



LOVE LIKE THIS

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Love Like This—Participant's Guide

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Journey...

Love Like This

Studies in Song of Songs and Hosea

The Bible is a love story told through a collection of what we might consider short stories (books of the Bible). It opens in a garden and ends in a city. God is the passionate lover who refuses to walk away from His unfaithful bride, chasing her to the ends of the earth and sacrificing Himself to save her at all costs. The story is filled with many, many twists and turns. The first half of the story ends with several failed attempts made by the impassioned lover to lure His adulterous wife into a commitment of covenant love and faithfulness (Hosea 2:14, 15).

The second half of the story opens with a shocking new attempt to win His bride through a personal effort of intimate relationship, compassion, personal sacrifice, and undying love—a love the world has never seen or heard of before from the greatest story ever told. A love that most will never understand. Why does He love her so? What makes Him give Himself away to such a faithless partner? It has been said that love makes us do strange things, but this has to be the most surprising of all. Calvin Miller writes about part two of the divine romance in *The Singer*,

*"When he awoke, the song was there. Its melody beckoned and begged him to sing it. It hung upon the wind and settled in the meadows where he walked. He knew its lovely words and could have sung it all, but feared to sing a song whose harmony was far too perfect for human ear to understand. 'Sing the Song!' the heavens seemed to cry. We never could have been without the melody that you alone can sing."—Miller, Calvin. *The Singer: A Classic Retelling of Cosmic Conflict (Function)*. Kindle Edition.*

But if the whole Bible is a *Mamma Mia* love story, every romance needs its love song. The Song of Songs, often referred to as Song of Solomon, is the sweetest song of love. Composed by King Solomon (Song of Songs 1:1) for his beloved, it is considered the song of all love songs! Whether written by Solomon or an unnamed author it is believed to have been written by a single source or literary tradition. Closest parallels of the Song may be found in Proverbs 5:15-20; 6:24-29; 7:6-23.

Rather than understanding Song of Songs as an allegory of love between God and Israel or Christ and the church it is probably best understood as a linked chain of lyrics covering the entire gamut of courtship, wedding, marriage, and mature love. It showcases love in all its spontaneity, beauty, power, and exclusiveness—experienced in its varied moments of separation and intimacy, anguish and ecstasy, tension, and contentment.

But what can the Bible teach us about romantic love? It has much to say about divine love, but romance between two human lovers is another story. The Greeks actually had many distinct words to differentiate love's many expressions:

- **Eros:** Intense, passionate, often sexual love, focused on desire.
- **Philia:** Deep, loyal love between friends, sharing values and experiences.
- **Storge:** Natural, instinctual affection, like that between parents and children or long-term partners.
- **Agape:** Selfless, unconditional love for all humanity, a universal, charitable love.
- **Ludus:** Playful, flirtatious, "game-like" love, common in early stages of romance.
- **Pragma:** Mature, enduring love built on commitment, understanding, and compromise over time.
- **Philautia:** Healthy self-love, self-care, and self-compassion, necessary for loving others.
- **Mania:** Obsessive, possessive love, often arising from imbalance between Eros and Ludus.

The love described in the Song of Songs varies between Eros, Ludus and Philia—a growing passionate love between young lovers meant for a lifetime.

A story of romantic love is not surprising. Hallmark has made a multimillion movie enterprise from story after story. We are just unprepared to find one of the 66 books of the Bible solely dedicated to describing and celebrating it. But why should we be so amazed at this? Love for God is the foundational principle between Himself and the human family (Deuteronomy 6:4, 5). And love for one another is the second great commandment (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37-40). In fact, Jesus said that "all the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments." It's also true that the very first institution introduced after creation is romantic love and marriage in the idyllic garden of Eden (Genesis 2:18-24). In fact, God's very purpose for managing and populating the earth was dependent on the strength of the first couple's relationship. With this in mind, should we not be surprised about God's interest and care for human romance?

