

Living in the Loop: Receiving and Showing God's Love



1 John 3:1-13, 11-18;
1 John 4:7-21

This week we explore what it means to 'live in the loop' of God's love. John shows that love is not just something God does; it is who he is. When we receive his love, it changes us and shapes how we treat others. In this session we'll see how John loops back to the same message again and again. He reminds us that God's love brings life, while holding on to hate keeps us in darkness. Together we'll discover how to stay in the loop by walking in God's path of forgiveness and love.

You will need:

- Paper and pens/pencils
- Large sheets of paper for the group feedback
- 'Living in the Loop' handouts printed on A3 (one per group)
- 'In the Loop' sign
- 'Out of Sync' sign
- Smalls cards or slips of paper for the Selah reflection



Beat

Say:

Before we continue to learn about John's letters, we're going to explore a technique used by many musicians.

Ask:

What is looping, and how do artists use it in their music?

Say:

This is a technique made famous by artists like Ed Sheeran, but it has been used for many

years. We're going to watch a short clip of KT Tunstall performing 'Black Horse and the Cherry Tree' for Rolling Stone Originals back in 2007. She uses a loop pedal to record and build the layers of the rhythm, harmony and melody, until the full song takes shape.

Leader's notes:

You can stop the clip once the group has understood how the looping technique works. Once the initial loop is established, you may want to skip ahead to around 3:20, which clearly shows how different musical layers are added together.

Watch:

KT Tunstall – 'Black Horse and the Cherry Tree' (Live) (4:59)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulyoxdhHrls>

Ask:

- What did you notice as the song built up?
- Did it feel repetitive, or did it grow more powerful as each layer joined in?
- What happens to the sound when all the layers come together?

Say:

So why are we looking at musical looping at the start of a Bible study? John uses a similar technique in his letters. He writes like a musician looping parts of a song, returning to the same themes again and again, each time adding something new. That's what we're going to explore in today's Bassline.

 Bridge**Ask:**

Think of all you have discovered about John's letters so far. If John's letter were a song that kept looping, what themes do you think he would keep returning to?

 Amplify**Say:**

Last week we explored what it means to walk in the light by living honestly and bringing our sin into the light of God's love and forgiveness.

Now John takes that same idea further as he encourages us to walk in love. In 1 John 3 he begins by reminding us just how much we are loved as precious children of God.

Read:

¹ See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

– (1 John 3:1)

Ask:

- When you think about the phrase ‘See what great love the Father has lavished on us’, what words or images come to mind?
- What does it mean that God doesn’t just show love, but lavishes it, pouring it out so freely that we’re called his children?

Say:

That verse sets the scene for everything that follows. John wants his readers to understand that love is not just something God does; it is who he is.

When we belong to him, love becomes who we are too.

Earlier we thought about how music can build up layer by layer. John’s writing works in the same way. He loops back, returning to the same truths repeatedly, each time adding depth and harmony. In today’s passages we will see how his focus moves from walking in the light to walking in love.

Leader’s notes:

To help the group see how this loop works, divide the young people into two groups:

- Group 1 will explore 1 John 3:1–3 and 11–18.
- Group 2 will look at 1 John 4:7–21.

Each group has the same four reflection questions on the ‘Living in the Loop’ handout following the Bible references for their chapter in 1 John.

They will read their passage, discuss the questions, and write their ideas in the boxes.

The sections in bold show the content of the handout. The italic sections are for leader use to prompt and guide discussion.

‘Living in the Loop’ Handout Content

Reflection Question	What we see in our Scripture passage	What this teaches us about real love
1. What kind of love calls us God’s children? Read 1 John 3:1-3 or 1 John 4:7-10 How does John describe God’s love and our identity?	1 John 3:1-3 - John marvels that God’s love is so great it makes us his children. 1 John 4:7-10 - Love originates in God. Everyone who loves is born of him. God showed this love by sending his Son so that we might live through him.	<i>God’s love is both the source and the definition of our identity. We are not just forgiven people but also members of God’s family. Knowing we are loved by God gives us security and shapes our character.</i>
2. How does love (or hate) reveal what’s inside us? Read 1 John 3:11-15 or 1 John 4:20-21 What contrast does John show? Why does it matter?	1 John 3:11-15 - The ‘message from the beginning’ is to love one another. Cain’s hatred of his brother revealed a heart far from God. Love shows that we have passed from death to life; hatred is evidence of spiritual death. 1 John 4:20-21 - Anyone who claims to love God but hates a brother or sister is lying. Love for God and love for others cannot be separated.	<i>Love and hate expose the true state of the heart. Real faith expresses itself in love; hatred shows disconnection from God’s life.</i>
3. Where do we see love in its purest form? Read 1 John 3:16 or 1 John 4:9-10.	1 John 3:16 - ‘This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.’ Love is defined by Christ’s self-sacrifice, and we are called to follow his example. 1 John 4:9-10 - God demonstrated love by sending his Son into the world as an atoning sacrifice. Love begins with God’s action, not our feelings.	<i>The cross is the definition and demonstration of love. True love is self-giving and costly. It acts for the good of others even when it hurts.</i>

4. How can love move from words to deeds? Read 1 John 3:17-18 or 1 John 4:12 What does John say love looks like in everyday life?	1 John 3:17-18 - <i>If someone sees a brother or sister in need and does nothing, God's love is not active in that person. 'Let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.'</i> 1 John 4:12 - <i>Though no one has seen God, when we love one another his presence is made visible and his love is completed in us.</i>	<i>Love must be practical and visible. It meets needs, not just emotions. When we act in compassion and service, God's invisible love becomes visible in the world.</i>
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Leader's notes:

When the two groups have completed their handout, bring them back together. Ask each group to share their notes for one question at a time (for example, both groups answer Question 1 before moving to Question 2). As they do this, write the key words or short phrases on a large sheet so everyone can see the overlap.

