

Taught by RICK WARREN



**40** Days  
of **LOVE**

*We Were Made for Relationships*

A Six-Session Video-Based Study Guide for Small Groups

## Read the Book!

To maximize the impact of this study, we recommend that each participant have a copy of this study guide and the book *The Relationship Principles of Jesus*, by Tom Holladay, Teaching Pastor at Saddleback Church. Reading assignments and in-group review of *The Relationship Principles of Jesus* are a vital part of this learning experience. The book will become a valuable, permanent resource for review and sharing once you have completed this study.

SESSION ONE

# Love Matters Most



## LOOKING AHEAD

1. Welcome to *40 Days of Love*. If your group is new or if you have new members, take time to briefly introduce yourselves and to review the Group Guidelines on page 98–99.
2. Share with the group what you hope to get out of this study.
3. If you search the Internet for love songs, you will find more than thirty-nine million entries! Name some of your favorites, and discuss what they say about love.

## KEY VERSE

Let love be your highest goal!

1 Corinthians 14:1 (NLT)

### Host Tip

The key verse establishes the theme and binds the group with the “glue” of God’s Word. Have someone read the passage aloud.



Watch the video lesson now and take notes in the lesson outline. Refer back to the outline during your discussion time.

# Love Matters Most

The Bible can be summarized in one word:  
relationship.

Let love be your highest goal!  
(1 Corinthians 14:1 NLT)

## Three Reasons Why Love Needs to Be Your Number One Priority

1. Love is the \_\_\_\_\_ in life.

<sup>37</sup>Jesus replied, “You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’

<sup>38</sup>This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup>A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Matthew 22:37-39 NLT)

Get the message: relationships—love—is what matters most in life.

The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”  
(Galatians 5:14 NIV)

Human love wears out, but God’s love lasts forever.

**2. Love is the \_\_\_\_\_ of life.**

If I don’t live a life of love . . .  
nothing I \_\_\_\_\_ will matter.

If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but didn’t love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal. (1 Corinthians 13:1 NLT)

Words without love are worthless.

If I don’t live a life of love . . .  
nothing I \_\_\_\_\_ will matter.

I may have the gift of prophecy. I may understand all the secret things of God and have all knowledge . . . if I do not have love, then I am nothing.  
(1 Corinthians 13:2 NCV)

Brilliance without love equals zero.

If I don't live a life of love . . .

nothing I \_\_\_\_\_ will matter.

Even if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, I would still be worth nothing at all without love.

(1 Corinthians 13:2 LB)

Faith without love does not matter.

If I don't live a life of love . . .

nothing I \_\_\_\_\_ will matter.

If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body . . . but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever.

(1 Corinthians 13:3 NLT)

Giving is not necessarily loving.

If I don't live a life of love . . .

nothing I \_\_\_\_\_ will matter.

No matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love.

(1 Corinthians 13:3 MSG)

Relationships are more important than accomplishments.

### 3. Love is the \_\_\_\_\_ in life.

There are three things that will endure—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13 NLT)

God has shown us how to leave a lasting legacy—fill your life with love.

To deepen your love:

- Commit to meet with your small group these next six weeks.
- Commit to go to church together each weekend during this study.
- Do the daily reading in *The Relationship Principles of Jesus*.
- Practice acting in unselfish and loving ways.

Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that. (Ephesians 5:2 MSG)

## Discovery Questions

### Host Tip

Please don't feel pressured to answer every question.

1. "I love ice cream. I love my kids. I love God. I love those shoes." What does this tell us about the meaning of the word "love"?
2. Who is the most loving person you have ever known, and what did their life look like?
3. What practical advice do you think they would give about how to show love to the people in your life?

4. Pastor Rick said that if we don't live a life of love, nothing we say, know, believe, give, or accomplish will matter (see pages 16–17 in your lesson outline notes). Which of the five speaks to you the most? How can you improve in that area?

## Living on Purpose: Worship

Have a group member read the following passage aloud.

When asked “what is the greatest commandment,” Jesus said:

<sup>37</sup>“You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. . . . <sup>39</sup>Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37, 39 NLT)

What does it look like to love God with your whole being?

Sometimes the second part (love your neighbor) is more difficult than the first part (love God with all you've got). How can loving others be an act of worship?

## Putting It into Practice: The One Person Assignment

How does a person go from talking about love to living a life of love? This **One Person Assignment** exercise will give you an opportunity to show love to at least one person each week. Take time as a group to read and discuss these guidelines, then follow the suggested action for this session.

### The One Person Assignment Guidelines

Turn talk into action by reaching out to one person in a loving, unselfish way this week.

1. You can pick the same person or a different person each week.
2. It can be a close relationship or a distant one. The relationship doesn't have to be one in crisis—it can be a good relationship you want to improve.
3. The individual you choose can be:
  - a person in your group
  - a family member
  - your spouse
  - a person who needs the Lord
  - your neighbor
  - someone you work with
  - a person on the fringes of your life or church
  - a lonely person
  - anyone the Lord puts on your heart
4. Each week you will receive a suggestion on how to reach out to the person you have chosen. You may want to write down the person's name next to the key verse in the **Group Resources** section (page 116). Pray for that person at least once next week and make a connection to develop or deepen your relationship.

## ACTION FOR SESSION ONE

Think of someone you haven't shown love to recently—a friend, family member, colleague, etc. In what way can you apply this week's lesson to that relationship?

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Take them out for coffee.
- Send a note, card, or e-mail.
- Give them a call to see how they're doing.
- Ask how you can pray for them.
- Invite them to join your group.

Choose a practical action step and tell your group what you are going to do.

## Diving Deeper

How do we bridge the relationship gap—the gap between what we hope for in a relationship and what we actually experience? Begin to explore this issue by reading chapters 1–7 in *The Relationship Principles of Jesus*. Be prepared to share your thoughts and insights with the group next week.

## Prayer Direction

### Host Tip

Some people are comfortable praying out loud, while others prefer to pray silently. Either is okay. The point is to connect people to God and with each other in a loving, supportive environment.

1. We love God because he first loved us. Think about a time when the Lord showed you that he loved you. Take a few moments to voice thanks to God for loving you at those points in your life.
- 2 Ask the Lord to help you choose love. Use this concluding prayer as a guide:

“Thank you, God,  
for loving me in spite of my imperfections.  
I have to admit that as hard as I try,  
I have difficulty loving some people.  
Help me trust you for the power to love.  
Lord,  
I turn to you for wisdom  
as I focus on one person to love this week.  
Help me to show that I love you by loving others.  
In Jesus name, amen.”