



+ Generations Together

Power of Love

Here is a cross-generational session for all members of the congregation exploring the meaning of love and its importance in our lives—as individuals, families and communities. This session is designed to be conducted in about 90 minutes, and can be adapted for a shorter or longer timeframe.

Introduction

This session works well just prior to Valentine's Day. The Bible has a lot to say about love. This session begins with a game that makes Scripture reading more fun that gets people counting and talking. Families can then choose which LOVE activities they want to do.

I. Gather

[use the following adaptation of the activity Love, Love, Love]

Needed

Bible, Bible Passages about Love – one for each small group, scissors, bowl for each small group, a single die for each small group

Prepare in Advance

- Mark your Bible to 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, 13
- Gather needed materials as listed above
- Print out one copy of Bible Passages about Love
- Cut out the 10 Bible passages from the Bible Passages about Love, fold them, and place them into a bowl – one set of strips and bowl for each table group.

Activity Plan

1. Ask participants to gather in small table groups of 2-3 households each. From your Bible, proclaim the famous passage on love, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, 13. Pause, then voice this prayer:

God, thank you for loving us so much. Help us to love you more and each other. Amen.

2. Announce that each table group will now be invited to play the game called Love, Love, Love. Quickly, but clearly, explain the rules of the game:
 - Each person takes a turn at rolling the die.
 - A number from one to six will appear. Start with the person who rolled the die and count around the circle to your right, counting each family member until you get to the number on the die.

- The person who is the number on the die, such as six, gets to take one Bible passage out of the bowl. That person then unfolds the paper and reads aloud the Bible passage.
 - The person who read aloud the Bible passage then gets to roll the die.
 - Repeat the process.
 - Play the game until all the Bible passages have been read.
3. As a table group, talk about these questions one at a time:
 - Why is love mentioned a lot in the Bible?
 - How do you feel when you love someone?
 - Can you love someone and be angry with him or her at the same time? Why or why not?
 - Which of these Bible passages do you like the best? Why?
 4. After sufficient time, call for all the table groups to focus their attention to the large group. Invite a few people of varying ages to share something they learned or enjoyed from this game.

II. Grow

During this part of the session, families (and individuals) will be able to choose an activity they would like to engage in.

Needed:

- Sufficient copies of each activity that you will offer.
- Separate space for each activity – classroom or corner of the large gathering room or the like.
- At least one person to facilitate each activity. This person will explain the activity and offer assistance to those participating.
- Gather needed materials for each activity as listed on the front page of each.
- Set up a “learning station” for each activity that you will offer (see list below). Be sure to offer at least one activity geared toward each audience group that you have present: Adult/Couple, Young Adult, Young Family, Teen Family. Make a simple sign for each “learning station” depicting the name of the activity.

Activity Plan

1. Explain to all participants that they will now get to choose which activity they would like to do next to further explore the power of love. Invite each activity facilitator forward to give the group the title and a brief description and the intended audience for her/his particular activity.
 - I Do, I Do, I Won’t (adult/couple): Valentine’s Day is the traditional day for sweethearts and lovers. But love isn’t only for a day; it must be renewed daily. Learn how to keep it going over the long haul by recommitting to “I won’t give up!”
 - Love Is . . . (adult/couple, young adult, teen family, young family): Although this activity can be done at any time of year, it is particularly suited for married couples around Valentine’s Day (or perhaps your anniversary). Few couples fully realize what they’re getting into on their wedding day. Now that you have experience, revisit your wedding and go deeper.
 - Be My What? (young adult): For some reason, our culture has a holiday that focuses on love and romance right in the middle of the Winter. Rather than complain, take some time to explore your feelings on relationships and what you expect from your Valentine experiences.
 - Valentine Prayers (young family, teen family): Make easy, handmade valentines with pictures and messages that tell people how much you care about them.

- Love and Stuff (teen family, young adult): How do we talk about love and relationships? The Bible has a great conversation starter in Song of Songs. Explore this ancient text as a family and spend some time talking about emotions that have apparently been around for a long time.
2. Now, instruct families and individuals to move to their desired activity and do it!
 3. When families arrive at each learning station, the activity facilitator should provide the activity, necessary handouts and supplies, and then assist as needed.
 4. If time permits, have participants choose a second activity and do it.