But there's another thing to consider. The passionate love described in Song of Songs is a great illustration of the larger narrative of divine love encompassing all of scripture. The agape love of God is hinted at in Song of Songs, but displayed in greater detail from the prophet Hosea where God reveals His broken heart for Israel His faithless lover. The climax of the story is depicted in a poem of God's heartbreak: Hosea 11, 14.

Hosea was a prophet to the northern tribes of Israel during their final downfall in the early 7th century. The ten tribes of Israel had split from Judah and Benjamin centuries before following King Solomon. Their spiritual decline can be traced in the books of I and II Kings with many parallels in I and II Chronicles.

Hosea illustrates the nation's moral and spiritual degradation by their own infidelity depicted through Hosea's faithless marriage to his wife Gomer—a temple prostitute. Like Gomer, Israel betrayed her marriage vows and sold herself to other gods. The drama is laid out in the first four chapters. But the heartbreak of God as the wounded lover is captured in the poems of Hosea 11 and 14. Here we relive the anguish of God for His beloved Israel and trace His efforts to win her back regardless of the cost.

The two books Song of Songs and Hosea provide a profound lesson about love from a divine perspective. Of course, the real lesson of God's love is demonstrated at the cross in the act of God's own great sacrifice by laying down

His life for His adulterous lover. These two books help illustrate the divine crucible.

The apostle Paul completes his epitome on love in I Corinthians 13 with the words, “*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*” Why is love the greatest of these? This is our invitation to learn the answer to this question from the greatest love song ever written and the divine poems of the prophet Hosea!

Titles and
Topics
Covered in
*Love Like
This*

1. Budding Romance	1
2. Blossoming Courtship	5
3. Wedding Song	9
4. Enchanted Evening.....	13
5. Lovers Quarrel.....	17
6. Love Renewed.....	21
7. Love For a Lifetime.....	25
8. Infidelity.....	29
9. Love For Keeps	33
10. Cry of a Broken Heart	37
11. Agape Love.....	41
12. The Greatest of These	45

Breaking
Down
Journey

Journey was created for larger weekly on or off campus meetings in a teaching format and small group discussion. The beginning story or illustration introduces the topic of study.



- **Journey Together** helps ease participants into the topic through ice-breaker related questions.



- **Road Map** is the main passage for discussion followed by questions that help draw out the topic. If you are leading *Journey*, feel free to depart from these as needed and come up with your own questions, while staying on track with the main direction of the study laid out in the leader’s guide.



- **My Story** has been prepared as a continuation of the larger group meetings for smaller groups that meet during the week to check in with one another and reflect on how God is using *Journey* in their daily life. We recommend these groups be flexible in terms of location and meeting time. Also, the number of questions is limited in the *My Story* section, allowing for more personal interactions and life application.

Getting
the most
out of
Journey

Here's what you're going to need for Life at the Center:

- Good soil—an open and receptive heart
- Working the soil—Determination and diligence
- Hunger and thirst—Desire to follow God as He leads
- We also strongly advise reading the entire books of Song of Songs and Hosea. Use this study guide for your group reading/discussion. The important thing is to really lean into what these books are telling us about love's priority and what they can teach us about how to love well. In fact, set it aside if it's getting in the way of hearing the Bible's message. God is love and He alone can teach us how to love Him and one another.

Best Practices: The five S's of hearing and discerning God's voice

- **Seek:** Pray for God to open up the passage for you. Is there a promise for you to claim, a sin to confess, a word for you to follow, an insight to share?
- **Soak:** Read the passage each day and write down any observations, thoughts, questions, connections, or anything God speaks to you about the passage.
- **Seal:** Seal God's word to you deep within your heart by taking some time to meditate on the most important truth to you this week. Ask God to open the deeper recesses of your heart to teach you what you need most for your life this week.
- **Script:** Journal or write if even a few lines, noting the ways that God spoke to you from the passage, your meditation, or our group time together. This will help you keep better

track of God's voice and the way He is speaking through scripture.

