Love in Chaos

Session 1: A Divided Culture

NOTE TO LEADER

We intentionally created this study guide with more than enough material so that you can pick the questions that work best for your group. Before your meeting, watch the video, read the study guide's corresponding session, and decide which questions you'd like to discuss. For more information on using this guide in your group, click the three lines in the menu bar and select How to Use This Guide. Thank you for choosing this study and for faithfully leading your group.

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: If we want to love others the way Jesus does, we must obey his commands.

Head Change: To know that obeying God's Word is essential to following Jesus and showing his love to the people around us.

Heart Change: To feel love the way Jesus does for everyone we encounter.

Life Change: To actively love others—no matter who they are—and serve them by obeying God's instructions to us in his Word.

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OPEN

Who is the most loving person you know? Spend a few minutes describing him or her to the group.

When we think about love and what it means, we immediately think of the people who've modeled love for us. The same is true in our relationship with God. We are meant to learn from and emulate his love for others. But life is hard—and people are too, for that matter. In all the complexities and even chaos of life, are we really expected to engage the people around us with love? Wouldn't it be a whole lot easier to hunker down and steer clear of all the chaos of life and relationships?

In *Love in Chaos*, bestselling author and speaker Bob Goff will show us why engaging people with the love of Christ is exactly how we undo the chaos surrounding us. In this session, he will remind us that following the way of Jesus requires us to obey his words.

VIEW

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Bob Goff's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

What question did Bob encourage us to ask ourselves and others?

How did Bob summarize what Jesus is asking us to do?

What did Bob contrast Bible study with?

Watch Session 1: *A Divided Culture* (10 minutes).

REVIEW

There's a lot of conflict happening right now in our culture and it's persistently beating us up. There's division and anger and confusion, and it seems only to be getting worse. **To what degree have you sensed cultural conflicts affect your life? Do you feel "beat up" by our cultural divisions? In what ways?**

Bob set the stage for who he thought might be watching this series, including those for whom faith is important and some for whom "faith is an emerging thing." **Where would you say you fall on that spectrum? How would you classify the importance of faith in your life?**

Bob made an interesting claim about love. He said, if "you express love because you've got an agenda for other people . . . it isn't love anymore, it's a program." **What is your reaction to Bob's statement? In what ways does having an agenda for someone undermine our love for them?**

Bob took us from the idea of chaos being *outside* of us to the chaos *inside* of us, likening it to Paul's words in Romans 7:19, "I do not do the good that I want to do, but I practice the evil that I do not want to do." **To what degree do you experience that conflict inside you? How do you deal with that chaos? What could you do to deal with that chaos in a healthier way?**

One of Bob's goals for this series is for us to get clarity for our actions—why we believe what we believe, talk the way we talk, work the way we work, and choose to obey God instead of disobey. **Do you have clarity about why you're doing what you're doing? Why, or why not? What can you do to gain the clarity you're seeking?**

Bob summarized Jesus's instruction for his followers as, "I don't want you to be right; I want you to be like me." **What do you make of Bob's summary? Do you agree or disagree? Why?**

Bob said we can't fully understand how we're doing until we realize how others experience us. When we begin to think beyond ourselves, we'll ask ourselves and others different questions. Instead of "How's life working for you?", we'll ask, "How is your life working for the people around you?" **How would you answer Bob's question?**

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For what reasons might the latter question be a better indicator of how you're really doing?