III. Go Forth

Needed: copies of the activity Love Notes (one for each household)

Activity Plan

1. Invite participants back to their original table groups. Ask them to share their responses to the following questions. Encourage young people to respond first, then bigger people:
 - Who teaches you the most about love?
 - How can you share your love to make the world a better place?
2. With your Bible, ask someone to proclaim the famous passage on love from Paul, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, 13.
3. Conclude with this short prayer:

God, we give thanks for the stirring of love and the power of emotions. Guide us as we experience these feelings and help us to be supportive and honest with each other as a family. May we always talk about matters of the heart with loving hearts. Amen.

4. Send home with each household group a copy of the activity Love Notes.

Love, Love, Love

By Jolene Roehlkepartain

Two major holidays about love occur during the winter: Christmas and Valentine's Day. Make Scripture reading more fun by playing a game that gets people counting and talking.

For

Young Family

Season

Winter

Needed

Bible, one copy of Bible Passages about Love, scissors, bowl, a single die



Prepare in Advance

- Mark your Bible to 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, 13 (or see the text below)
- Gather needed materials as listed above
- Print out one copy of Bible Passages about Love
- Cut out the 10 Bible passages from the Bible Passages about Love, fold them, and place them into a bowl

Activity Plan

1. Say this prayer aloud to begin.

God, thank you for loving us so much. Help us to love you more and each other. Amen.

2. Explain the rules of the game:
 - Each person takes a turn at rolling the die.
 - A number from one to six will appear. As a family, start with the person who rolled the die and count around the circle to your right, counting each family member until you get to the number on the die. For example, if you have four people and someone rolls a six, you'll go around the circle once and then start going around a second time until you get to the number six. This helps young children learn how to count.
 - The person who is the number on the die, such as six, gets to take one Bible passage out of the bowl. That person then unfolds the paper and reads aloud the Bible passage.
 - The person who read aloud the Bible passage then gets to roll the die.
 - Repeat the process.
 - Play the game until all the Bible passages have been read.
3. As a family, talk about these questions one at a time:
 - Why is love mentioned a lot in the Bible?
 - How do you feel when you love someone?
 - Can you love someone and be angry with him or her at the same time? Why or why not?
 - Which of these Bible passages do you like the best? Why?
4. Variation: Play the game again. Instead of choosing a Bible passage, have the person name a person, pet, or something he or she loves.

Bible Passages about Love

Cut out the Scriptures below along the dotted lines. Fold each one.

John 3:16

For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.

Zephaniah 3:17

The Lord your God is with you; his power gives you victory. The Lord will take delight in you, and in his love he will give you new life.

1 John 4:8

Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Galatians 5:22

But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.

John 13:34

And now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

Deuteronomy 6:5

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

1 John 4:11

Dear friends, if this is how God loved us, then we should love one another.

John 15:9

I love you just as the Father loves me; remain in my love.

1 Corinthians 16:14

Do all your work in love.

1 John 4:19

We love God because God first loved us.

I Do, I Do, I Won't

By Susan Vogt



Valentine's Day is the traditional day for sweethearts and lovers. But love isn't only for a day; it must be renewed daily. Learn how to keep it going over the long haul by recommitting to "I won't give up!"

For

Adult, Couple

Season

Winter (around Valentine's Day)

Needed

Your spouse, a quiet time to reconnect as a couple, paper and pencil. Candlelight and a favorite beverage would be nice.

Prepare in Advance

- A romantic environment. You decide the details.
- Research marriage enrichment opportunities in your community – just in case. Often churches offer these, or check out national programs that might be held in your locale.

Activity Plan

1. This activity is about renewing your commitment to your beloved, Saying "I do" and "I won't give up." Open your couple time with a prayer such as:

Husband: *Dear God of Love, we came together ___ years ago pledging our love to each other. You who see all things know that we haven't always been perfect in our love, but we're still here. We're still committed. We're still trying. We won't give up.*

Wife: *God the Father, you are the model of generous love as you gave your son to us. Jesus, you are the model of sacrificial love as you died for us. Holy Spirit, you are our model of joyous and vibrant love.*

Together: *Amen.*

2. Remember together. The wedding vows are short but powerful words of commitment. Make them come alive by each of you privately writing down your answers to the following questions:
 - What has been the hardest time in your marriage so far?
 - Not counting your wedding day or the birth of a child, name one or two highlights of your marriage so far? Be as specific as possible.