- **Share:** Share with someone what you are learning from your time with God in *Journey*. As you share what you are learning, it will help drive God's word home to you even more and you will notice how God will use what He has revealed to you to bless others.

Journey
Covenant

I want to follow Jesus in the noble purpose He has for me. I want to participate in *Journey* to enhance my own relationship with God this year. I will commit to doing the weekly assignments and small group meetings.

Signature _____

My best times of availability are

Morning: _____

Evening: _____

Email address: _____

Cell phone: _____

Budding Romance

I was standing in the college cafeteria breakfast line and noticed a girl I had never seen before—or had I? She looked so familiar. I couldn't decide why I felt like I knew her. The cafeteria was not crowded so a few of us sat together and she joined us along with a couple of other female friends. I couldn't take my eyes off her. She was so attractive and like I said—*familiar*. I realized later that she resembled a girl I had seen in a dream. Big brown eyes, long brown hair, sweet shy smile. It was one of those dreams that you can't easily get out of your head, nor do you want to. Who was this girl of my dreams? I had to find out!



1. Share something about your first crush.

2. What attracts you to another person?



Read Song of Songs 1:1–2:7

1. Song of Songs is the love story between king Solomon (1:1) and Shulamith (6:13), his bride. Why is there a book on human romance in the Bible?

2. What do we learn about the bride's lover from these first few verses?

3. Describe the bride. What does her darkened skin and unveiled face reveal about her?

4. Friends of the bride and groom insert their comments in v. 4b and 8. What do we learn from their input? How important are the opinions of others on a budding romance? How much merit should we give to what friends think about our relationships?

5. How do descriptions of the bride “like a mare of Pharaoh” and of the groom “like an apple tree among the forest” help define the inner qualities of this couple? How would you compare their inner beauty with their outward appearance? Why does it matter?

6. What qualities are you looking for in a mate?

7. What else jumps out at you about this budding romance? How does it compare with some of your dating relationships with the beginning romance?

8. What additional questions do you have? What more would you like to know about this couple and their attraction to each other?

“I have loved you with everlasting love. With unfailing kindness I have drawn you.” (Jeremiah 31:3)

Blossoming Courtship

We were walking through a field talking as we walked along. I slipped my arm over her shoulder and she didn't refuse it. But even more, she placed her arm around my waist. That's when I knew that the feelings being nurtured in me for her were not just my own. She was obviously feeling my same attraction.

True romance is never 50/50%. It's 100/100%. Both partners need to be fully engaged. One person can never love enough for both people. A healthy courtship is a mutual affair and nothing can compare to knowing and feeling loved the same as the other. What can we learn from Solomon and Shulamith's courtship about mutual attraction?



1. What is your shortest/longest dating relationship?

2. Have you ever told someone you were romantically involved with that you love them? How did that go?



Read Song of Songs 2:8–3:5

1. The stanzas in the Song go back and forth between the man and the woman. Determine who is speaking to the other. What are they saying to each other and what can we learn about their courtship?

2. What is the difference between dating and courtship?

3. What excites you or scares you about marriage?

4. How is Solomon like a gazelle looking through the window? What does this reveal about his intentions?

5. What is your impression of Solomon's proposal in 2:10–13?

6. What kind of foxes might Solomon have in mind that could ruin Shulamith's vineyards? What is he expecting from her here? What does it reveal about her character?

7. What does this section of the Song reveal about the level of commitment they have for each other?

8. Why does Shulamith warn about arousing or awakening love "until it so desires"?

9. How would you describe their courtship? What additional steps would you suggest to better prepare them for marriage?

"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1 John 4:7, 8)



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?

Wedding Song

The first wedding I remember was between my older brother and his fiancée. I was six and a half years younger than him. Still, he asked me to be his best man. I was hardly a man at the young age of 14 and was truly honored to stand up for him. I looked up to my brother. He stood like a royal prince with his beautiful princess. Even though I was so young, the whole event was magical.

