



## A Valentine's Day Debrief

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We've all had Valentine's Day fallout, both good and bad, at some point in our lives: a crush realized, a crush crushed, etc. Use your students' after-Valentine's Day glow (or burn) as a springboard to explore how believers are to react to the love of God.

### **Personal Prep for the Leader**

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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**

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*<sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. (1 John 4:11-12 ESV)*

### **Group Guide for the Session**

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#### **Prep**

You'll want to choose one of the Digging In options below (after the Open exercise) for exploring 1 John 4:11-12 with your students. Each Digging In option has its own set of materials.

#### **Open**

Ask one or more of the following questions to get your students thinking about the subject.

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- Did any of you use Valentine's Day to move forward on a "crush" (i.e., make your feelings known, ask someone out on a date)? What kind of reaction did you get?
- Did anybody get "moved forward" upon, as in: someone let you know their feelings about you? How did you respond?
- Did anybody break up or get dumped over this past Valentine's Day? How did you react to that?

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

**Valentine's Day is often a time when we react to the "crushes" we have on someone or the "crushes" someone has on us. But have you ever thought of the Christian walk in this way? Think about it: 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 all-time top act of love!**

## 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 extra specific on how to react. We're going to take a look at one of these places.**

### Option 1

Needed:

Data projection, a projection "screen" that can be drawn on (i.e., poster board, whiteboard), large (fat) magic markers.

Project the passage 1 John 4:11-12 onto the "screen" you chose. Ask for three different volunteers to make these observations (using as thick of a marker as you can find) on the screen:

**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 on your screen. You'll have a collage of hearts, crosses, and smiley faces. Discuss these questions with each other:

**Besides some jumbled symbols, 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" on the next page. You'll want to project the passage again for these questions.

### 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?**  
*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.*

## Taking it Inward

Share with your group that this segment of Scripture 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 by completing the last phrase of the progression:**

- 1. God loves us**
- 2. God showed His love for us through Jesus**
- 3. I love God**
- 4. 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 it's impossible to accept this unconditional love, *really accept it*, 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.