- Has your beloved ever been seriously sick? How did you deal with that?
 - Name at least one practice that you do to stay healthy? Is it working?
 - Have you ever had financial problems in your marriage? Have you been able to resolve them?
 - If you have sufficient income for your daily needs, are you able to stop accumulating stuff and give the excess to those in need.
3. Exchange papers, read them over, and discuss. Did anything surprise you? Did you agree on most of your memories?
 4. Consider a next step. An evening of reminiscing is good but attending a marriage enrichment program together can be a bonus. Did any of your prior research uncover a program near you in the near future? Is it possible to attend? Would you both be willing to attend – perhaps as a Valentine gift to each other?
 5. Closing Prayer: Renew your marriage vows by saying out loud, one after the other:

“I _____, take you, _____, to be my wife/husband. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.”
 6. Go further. If you haven’t already memorized your vows, maybe this would be the time. The effort one puts into memorization makes the ideas stick more strongly.

Love Is . . .

By Susan Vogt

Although this activity can be done at any time of year, it is particularly suited for married couples around Valentine's Day (or perhaps your anniversary). Few couples fully realize what they're getting into on their wedding day. Now that you have experience, revisit your wedding and go deeper.

For

Adult, Couple

Season

Winter



Needed

A good memory, two pieces of paper for each spouse and a pencil/pen. Optional: readings from your wedding, wedding photo album, candles, background music wouldn't hurt (You might choose something from your wedding, a romantic or nostalgic song, "your" song.)

Prepare in Advance

Agree with your spouse to do this together. Pick a time when you might have about a half hour of uninterrupted time.

Activity Plan

The most commonly used scripture at weddings is 1 Corinthians 13:1-8, 13. It's so endearing and inspiring. Teary eyed couples listen to these words with hope and commitment, BUT then real life returns.

1. Begin by taking turns slowly reciting 1 Corinthians 13:1-8, 13 to each other:

Husband: If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. *(pause)*

Wife: And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. *(pause)*

Husband: If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. *(pause)*

Wife: Love is patient; *(pause)*

Husband: Love is kind; *(pause)*

Wife: Love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. *(pause)*

Husband: It does not insist on its own way; *(pause)*

Wife: It is not irritable or resentful; *(pause)*

Husband: It does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. *(pause)*

Wife: It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. *(pause)*

Husband: Love never ends... *(pause)*

Together: Faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love. *(pause)*

2. On your paper each spouse writes one negative trait that he or she knows they have brought into the marriage. For example: I am (or was) envious, boastful, arrogant, rude, insisted on having my own way, irritable, resentful, rejoiced in wrongdoing, or other. Perhaps you've already conquered this negative trait. (Check with your beloved to confirm this.) If not, consider one specific step that you can take to move in a more loving direction. Write it down.
3. On the other piece of paper, each spouse writes at least five virtues that your spouse has. Try to add a specific time when your beloved exhibited this virtue. For example: patience – you wait without complaining when I take a long time to get ready. Kindness – you let me sleep in and took the kids out for breakfast last Saturday. Consider also the virtues of truth telling, bearing wrongs willingly, believing in me, optimism, hopefulness, endures hardships, loves me unconditionally, or others.
4. Each spouse share what you've written. Keep the paper with your commitment to change the negative habit you've claimed. Give the virtue paper to your spouse to keep as a love reminder.
5. Seal it with a kiss, or whatever.

Be My What?

By Lee Yates



For some reason, our culture has a holiday that focuses on love and romance right in the middle of the Winter. Rather than complain, take some time to explore your feelings on relationships and what you expect from your Valentine experiences.

For

Young Adult

Season

Winter (prior to Valentine's Day)

Needed

Interview and Reflection Questions worksheet

Prepare in Advance

- Set up dates for at least two interviews.
 - One or more with someone who's romantic relationship you admire.
 - One or more with someone who struggles in relationships.
- Print out 2 copies of *Interview and Reflection Questions* for each interview.
- Give your conversation partner a copy of the worksheet.

