

# 40 Days of Love Individual/Small Group Discussion Guide

## Part 1: Love Matters Most

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” Matthew 22:36-39

We love because God loves us; and we also learned that love is a choice, an action, a skill, and a habit. This guide is the first part of *40 Days of Love* where we will learn about lessons of love through the Bible and Bible Talks & Small Groups. We will learn how to make love a habit. We will also learn how to grow in love through our relationships. Focus is an essential key for life to be effective, because effort without focus is not effective. Also, essential is what we place our focus on for an effective life. Jesus says, in the Scripture above, that our focus should be on loving God and loving others. This discussion will cover three important truths about loving God and others. (Open your time with a prayer. This is only a guide - select the points you want to cover.)

### 1. The best use of life is love.

**Love validates my faith.** What does 1 John 4:8 tell us about those who do not love? In what ways do we love that shows our love for God? When we love, we authenticate that we are children of God. What are some practical ways to love that can be identified by others as Christ-centered? First John 4:20 reminds us that love should be evident in our actions. How do people in our lives react when we show them love in our actions?

**Love integrates my life.** What priority does Colossians 3:14 place on love? What priorities do we frequently place over love? When love is not at the center of our lives, we treat people differently. What are some examples of how people treat others when work or other priorities are at the center of their lives? Love is a unifying life principle that binds together our virtues. What would happen to our character and integrity if we chose not to love or forgot to love?

**Love compensates for sin.** According to 1 Peter 4:8, what does love do? How do people respond when we choose to love them and not judge them for their sins? Colossians 2:14 reminds us that Jesus' love for us canceled the charges against us. How does that benefit us? What are some ways we can show that to others?

**Love reverberates forever.** First Corinthians 13:13 outlines three important things. What are they and which one is the greatest? What actions of love have you seen benefit others? What are some examples of 'legacies of love' you have seen that have affected multiple generations? How does 1 Corinthians 13:3 describe life without love? How are we affected when we do prioritize relationships in our lives? What are some practical ways to make relationships a higher priority?

**Discipleship** - At times, our world can portray love as a concept worth sacrificing moral principles and others' rights for. Opposite to this worldview, God's love is not selfish. When you love in a way that honors God, your life and the lives of people around you change in wonderful ways. Discuss with your group some examples of selfish love and godly love. Compare both types of love and discuss the effects they have on your lives.

### 2. The best expression of love is time.

**How should we show love according to 1 John 3:18?** What is the difference when someone gives their focused attention to another versus half-hearted words? Describe a few sincere actions that are only given by using time. **What is the only thing that counts according to Galatians 5:6?** How does our faith influence how much we give? How can a busy schedule affect our use of time to love others? What are some ways men and women are affected differently when it comes to loving through faith? **In Ephesians 5:2, how does it say we are to live life? Why?** Jesus taught the essence of life is not what we do, but how much we give of ourselves. What are some sacrifices that loving people often have to make? What are some distractions in society that can diffuse our focus on loving people? How can the distractions discussed above be controlled or eliminated?

**Fellowship** - Love is spelled: T-I-M-E. There is no replacement for time when it comes to loving God and others. It requires personal sacrifices, but will have eternal rewards. Relationships are more important than professional achievements or awards. They are more important than wealth or power. Relationships are everything in life. What changes and sacrifices are you willing to make so more time can be placed toward loving God and others?

### 3. The best time to love is now.

**What does Galatians 6:10 instruct us to do when we have the opportunity?** What are some opportunities to do good to others that we overlook because of our busy lives? **According to Ephesians 5:16, how should we be spending our time?** Paul advises us to live wisely/ What are some foolish habits that can be transformed to good deeds? **What does Proverbs 3:27-28 urge us to do? When?** What are some typical excuses for our unwillingness to help others immediately? **What does 1 Corinthians 14:1 claim should be our highest goal?** Who are some good role models who put love as their top priority? What can we learn from those who make love their highest goal?