The bride's younger sister was the maid of honor and very attractive. She was a few years older and definitely dating material for a person closer to her age. I was so excited to be marching down the aisle with her at my side. It was a wedding I will never forget.

Another memory from their wedding was a song at the reception, "Longer Than," written and sung by Dan Fogelberg. The Song of Songs has now brought us to the wedding in this grand processional of the prince and his princess. I can only imagine the music performed in their honor!



1. Which weddings you have attended stand out most in your memory?

2. What concerns you the most—the wedding or marriage and why?



Read Song of Songs 3:6–11

1. The wedding ceremony/procession is only a few stanzas. What stands out to you from these verses?

2. How important are the making of vows to one another before God and witnesses?

3. Why do you think the main focus of the wedding ceremony is the chariot and procession of Solomon?

4. If you are the bride what impresses you or disagrees with you about Solomon's procession?

5. If you are the groom, what do you like or not like about Solomon's procession?

6. What key elements do you want to include in your wedding ceremony?

7. What excites you or scares you about marriage?

8. What kind of statement should the wedding ceremony make in relation to the marriage?

"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.'" (Revelation 21:2, 3)



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?

2. What spiritual lessons have you drawn from Solomon and Shulamith's wedding?

Enchanted Evening

The wedding night seldom turns out how Hollywood sensationalizes it. For those that have saved themselves for their one true love it comes with great anticipation. My wife and I were exhausted from the wedding service and a fight just outside our hotel room made for an incredible distraction coupled with having to sit for my Greek final the next morning. All this put a damper on everything except the privilege of finally being alone and legally spending the night in the same bed together. The important thing, along with Solomon, I knew I had married my soulmate and that like Shulamith, she was, "Completely beautiful, my darling companion, with no blemish in her" (SoS 4:7).



1. How did you learn about sex? Who did you have the conversation with?

2. How would you explain the wedding night to a five-year-old?



Read Song of Songs 4:1–5:1

1. How do you define intimacy?

2. What stands out to you about the couple's first night together?

3. Solomon provides seven compliments of his beautiful bride. Why does he consider her a "flawless beauty"?

4. What makes you uncomfortable about the couple's love making?

5. What is the meaning here for those who question the beauty, playfulness, and enjoyment of sex?

6. If this is God's view of sex in marriage then why do so few couples experience nothing like this?

7. The Song reserves "going all the way" for marriage. How does it make waiting till marriage seem attractive?

8. What can we learn from today's passage about reigniting passion in a loveless marriage?

"In that day," declares the Lord, "you will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master.'" (Hosea 2:16)



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?

2. What is God teaching you about love and intimacy?

Lovers Quarrel

It's surprising to see the manipulative games some couples play to feel assured of each other's affections. The wife of one couple I knew was very flirtatious with other men. Her husband was probably a bit too trusting and didn't seem bothered by it. It turned out that she had some unresolved issues with her father and had experienced some sexual abuse at a younger age. It finally reached a boiling point when she had to admit to sharing romantic feelings for someone else. Fortunately, she went for counseling and through therapy was able to drill down on her dysfunction. Her response saved their marriage and they have been happy together for many years.

Pay attention to the heart strain between Solomon and Shulamith. What can we learn from the Song about relationship drama and the cooling off of love?



1. Describe one of your relationship break-ups.

2. What does it feel like to be "love bombed" and then ghosted?



Read Song of Songs 5:2–6:3

1. How would you define “gaslighting”? When have you experienced it?

2. Was Shulamith playing some kind of game with Solomon by not answering the door? Why did Solomon leave so quickly, leading her to run after him? Who was at fault here?

3. Shulamith refers to Solomon as both her lover and friend. Why is it important for our marriage partner to be both? Which is more important?

