



This Valentine's Day: React to God's Love.

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Valentine's Day tends to help relationship stuff bubble to the top: crushes are realized, crushes are crushed. It can all be a bit unnerving. Use your students' Valentine's Day anxiety to react to the assurance of a love they never have to question: God's love.

Materials Needed

Digging In Option 1:

- Data projection to project 1 John 4:11-12 from a Bible app, a projection "screen" that can be doodled on (i.e., poster board, whiteboard), large (fat) magic markers.

Digging In Option 2:

Print outs of 1 John 4:11-12, colored pencils.

Leader Personal Prep

(Before you meet with your students.)

- Prayerfully read 1 John 4:11-12. Meditate for a few minutes on the connections between God, God's love and God's people. Process how the statements in this passage play out in your daily life. Before you meet with students read through the guide below so that you're familiar with the flow of the exercise.

The Passage: 1 John 4:11-12

- ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.*

Open

Use one or more questions below to get your students thinking about Valentine's Day.

- **What do you like about Valentine's Day?**
- **What do you NOT like about Valentine's Day?**
- **How do you react when you receive a Valentine (or Valentine overture) from someone you'd rather not receive a Valentine from?**
- **How do you react when you receive a Valentine (or Valentine overture) from a crush?**

Transition into your study time by sharing these thoughts in your own words:

Valentine's Day can be a bit unnerving. We take risks in sharing our feelings. We sometimes have to say "no" and break someone's heart. Lots of reactions and interactions. But think about this for a minute: Followers of Christ are actually in a lifelong reaction to God's "crush" on us, His relentless love, with Jesus' journey to the cross being the top act of love of all time.

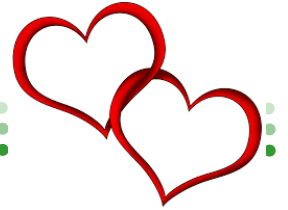
So, let's use Valentine's Day to focus on how we are to react to God's love.

Choose one of the Digging In options below for exploring the passage (1 John 4:11-12) with your students. Each has its own set of materials.

Digging In

Share in your own words:

- **While most of the Bible is an instruction book on how to react to God's love, there are a few places where God is very specific on how to react. We're going to look at one of these places.**



● Digging In Option 1

- Needed: Data projection to project 1 John 4:11-12 from a Bible app, a projection "screen" that can be doodled on (i.e., poster board, whiteboard), large (fat) magic markers.

Project the Scripture onto a piece of poster board, a large whiteboard or large piece of paper (such as newsprint or the back of a desk pad calendar page). Ask for three different volunteers to make these observations (using as thick of a marker as you can find):

Draw a heart over every reference to love.

Draw a cross over every reference to God.

Draw a smiley face over every reference to people such as "us," "we" and "one another."

After the passage is marked up, turn off your projector and look at what's left. You'll have a collage of hearts, crosses and smiley faces. Then discuss these questions with each other:

What does this collage of symbols say to you? What seems to be important in this passage?

There is a direct connection between God, love and people.

What's God saying to us in this passage?

What's the relationship between us, God's love, and other people?

God's people show God's love by loving.

God counts on the world seeing Him through the love His followers show.

[Move to "Taking It Inward" below. You'll want to again project the passage for these questions.]

● Digging In Option 2

- Needed: Print outs of 1 John 4:11-12, colored pencils.

Copy and paste 1 John 4:11-12 into a document that you can print and distribute. Ask students to take a couple minutes in personal solitude to read the passage and to mark these observations below as they read:

Draw a heart over every reference to love.

Draw a cross over every reference to God.

Draw a smiley face over every reference to people such as "us," "we" and "one another."

After students have finished, process the passage with these questions:

Look at the symbols you drew in this passage. What seems to be important in these verses?

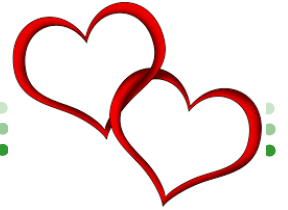
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● Taking It Inward

- Share with your group that this passage has some powerful phrases. Invite students to look at the passage and pick out a
- phrase to comment on. Use the questions below to prompt the discussion.

What does it mean to you to that God's love is complete in you?

Possible responses:

- We can experience the fullest extent of God's love when we love others.
- Love is the ultimate goal of God's creation; when we love others we are experiencing one of God's reasons for creation: love.

What seems to be implied by "No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another..."

Possible responses:

- Our love for one another helps people see God.
- Loving others is our best way to experience "seeing" God ourselves.

● Close

- Share in your own words:

We show that we "get" God's love when we love one another. To help you process "getting" God's love, do this little thought exercise below by completing this progression:

1. God loves us
2. God showed His love for us through Jesus
3. I will show my love for God through: [an attitude, an action, a change]

Stress to your group that, of course, we don't have to *do* or *show* anything to earn or experience God's love. It's there, with no conditions, for us to accept. But 1 John 4:11-12 is pretty clear that when we accept this unconditional love, *really accept it*, it's impossible to do that without some kind of reaction to how good God's love is. If there's not some kind of reaction in us, there's a good chance that, and this may sound harsh, we really don't "get it."

Challenge your students to do something in the next 24 hours that is a direct reaction to God's love. You may want to spend a few minutes having students share some ideas before closing in prayer.