HEAVY-DUTY LOVE

**OVERVIEW**

Many teenagers don’t know that there are different kinds of love; God’s love, brotherly love and romantic love. We will be discussing some of the differences between all of these. Agape love is the highest form of loving expression; this is the kind of love displayed by God – pure, self-giving, unconditional, rare, heavy-duty love. We want to introduce this love to the youth, and encourage them to see how God might show his love through them.

**OPENER**

Ask the group to describe the greatest act of love that they have ever witnessed (not just heard about). Who is the most loving person they know? Give some of them a chance to share stories or examples of those who’ve shown great love. Then ask the group to think of one-word descriptions for both the acts of love and the loving individuals they mentioned. You’ll probably hear answers like *selfless, giving, generous* and the like. Then mention that those are the same words that describe the love you’re about to discuss – God’s love.

**LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION**

Hand out the *“Heavy-duty Love”* worksheet, and give the group a few minutes to complete it. If they are not sure of an answer, just give it their best guess. Have the group vote on and discuss how emotions of love (or lack of them) are related to each item on the list. Some (like Valentine’s Day) will have more feelings involved. When finished, they should see that agape love isn’t an emotion, but an act of will.

Read **Psalm 103**. Make a list of the things that God’s love does for people or provides for people. Ask the group to brainstorm modern-day examples of this kind of divine love. Discuss what each one means to them – in their lives, schools, homes and with their friends.

* + What would society be like if everyone displayed God’s kind of love?
  + How would this affect people? Schools? Churches?
  + What keeps people from showing this kind of love? Why?

*[Play the song “10,000 Reasons” by Matt Redman. What are some of the similarities between this song and Psalm 103?]*

**WRAP-UP**

Summarize the ideas about godly love that have been brought up during the discussion. Point out that God wants everyone – every Christian – to show this kind of love for one another. Also point out that by having the Holy Spirit, Christians actually have the power to love people in the same way God does.

**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION**

**Senior Group:**

The world’s perception of love is so different from what God intended love to be. Society and the media have portrayed love as purely emotional and sexual (take some time to point that out). Discuss what misconceptions of love they have seen or experienced. How do these differ from what God intended them to be? Find some examples in the Bible of people showing true love to others. You may want to look at a few examples of how Jesus showed love to others. His love is exactly the kind that Christians can model.

Read **1 Corinthian 13**. How do the bible’s definitions of love differ from what society’s definitions of love are in the movies, in music, on TV or in school? How can we practice God’s love more in our daily lives?

Spend some time talking about love and mercy – how are the two related? How did God having mercy on Christians show in his sacrifice of his son, Jesus? What does mercy mean to them? Is it harder for them to show love to others or to have mercy on them? Why or why not? Some examples of mercy can be found in Exodus 33:19, Deuteronomy 13:17, 2 Samuel 24:14, Nehemiah 13:22, Micah 6:8, Matthew 5:7, and throughout the Psalms.

**Junior Group:**

What various and insignificant meanings do people have for the word love? Ask the group to brainstorm all the meanings of love that they know or have learned (or perceived) from society, what they have been taught in school or home, or from friends. How is love shown or expressed in culture, on TV, in the movies, in music, in school, at home, or at church? Make a master list of all these meanings, examples and illustrations.

Read **1 Corinthians 13**. Make a list of these definitions of love. Compare the two lists, how are they different? How are they the same? Which ones (if any) from the first list fall under the Bible’s definition of love?

How can we demonstrate agape love? How does agape love compare with simply being nice to someone or doing a favor for them?

**PERSONAL DEVOTION**

Read **John 15:9-14.** Evaluate your “love life;” how are you doing in God’s eyes? What attributes of love are you missing in your life? Which ones do you need to work on? Are you showing agape love to those around you? Challenge yourself to think about what you can do to kick it in gear and start reflecting God’s love to those in need around you!