4. What mistakes does Shulamith/Solomon make?

5. What surprises you about their conflict? How do conflicts that are resolved demonstrate a healthy relationship?

6. What steps have you used to resolve conflict?

7. What surprises you about the city watchmen beating Shulamith?

8. How can you tell that Shulamith's love for Solomon was revived?

"Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty.
(Malachi 3:7)



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week?

2. What can you expect to see from couples that are secure in each other?

Love Renewed

Resolving conflict even for the greatest of lovers doesn't come easy. Even small rifts in a relationship demand great sensitivity, humility, dedication, commitment, and personal introspection. The opposite of love isn't hate. It's indifference—the very issue that troubled Solomon and Shulamith proved too much for good friends of ours. In their case it was the husband who prioritized himself over his wife too many times until she became used to being without him. Shulamith and Solomon's separation was brief and not so formidable that they were able to find their way back to each other. What can they teach us about rekindling the fire in a smoldering relationship?



1. What keeps you from saying you're sorry?

2. Who was someone in your life that showed you undeserved favor and forgiveness?



Read Song of Songs 6:4–7:9

1. Who seems to be most at fault in their separation? How can you tell?

2. What do Shulamith's friends encourage her to do? Why does she seek Solomon out?

3. It has been said that love is never having to say you're sorry which seems to imply never making a mistake or hurting each other. How does the Song push back against that argument?

4. How does Solomon react to Shulamith's seeking him out? What surprises you about his warm reception?

5. This is where we learn Shulamith's name. As already mentioned, it is probably a feminine form of Solomon's name as in Don and Donna. Why is their reunion the appropriate time to learn her name? How does her name and their relationship renewal symbolize and cement their oneness?

6. What friend do you need to reconcile with? Who needs to take the first step?

7. How can you tell that they have found their way back to one another with their love restored?

8. What do we learn about love from today's lesson?

"I have loved you with an everlasting love therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you, says the Lord!"
(Malachi 3:7)



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week?

2. What is God teaching you about reconciliation and resolving conflict?

Love For a Lifetime

Falling in love is not difficult. It's actually much like any other kind of tumble. Attraction is the first trip into romance. It's not hard to fall in love, but staying in love and keeping love alive is another story.

The Notebook, a romantic love story a bit like *Song of Songs*, takes us on a journey through all the stages of a couple's romance from attraction to dating, challenge, breakup, recovery, symmetry, and final years together. Spoiler alert if you've never seen it—the wife is plagued with dementia in the end and goes in and out of remembering her lover. The closing scenes are the most touching as the couple fall asleep in each other's arms and breathe their last together. It's a story of lasting love—mature love that survives even the test of senility. How can we love like that? What can the *Song* teach us about love like a fine wine that deepens and matures through a lifetime?



1. What friends do you still keep in touch with from childhood?

2. What helps you stay connected with others?



Read Song of Songs 7:9–8:14

1. What are the clues that this stanza is about lasting love?

2. How secure are they in their love for each other? How can you tell?

3. She wishes that her lover was more like a brother? What does this have to do with PDA? What effect would it have on their romance?

4. How is Solomon's birth under the apple tree a correlation with the awakening of their love? What does it have to do with awakening love when it pleases? When is the best time for love to awaken?

5. Have you ever experienced a love as strong as death, fervent as the grave, and an unquenchable fire?

6. How was Shulamith like a wall? What was she protecting? What did it matter to her brothers if she was a wall or a door?

7. What vineyard has Shulamith reserved for Solomon?

8. What are they calling out to each other in the last verses of the Song? Is this an appropriate ending?

"Truly I am with you always, even to the end of the age!"
(Matthew 28:20)



1. How has God been using journey in your life this week on campus?

2. What is God teaching you about love for a lifetime?

Infidelity

Hosea 1–2:13

Fortunately, I have never experienced the trauma and disappointment of adultery. But I do know the heartbreak of being dumped by someone I cared about deeply. The relationship was going so well and I had been attracted to this person for some time when out of the blue she hit me with the message that she wasn't feeling it. I was all set to take things to the next level and she had me in her rearview mirror. As the song goes, "she was a hard habit to break."

