may we remember Your sacrifice and forgiveness. Each time we gather as a youth group and as a congregation, let it be a reminder of the larger community of believers with the same struggles, but who also have the same love in You. Forgive us when our love fails. Lead us to walk with You always, loving everyone you place in our path. In Your love and in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.