Activity Plan

1. Begin with a short prayer. Here are some words if you need them.
Lord of Love, help us to look into our own hearts and understand love more fully.
2. Use the *Interview and Reflection Questions* worksheet to guide your conversation. Be sure to take notes as you go. You will want to look back on them later.
3. Thank your conversation partner for their time and honesty.
4. Close in prayer. Here are some words if you need them:
Lord of Love, we give thanks for your love that challenges us and supports us. Help us to open ourselves up to love more fully. Help us to open ourselves up to receive love more fully. Amen.
5. Repeat with other conversation partners.
6. Look back over all of your interview notes and reflection notes. Try to answer the following:
 - What am I looking for in a relationship (or my current relationship)?
 - What are the expectations of those with whom I am in relationship?
 - What is the purpose of Valentine's Day in our culture?
 - How do I want to spend my Valentine's Day?

Interview and Reflection Questions

Opening Statement (share this before you begin):

The following questions focus is on romantic relationships. I will begin with some questions for you. Then together we can discuss some reflection questions.

Interview Questions (*you ask these but do not answer them*) :

- ❖ What do you think makes a healthy romantic relationship?
- ❖ What impact did your childhood family have on your relationship/s?
- ❖ What couples have served as a model for your relationship/s?
- ❖ How do you deal with conflict in current relationships?
- ❖ What role does your faith play in your romantic life?

Reflection Questions (answer these questions together):

- ❖ What do you think is the point of Valentine's Day?
- ❖ How do you feel about the growth in on-line dating?
- ❖ How can Churches make an impact in new or young relationships?
- ❖ What is the biggest mistake you have made in a relationship?
- ❖ What factors in our culture make forming relationships a challenge?
- ❖ *What factors in your life make sustaining relationships a challenge?

Valentine Prayers

By Jolene Roehlkepartain

Make easy, handmade valentines with pictures and messages that tell people how much you care about them.

For

Young Family

Season

Winter



Needed

Bible, copies of the People Around You worksheet (one per person), pens or pencils, washable markers or crayons, copies of the [heart image](#) (several per person), 8 ½- x 11-inch paper (in white, pink, or red), envelopes, first-class stamps, addresses

Activity Plan

1. Say this prayer aloud to begin.

God, help us to show our love to the people around us. Amen.

2. Ask someone to read aloud 1 John 4:7 "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God."

Then ask another family member to read aloud Matthew 22:37-39 "And he said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.'"

3. Give each person a copy of the People Around You and pen or pencil. Read through the handout together. Have each person identify the name of someone who fits each category. (You can also name more than one for each category.) Help young children who may not be able to write yet.
4. Have each person circle three to five names from the People Around You worksheet.
5. Using the [heart image](#), print one for each person on an 8 ½- by 11-inch paper in white, pink, or red.
6. Have each person write a short thinking-of-you prayer (or draw a picture) on each heart using washable markers or crayons. For example, someone might write, "I love you and I pray for you" or "You are the best!" Then have the person sign his or her name at the bottom of the heart.
7. Find the address for each person you created a Valentine for. Write the address on an envelope. Fold up the heart that you created for the person to fit inside the envelope. Then place a first-class stamp on the envelope, and mail them to be received by Valentine's Day.
8. Give each person another heart. Have each person write the names of the people he or she made Valentine Prayers for. For example, the heart might say: Grandpa, Aunt Nancy, Bobby, Mom, and Mr. Anderson. Then have that person write his or her name at the top of the sheet. Keep the Valentines with people's name on it at your table. When you have a meal, say a prayer for the people listed on the Valentine heart.

People Around You

Fill in the names of people around you who you know.

How You Know This Person	Name of Person
Mom, Dad, Brothers, Sisters, Stepmom, Stepdad	
Grandpa and Grandma	
Aunts and Uncles	
Friends	
Classmates or Co-workers	
Neighbors	
People at Church	
Teachers	
Others	

Love and Stuff

By Lee Yates



How do we talk about love and relationships? The Bible has a great conversation starter in Song of Songs. Explore this ancient text as a family and spend some time talking about emotions that have apparently been around for a long time.

For

Teen Family

Season

Winter

Needed

Bible, note-cards and pens

Prepare in Advance

- Parents should make a timeline of romantic relationships from their youth.
- Parents should use this list to reflect on their own teenage experiences with romance and relationships.
- Teens should list questions they would like to ask about their parent's teen romance experience.
- Warn everyone that this topic can be uncomfortable so decide on some rules about "passing" or "skipping" uncomfortable questions.