We are called to confront the chaos in our culture (division, anger, immorality) with love and obedience. **In what ways do you respond to the chaos you see in the culture? What do you think it means to confront chaos with obedience? What opportunities do you have right now to be obedient in chaotic situations?**

Bob told the story about a time when he confronted the chaos of his friend's diagnosis by anointing his friend with oil from a Burger King fryer. And though his story may have seemed a bit silly, he was adamant that his obedience in that situation didn't only impact his friend but had a lasting impact on his own heart and faith. **Do you have any stories like Bob's? If so, feel free to share it with the group. How did God use your obedience to accomplish his will in that situation? How did he use your obedience to change you?**

Bob said we're called to love people "with kindness and respect." When we show kindness and respect to others, we pay them the dignity they deserve as God's image bearers. **What does it look like to love others with kindness and respect? How does it affect the people who receive it? Can you love others without kindness and respect? Why, or why not?**

We can't obey what Jesus says to us in the Scriptures if we don't know what he says to us in the Scriptures. **What can you do to grow more familiar with Jesus's commands to us in the Bible? In what ways can you grow in obedience to his commands?**

Love and obedience don't happen in a vacuum. They require us to be around other people, including those who might "creep us out," who aren't like us, or who are "flat wrong." **Who are the people around you regularly? In what ways can you view them as people to love instead of people to fix or correct?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Bob homed in on two specific ideas: love and obedience. For our Bible exploration, we'll see how these two ideas relate to each other. Read 1 John 2:1–6.

When we talk or think about obedience, we may do so in a way that leads to discouragement and shame. Because we will inevitably fail, we may perceive ourselves to be among the liars who don't truly love God. But John starts our conversation about obedience with the gospel. In verses 1–2, John is trying to keep us from sin. But he reminds us that even if we do sin—and we will—Christ's sacrifice covers us and still loves us. **In what ways can we feel like our standing with God depends on how "good" we are or how much we do for God?**

What would change if you truly believed that nothing you can do could make God love you any more or any less?

John wrote this letter to make sure his readers understood what it means to follow Jesus. And since we can get a bit off track from following Christ ourselves, we can easily apply John's words in this passage to our lives. **How would you summarize verses 3–6 in your own words?**

One of the primary marks of knowing God is that "we keep his commands" (v. 3). Obedience is how we distinguish ourselves as followers of God. **In what ways does keeping God's commands prove that we know him? How does disobedience put our knowledge of God into question?**

In verse 4, John continues arguing for the importance of obedience, this time with even sharper language. He writes that those who claim to know God but refuse to obey him are liars. **How would you define what it means to disobey God? Do all forms of disobedience indict us as liars? Why, or why not?**

In verse 5, John introduces the second idea that Bob covered in this session: love. Love and obedience are inextricably linked, according to John. He says, "whoever keeps his word, truly in him the love of God is made complete." **How would you describe the relationship between love and obedience?**

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In what ways do you show your love for God by obeying him? What does it communicate about the depth of our love for God when we disobey him?

Love isn't an add-on for us. It's central to who we are and what we do as God's people. It's so central, in fact, that our love for one another will mark us as Jesus's disciples. **Can other people tell that you're a disciple of Jesus by the way you love them? Why, or why not?**

What does it look like for us to make love a priority in everything we do?

Loving one another is a command, which suggests that love is more than just a fuzzy feeling. Love is active, and it's an act of obedience. **What acts of obedience is God calling you to perform right now? Who is one person in your life you could show love to right now? In what practical and tangible ways can you love him or her this week?**

LAST WORD

Our culture is in conflict and, to some degree, we're all bearing the brunt of it. Life can be chaotic, and it can beat us up, little by little. As followers of Jesus, we are commanded by God to acknowledge the chaos—both the anger and frustration around us and the anger and frustration inside of us—and engage it with love. How do we do that? By obeying the Word of God.

The choice is before us today: Will we be doers of the Word or hearers only?

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DEEPER WALK

Meditate: Set aside fifteen minutes to meditate on John 13:34–35. Read the passage 3–5 times slowly, running the words over in your mind and praying that God will apply his Word to your heart.

Pray: Pray that God will make you a doer of his Word and not a hearer only. Pray for opportunities and for the power to obey God.

Practice: Obey Jesus's command to love one another by actively showing the love of God to one person this week—a person that's been hard for you to love. Speak kindly to them when you encounter them, serve them when you can, and pray for them often. At the end of the week, take stock of how it went.

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