The real heartache came when I saw her flirting with someone else which in the end proved to be a good thing as the bubble began to burst and I realized I had been in love with a phantom. She really wasn't the person I had imagined or made her out to be. This made letting go much easier!

Healing a broken heart is a kind of emotional open-heart surgery. What can the book of Hosea teach us about divine heartache and faithful love?



1. How did your parents decide on your name? What is the meaning behind it?

2. Who is your closest friend? How have they proved they are dependable?



Read Hosea 1–2:13

1. What is important to know about the period in which these kings reigned (2 Kings 14:23–29)?

2. Why does God have Hosea marry an adulterous woman?

3. What would you do if you had a wife like Gomer?

4. What do the names of their children represent?

5. How is Hosea's marriage to Gomer symbolic of God's covenant with Israel? How is a covenant similar to a marriage?

6. What message of hope do you find in these verses? What does God promise to do on behalf of His faithless lover?

7. What is God like according to these verses?

"If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself." (2 Timothy 2:13)



1. How has God been using journey in your life this week on campus?

2. How have you experienced God's unconditional love?

3. What do you need to be able to love God and others like this?

Love For Keeps

Hosea 2:14–3

How do you forgive and reconcile with someone who keeps on repeating the same destructive and hurtful patterns with little or no remorse? That's the question that God has to deal with in today's lesson. Friends of mine were stuck in a similar destructive pattern where one partner kept forgiving and taking her abusive husband back and he kept continuing the same dysfunctional cycle until she could take it no longer. She finally left and stayed out of touch for some time for her own protection.

The marriage finally ended in divorce.

In chapter 2 and 3 of Hosea we learn about a similar pattern with different results. What can these chapters teach us about a love we have never seen before—one that *never ever* gives up?



1. Have you ever had to cut someone loose that you truly loved for your own well-being?

2. What's the best forgiveness story you have ever experienced?



Read Hosea 2:14-3

1. Gomer's harlotry enslaved her and Hosea was instructed to redeem her. What was the lesson here for Israel?

2. How would you describe God's plan for winning His people back?

3. The term "master" in v. 16 might better be translated *Baal*. Apparently the Israelites were referring to Yahweh as Baal—a pagan deity. What desert is He planning to allure His people to and how will it make a difference?

4. How does God describe the new covenant He is planning for His people? What are the promised blessings of this covenant?

5. God's new covenant is clearly a marriage covenant. What are the terms of this covenant? How can God make such unconditional promises to faithless people?

6. What is the meaning of Hosea buying his wife back to live with him no longer as a prostitute? How does this explain God's plan for Israel?

7. God's determined effort to stay with His prostitute wife (Israel) would normally be considered insanity or at best dysfunctional. How is God's unconditional commitment different?

"I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38, 39)



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?

2. What are you learning about the new covenant?

Cry of a Broken Heart

Hosea 11

Mildred Pierce is a 1945 black and white melodrama classic starring Joan Crawford as Mildred and Ann Blyth as Veda, her narcissistic daughter who Mildred can never make happy. Many would describe Veda as a spoiled brat. She was ungrateful, disrespectful, and even beguiled her mother's second husband to leave her mother and hook up with her for her money. She seemed bent on disappointing and hurting her mother in every way possible.

Mildred grieves the daughter that Veda has become as God mourns Israel's betrayal. What can we learn from Hosea 11 about love and God as a wounded lover?



1. Would your parents describe you as more strong-willed or compliant as a child?

2. What have you grown to appreciate most about your parents?



Read Hosea 11

1. What images in vv. 1-4 describe God's relationship to Israel?

2. What surprises you about God's vulnerability in these verses?

3. What impact did God's parental love have on Israel described in vv. 2-7?

4. What do vv. 8-10 reveal about God's character? How consistent is this with God's seeming change of heart according to Deuteronomy 4:27-31?