Activity Plan

1. Begin with a short prayer. Here are some words if you need them.

Lord, some topics are easier to avoid or ignore than really talk openly about. Help us to speak freely, giggle as needed, and listen to each other.

2. From your Bible read Song of Songs 2
 - Why do you think this was put into the Bible?
 - What might this tell us about God?
3. From your Bible read Song of Songs 3:1-5
 - What might this tell us about God?
 - What do you think the last line of verse 5 means?
4. From your Bible read Song of Songs 4:1-7 and 5:10-16
 - Why do you think this was put into the Bible?
 - Which of these "complements" is your favorite?

5. Use the following questions for reflection:
 - What is the best complement someone could give about your physical appearance?
 - What is the best complement someone could give about your personality or behavior?
 - When have you prayed about a romantic relationship or someone you were attracted to?
6. Let teens share some of the questions from their list. Take time for conversation sparked by the question. Use these additional questions if you need some extras:
 - What attracts you to people romantically?
 - Tell me a story about someone wooing you or seeking your affection.
 - When have you written or received a love poem?
7. See if parents have any questions for teens about romance and relationship issues that today's culture presents.
8. Close your conversation with a prayer. Here are some words if you need them:

God, we give thanks for the stirring of love and the power of emotions. Guide us as we experience these feelings and help us to be supportive and honest with each other as a family. May we always talk about matters of the heart, or hormones, with loving hearts. Amen.

Song of Songs 2

I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys. *(He)* As a lily among brambles, so is my love among the young women. *(She)* As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Sustain me with raisins; refresh me with apples, for I am sick with love. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me! I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.

(She) The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, there he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, looking through the lattice. My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away. O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely. Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom." My beloved is mine, and I am his; he grazes among the lilies. Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle or a young stag on cleft mountains.

Song of Songs 3:1-5

On my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but found him not. I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares; I will seek him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but found him not. The watchmen found me as they went about in the city. "Have you seen him whom my soul loves?" Scarcely had I passed them when I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her who conceived me. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.

Song of Songs 4:1-7

Behold, you are beautiful, my love, behold, you are beautiful! Your eyes are doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from the washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them has lost its young. Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely. Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil. Your neck is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors. Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, that graze among the lilies. Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, I will go away to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.

Song of Songs 5:10-16

My beloved is radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand. His head is the finest gold; his locks are wavy, black as a raven. His eyes are like doves beside streams of water, bathed in milk, sitting beside a full pool. His cheeks are like beds of spices, mounds of sweet-smelling herbs. His lips are lilies, dripping liquid myrrh. His arms are rods of gold, set with jewels. His body is polished ivory, bedecked with sapphires. His legs are alabaster columns, set on bases of gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

Love Notes

By Christy Huffman

Using God's Word, our words, and pictures to share love with our family.

For

Young Family

Season

Winter (around Valentine's Day)

Needed

Bible, Red, pink, and/or white construction paper or cardstock, markers, crayons or colored pencils, scissors, heart stickers (optional)

Activity Plan

1. Using the paper or cardstock, cut seven hearts of different sizes per family member. (Parents may need to cut these for small children.)
2. On one side of the hearts write TO: [family member's name] LOVE: [your name]. Optional: Place heart stickers on this side.
3. On the other side of the hearts write (or draw) one of the following:
 - A verse about loving God or God's love for us. (Parents may need to help younger or non-reading children find these verses. For children who can't write, have them draw pictures of what the verse means to them. Parents can also re-word a verse, if needed, so a child can understand it.)

John 3:16
Deuteronomy 6:5
Psalm 18:1
Psalm 33:22
Psalm 36:7
Psalm 86:15
Psalm 89:1
Psalm 100:5
Psalm 106:1

Proverbs 10:12
Matthew 19:19
Luke 10:27
John 13:34
John 15:9
John 15:12
Romans 8:38-39
1 Corinthians 13:4
1 Corinthians 13:13

1 Corinthians 16:14
2 Thessalonians 3:5
1 Peter 3:8
1 Peter 4:8
1 John 4:8
1 John 4:19
Jude 1:2

- One thing you love about a family member
 - One thing you love about God and/or God's creation.
4. Place one heart in each family member's backpack, purse, diaper bag, briefcase, lunch bag for a week.