Ask:

- What do you notice about how the same idea appears in both chapters?
- How do these two passages work together to show the full picture of God's love?

Say:

In chapter 3, John shows us what love looks like in the life of God's children. In chapter 4, he shows us where that love comes from – God himself. Together they show a complete picture. We receive God's love, and we show it through our lives.

 Bridge

Ask:

What is your response to the following quote and how can it be applied to the way we love others?

'The great thing to remember is that though our feelings come and go, God's love for us does not.'

– C.S. Lewis



Sound Check

Say:

In his letter, John talks very honestly about the difference between love and hate. He isn't saying that every time we fall out with someone we've stepped out of God's love. The problem isn't when we disagree. The problem comes when we choose to hold on to anger or bitterness and refuse to work things out. When we stay in that place, it's like choosing to walk in darkness even though we know where the light is. This theme is looped throughout John's letter.

Read:

¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵ Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

— (1 John 3:14-15)

²⁰ Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.

— (1 John 4:20)

Ask:

These verses may seem extreme, but what message do you think John is trying to emphasise?

Leader's notes:

Label one side of the room 'In the Loop' and the other 'Out of Sync'.

Say:

We've seen that John takes love and hate seriously. He tells us that, as part of God's family, we should walk in love. When we love, we stay 'in the loop'. When we hold on to hate or refuse to forgive, we step 'out of sync' with God's chosen path for our lives.

Let's see what this looks like in everyday life. I'll read out a few short examples. For each one, decide whether it sounds like staying 'In the Loop' of God's love, or stepping 'Out of Sync'.

If you think it shows love and light, move to the 'In the Loop' side.

If it sounds more like hate or darkness, move to 'Out of Sync'.

Leader's notes:

Give the group opportunity to discuss their choices after each statement. Some of the scenarios give the opportunity to clarify the difference between showing hate to others and putting healthy boundaries in place.

Scenarios to Read Aloud

- You argue with a friend but apologise and talk it through.
- You hold on to a grudge because you think they don't deserve forgiveness.
- You stop speaking to someone because of a rumour you heard.
- A classmate leaves you out, but you still include them next time.
- You forgive a friend who has hurt you but decide to take a break from the friendship while trust rebuilds.
- You choose to forgive even when the other person doesn't say sorry.
- You tell someone what's bothering you instead of gossiping about them.
- You decide to take a step back from a group that keeps pressurising you to do something unkind.
- You post something online that embarrasses someone who upset you.
- You pray for someone who has annoyed you.
- You hope something goes wrong for someone who hurt you.
- You forgive someone but still feel hurt inside.

Ask:

What helps us to move from being 'out of sync' to 'back in the loop'?

Say:

John reminds us that we stay in the loop when we forgive, restore, and let God's love guide our actions.



Ask:

How can love and healthy boundaries work together?



Say:

We've spent this session thinking about what it means to live in the loop of God's love, to receive his love and show it to others. John reminds us that when we love, we continue to walk in God's path. When we hold on to anger, hate or hurt, we step off that path and begin to walk in darkness.

This isn't about feeling guilty or trying harder. It's about coming back into the light and letting God guide our steps again.

Take a moment to be still and think carefully about the following questions.

Ask:

- Am I walking in the loop of God's love right now?
- Are there relationships where I've stepped out of God's path by holding on to hurt, resentment or frustration?
- What might it look like to bring those things back into God's light and walk with him again?

Leader's notes:

Give each person a small piece of paper or a card. Invite them to write a single word or phrase that represents how they want to live 'in the loop' this week. For example: forgive, listen, include, be kind, pray, rebuild trust.

They can keep this card as a reminder or place it somewhere visible at home as a quiet act of recommitment.

Read quietly:

If we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

— (1 John 4:12)



Say:

In a piece of music, the coda brings the different aspects of the melody, harmonies and bassline to a conclusion. It pulls together the different themes and often, but not always, brings resolution to a piece of music.

Ask:

As you reflect on everything you have learned today, what is your coda?

What is the one thing you will take away from this session about living in the loop of God's love?

Leader's notes:

Give the young people a moment to think about your question and briefly share their coda with the group before the session comes to an end.





**IN THE
LOOP**

**OUT OF
SYNC**

‘Living in the Loop’

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2. How does love (or hate) reveal what’s inside us? Read 1 John 3:11-15 or 1 John 4:20-21 What contrast does John show? Why does it matter?		
3. Where do we see love in its purest form? Read 1 John 3:16 or 1 John 4:9-10.		
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