

Live Love(d)
Introductory Bible Study
Leaders Guide (with notes in italics)



See also: *The Love Love(d) Thematic & Scriptural Study: A Primer of First John*, by Rev. Dr. Joel Lehenbauer
found: www.lcmsgathering.com/communitylife

Intro

What is love? Take 30 seconds to write down as much as you can to describe love. You may not mention the words “God” or “Jesus.” Ready? Go!

Ask for a few volunteers (youth, preferably) to share their descriptions.

The reason for not using “God” or “Jesus” in this exercise is to help people think about the fact that, although we speak frequently of love, it can be difficult to describe love apart from God.

Is this statement true or false?

“The greatest thing you’ll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return.”

(Quoted in the movie *Moulin Rouge!*, 2001)

Allow for some discussion.

Based on the numbers of movies and songs and stories that focus on love in our society, it would appear that most people believe this statement to be true. Keep this quote in mind as we go through this study. We’ll return to it at the end.

To the Scriptures

Read 1 John 4:7-12.

Point out that the Gathering Theme verse (verse 9) is in the middle of this reading.

Where does (true) love come from? (verse 7)

From God

How does verse 8 describe God?

God is love

- John says “God is love,” not “Love is God.” **What is the difference?**

Allow for discussion.

*To say “God is love” is to say something about God. God **defines** love. Because He is love, whatever He **does** defines love. To say “love is God” is to worship love, and often times a false idea of love.*

How do we know what “love” really is? (verse 9)

God has shown us real love in sending his Son.

To what end did God send his Son into the world? (verse 9)

So that we might live through him.

The theme, “Live Love(d)” is particularly apparent at the end of verse 9.

- **What does it mean to live “through” Jesus?**

Allow for discussion.

To live through Jesus is to find real and abundant life only in him

To live through Jesus is to view everything in life from the perspective of the cross

To live through Jesus is to love as he loved us



Reread verse 11. **What do we do with the love God gives us?**

We love one another. Or, we “live love.”

Textual note: When John talks about loving one another in 1 John, he is talking primarily about loving our brothers and sisters in Christ (Lehenbauer, 19).

Love Today

When it comes to love, we must constantly “unlearn” what we have been taught by the world even as we learn what God has to teach us.

What are some false ideas about love in our society today? How do you know when love is “false”?

Allow for discussion.

Here you might distinguish between “love” and “lust.” Love is self-sacrificial, lust is self-serving. Point out that most of what passes for “love” in our society is actually self-serving “lust.”

Ultimately, the only way to know whether love is true or false is to measure it against the Scriptures.

False love doesn’t always *look* ugly and disgusting. Sometimes false views of love are very attractive and seductive. **What are some examples of a false view of love that is very attractive? Why is it so attractive?**

Allow for some discussion.

False views of love are very appealing because they appeal to our sinful desires and inclination. Satan is the “father of lies” (John 8:44). He (as well as our sinful flesh and the world) lead us to look for love in the wrong ways and the wrong places. Often times false love looks good and leads us into sin and undesirable places and situations in life.

How did Jesus deal with people who were mixed up about love? Think of specific encounters that Jesus had with such people in the Bible, and discuss what we can learn from his example about reaching out to “de-loved” people today with the love of Christ.

Allow youth and parents to think of examples.

Examples could include the woman at the well in John 4, Zacchaeus in Luke 19, Jesus’ parable of the lost son in Luke 15, the thieves on the cross in Luke 23:39-43



A Radical Redefinition of Love

The theme for the 2013 National Youth Gathering is *Live Love(d)*. In many ways this Gathering will try to redefine in biblical terms what it means to love and be loved. It is crucial to recognize that, in the theme “Live Love(d),” the “(d)” makes all the difference. We cannot even begin to know what it means to love others in the biblical sense of the term until and unless we know and trust God’s love for us in Jesus Christ. “We love,” says John, “because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). By the same token, once we know God’s love in Christ we cannot help but love God *and* others; “whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4:21).

A quick look at the Gathering daily themes...

Here’s a preview of how the theme of National Youth Gathering is going to unfold:

Monday: **BE-loved**

We gather together as sinners who are “beloved” as God’s forgiven children.

Tuesday: **DE-loved**

We confront twisted and distorted views of love that inevitably end in disappointment and despair.

Wednesday: **Love LIVED**

We take an up-close and personal look at Jesus, the love of God in the flesh.

Thursday: **Live LOVED**

We take a second look at our identity as ones who have been loved purely and completely by God in Christ.

- Luther: “Rather than seeking its own good, the love of God flows forth and bestows good. Therefore sinners are attractive because they are loved; they are not loved because they are attractive. . . . This is the love of the cross.”

Heidelberg Disputation (1518), Explanation of Thesis 28 (quoted in Lehenbauer, 24)

Friday: **Live LOVE**

We look beyond ourselves to love others in the name of Jesus.

- Luther: “For where works and love do not break forth, there faith is not right, the gospel does not yet take hold, and Christ is not rightly known.”

Prefaces to the New Testament (LW 35:361), on the Gospels (quoted in Lehenbauer, 25)



Conclusion

Earlier we considered this quote: “The greatest thing you’ll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return.” Let’s think about it again. Is it true?

How might this revision be an improvement? “The greatest thing you’ll ever learn is that you *are* loved and that you are able to love in return.”

Unpacking this profound truth is the goal of the 2013 National Youth Gathering. (We look forward to being with you and your youth in San Antonio as we study God’s Word together!)

Closing Prayer

Father in heaven,

In Your Son Jesus You have shown us true love. His sacrifice for us on the cross has opened our eyes to what it means to be loved. With great thanksgiving we ask You to surround us with Your loving Spirit. Empower us to live through Jesus and to love others with His sacrificial love. Guide us and provide for us as we prepare to join our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world in San Antonio this/next summer. Let everything we think, say, and do bring glory to Your name and love to this broken world. In Jesus’ name. Amen.