

LOVE AND DATING

Week 3 - What is Love?

THE MAIN POINT

There are a lot of messages in our lives about what love actually looks like, but is that really what it's all about? This week we're going to take a look at what love truly is, and how that compares to what the world around us says it is. We'll also look at how changing our idea of what love is can help us.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Print attached love test
- Pen/pencil for each student

GETTING STARTED

Welcome the students back and give everyone a few minutes to share how their week has been going. If you want a great activity to help them think through their week is to ask them to share a high point and a low point from the past week.

After a few minutes of sharing, remind them of the small group rules:

RULES FOR SMALL GROUP:

Commitment - Commit to being at every group meeting (make it a priority!)

Confidentiality - What is shared here stays here.

Be honest or be silent - don't make up an answer just to have one. Sometimes the most honest answer is no answer, so if you need to, just say pass.

Respect - for one another, their thoughts/ideas/opinions (no put downs).

People say they "love" things all the time, but what does that really mean? I can say that I love ice cream and I can say that I love my mom.

- Is loving ice cream and loving your mom the same? Why or why not?
- So are you saying that there are different types of love?
- What are the types of love? (friend, romantic, family, God)

We only have one word for love. We use it interchangeably between loving tacos and loving our family. Did you know in ancient Greece they actually had 8 different words for love? Those can be combined into 4 main ones: eros, storge, philia, and agape.

Eros is sexual or romantic love - for example love between a husband and wife.

Storge is family love or the kind of love you naturally have for your family members.

Philia is deep friendship love. This is the love you have toward your closest friends.

Agape is God's love toward us. This love is unconditional, perfect, sacrificial, and pure.

Pretty cool huh? But before we talk more about that, let's take a little test. Don't worry you can't fail this test.

ACTIVITY

Have students take the attached love test. Don't give away that this is a test about love according to the Bible. When everyone is done, go through each of the items on the list and have students share their ratings. Have them explain why they gave themselves each number. Leaders should take the test and share their results as well.

GOING DEEPER

Tons of songs are written about love every year. Lots of movies and TV shows show people falling in and out of love. We tell people we love them. We say we love ice cream. But what is love really?

- What comes to mind when you hear the word love?
- What are some characteristics of love that you have seen in movies/shows or music?

That's a pretty broad spectrum right? So how do we figure out what love actually is? Remember in this small group we aren't looking at advice columns on the internet. We are hoping to see what God has to say about relationships, since He was the one that invented them. Let's take a look at what the Bible says about love. You might recognize this passage if you've ever been to a wedding.

Have a student read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NLT

- What stands out to you from this passage?

If this list sounds familiar, it's because it is the list from the test we took earlier! One thing that stands out to me is that none of the ways love is described here sound like romantic feelings. They all sound more like decisions or character attitudes to me.

- So if love is about decisions and attitudes rather than feelings, how might that impact romantic relationships?

One other thing from that passage that is interesting is that it sounds like love is all about putting the other person ahead of yourself. There is no room for selfishness in this list!

- How is that different than the way love is usually portrayed? (Usually love is portrayed as "What am I getting out of it?")
- So if love is really about putting the other person first, how does that change the way you treat the other person in a dating relationship?
- How could the items on God's definition of love's characteristics change your way of dating?

Love is ultimately about putting others first. When we took that test earlier or when we read that Bible passage, all of the things on that list are characteristics of being unselfishly loving toward someone else. After looking at that list and rating myself, I know for sure that I have a ways to go when it comes to being more like that list.

In Andy Stanley's book "The New Rules for Love, Sex, and Dating," He challenges us to look at this question: Are you the person the person you're looking for is looking for? In other words, are you as good as the type of person you would hope to date? Last week we talked about choosing the "right

person.” However, we often fail to think about the ways that we can *become* the right person.

- What do you think about that question from Andy Stanley? Are you the person the person you’re looking for is looking for? Why or Why not?
- Why is it important to consider that question?
- What ways can you become more like God’s definition or list of what love is like?
- How have your friends or people that you’ve either dated fallen short of that definition of love? (No names.)

TAKE AWAY

The truth is we all fall short of God’s definition of love in some way, shape, or form. None of us love perfectly like God does. This teaches us two things:

1) God is the only source of perfect love out there. We as people often try to find it in relationships with other people and always come up short of getting that perfect love. A relationship with God on the other hand is where we do find perfect love. God is perfectly patient, kind, and unselfish. His love is better and deeper than any of us could possibly understand. (Leader should share an example of how they’ve seen God’s love at work in their own life.)

2) We need God’s help to make us better at love. When we are in relationship with God and are actively seeking to follow His example (because we don’t get it right), our love for others becomes more and more like God’s perfect love for us. This isn’t just for romantic relationships, but all of your relationships. Think about what it would be like if two people in a romantic relationship were both working to follow God’s example of what love is. They worked hard at being kind to each other, patient with each other, generously forgiving one another, and all of the other things on that list. That would be a pretty great relationship right? Show of hands, who would want something like that?

We’re going to talk more about what it looks like to have a relationship with God later in the series, but if you want that now or want to know more about what that looks like, talk to us after!