5. We might describe God's judgement of Israel in Hosea as a severe mercy. How would you describe God's mercy here?

6. In what way does Hosea 11 resemble the Prodigal Son story of Luke 15?

7. How have you experienced God's severe mercy?

8. What comfort do you take in God's enduring love?

9. How can this group pray for you?

"Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.'" (Exodus 34:5-7)

Agape Love

Hosea 14

I once read a surprising story illustrating unconditional love. A man and woman were seemingly happily married, but traveling abroad on a business trip the husband was unfaithful and fathered a child with another woman. He wrote his former wife a letter that he was divorcing her. She was of course heartbroken to learn of his affair and of his decision to end their marriage. Not long after, the husband died suddenly, leaving his new wife alone with a child to care for. She was completely bereft. The shocking story is that the first wife began to write to the new one. Over the course of their letters the first wife could see how desperate the other woman was on her own and caring for a child. In spite of her husband's indiscretion she still cared for him and felt drawn to the plight of the young mother and child. She made the incredible decision to have her relocate and live with her and help her raise the love child.

Honestly, it's got to be the most surprising story I have ever heard outside of what God did for Israel. Let's see what Hosea 14 can tell us about unconditional agape love!



1. Describe a time you confessed to making a mistake or doing something wrong.

2. What do you like most about trees?



Read Hosea 14

1. How significant is it that God takes the first step in Israel's return?

2. What words does God suggest Israel use as they approach Him?

3. What does God promise to do if they heed His call?

4. What is God's vision for Israel's future?

5. Where does God say Israel's/Ephraim's fruitfulness comes from?

6. How would you compare Hosea 14 with Psalm 1? What role does wisdom play in both references?

7. How have you experienced God's unconditional love?

8. What has the book of Hosea taught you about God's love?

9. How can this group pray for you?

"As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust."
(Psalm 103:13, 14)



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?

2. What are you learning about God's unconditional love?

The Greatest of These

I Corinthians 13

Love Potion No. 9 is a 1992 American romantic comedy starring Tate Donovan and Sandra Bullock. The film takes its name from the 1959 hit song with the same title. The story is about a love potion that enables a person to make members of the opposite sex become completely infatuated with them by simply talking.

If falling in love were really that simple a small bottle would be more precious than gold. In fact, I know some couples who fell out of love that would line up for even a sip. As we have seen throughout this *Journey* series, loving and receiving love is the greatest thing in life. As the song lyrics go, "Love is a many-splendored thing"! Let's see what we can learn about loving like this in a final tribute to biblical love.



1. What was your favorite teenage love song?

2. Who has taught you the most about love?



Read I Corinthians 13

1. When in your life have you felt the most loved and by whom?

2. What things are useless in vv. 1-3 without love?

3. What does Paul say love is and is not?

4. How does Paul's definition of love compare with the way it's viewed in contemporary culture?

5. Considering how Paul defines love, where do you excel or fall short?

6. How do you feel about being fully known by God? Does that make you nervous or relieved?

7. Why does Paul say that love is the most excellent way and greater than even faith and hope?

8. What have you learned about romantic love, divine love, and loving others from this series?

9. How can this group pray for you?

"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." (1 John 4:10-12)



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?

2. What is God teaching you about loving and being loved?

What can the Bible teach us about love?

The books Song of Songs and Hosea provide a profound lesson about love from a divine perspective. Of course, the real lesson of God's love is demonstrated at the cross in the act of God's own great sacrifice by laying down His life for His adulterous lover. These two books help illustrate the divine crucible.

The apostle Paul completes his epitome on love in I Corinthians 13 with the words, *"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."* Why is love the greatest of these? This is our invitation to learn the answer to this question from the greatest love song ever written and the divine poems of the prophet Hosea!



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