

## “Maintaining our eco-system ”

We are offering a series of reflections for individuals and churches who may be finding it difficult to provide midweek prayer and shared learning from Scripture. You can use these by watching the YouTube video, reading the relevant Bible passage and then reflecting on the questions below. To help make this a shared activity, you are encouraged to reflect on this together with friends using an online conference package, or simply arrange with a friend for them to watch it too. Then ring each other up, share your thoughts and responses and then pray for one another, and pray together for our world.

Read 1 John 4:7-12

If you can, watch the YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/Cjd08oTyfUI>

A number of our recent reflections have been based on the words of Jesus, spoken to his disciples on the night before he died – these are recorded in the Gospel of John, chapters 13-16. Jesus speaks of many things in this discourse and in particular we have focussed on his call to “remain in me” (John 15v7) and “everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another” (John 13v34). Yet these statements are interlinked with many others that speak about our love for God, God’s love for us, our love for each other, love and obedience belonging together, and so we might continue.

What we increasingly recognise is how each of these is inter-dependant – they are both the cause and effect of one another. We might describe this as a “spiritual eco-system”. Just as actions in one part of the world can affect the climate in another, or by seeking to suppress a harmful species in nature, we discover we have damaged another that was reliant on it – so we might look at all of these elements as being a necessary part of our spiritual system of well-being. None of them define our discipleship on their own, but all of them are a necessary element in it.

There are a number of other books in the New Testament that bear John’s name. One of them is 1 John, and the verses of chapter 4 could be read as a summary of those words of Jesus that the writer first heard in the upper room. We might use 1 John 4:7-12 as a spiritual checklist as we seek to maintain a healthy “spiritual eco-system”. You might simply spend some time reflecting on the Bible passage using the image of an eco-system as a kind of spiritual checklist, or you could explore some of the key statements below:

**Love one another (v7, v11, v12)** - Am I acting in love towards my sisters and brothers in Christ? As a church community do our behaviours and attitudes commend us as a community of love?

**Love comes from God (v7, v10, v11)** – Have I truly received the love of God? Do I have the grace and honesty to receive the mercy and forgiveness that is mine in Christ? If we have not received the love of God, we will not have the capacity to share the love of God.

**If we do not love we do not know God (v8)** – What is getting in the way of me knowing God more fully? Where am I not showing the love that God calls me to display? How is that affecting how my relationship with God is or is not flourishing?

**No-one has seen God but if we love each other, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us (v12)** – What impression of God do people draw from my attitudes and behaviours? How does our life together as a community of believers reflect the nature of God? If I am struggling to see God right now – to what degree is that because there are other aspects of my life that need attention?

**God sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice (v10)** – how does that big story impact my life? How does my understanding of the story of salvation affect the person that I am?.

### PRAYER

Loving God, made known to us in Jesus; alive in us through your Holy Spirit – help me to embrace your love in all its fulness; to invest in my spiritual health so that your love might be revealed through me and that I may grow in my knowledge and experience of you. So may your love be made complete in my giving and receiving, my living and my loving, my attitude to others and their attitude to me. Through Jesus who is love’s gift and love’s example. AMEN