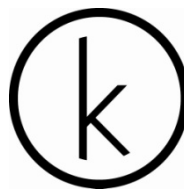


life groups' sermon guide

all we need is love



LIFE GROUPS

doing life together

Life Groups exist at Kingsway to provide authentic relationships for the life application of the Core 4 elements of worship, grow, serve, and share.

“My lover is mine and I am his.”

– the Beloved describing her Lover (Song of Solomon 2:16)

We are made for stories. As children, we are naturally drawn to the fairy tale stories where the prince and princess “live happily ever after.” A love story is full of anticipation, hopes and dreams for the future.

In February 2008 Clint Buffington stepped on a bottle. Upon closer inspection, it turned out to be a message in a bottle, one of many that he has found over the years.¹ After opening the bottle, he found a message written by Janet (La Clair) Rockware on her wedding day. Time had taken the bottle hundreds of miles from where it was originally launched. The hope-filled message read,

“April 4, 1981. Launched from the Delaware River, New Hope, Pennsylvania. To Whomever is the finder and keeper of this bottle. This is the date of our wedding and the start of our life together. We are leaving Pennsylvania on April 6th, 1981 to go on our honeymoon at Key Largo, Florida until April 12 of the same year. We hope to find this bottle while there and figure out the traveling time of which the bottle took (if it is a good time, the next time we come down there we will build a raft and just float down). If found, please respond with place found and date. Thank you...”

Unfortunately, not every fairy tale love story has a happy ending. In the case of Janet and her husband, Bruce, Clint found out they had divorced two years before he discovered the bottle.

In *The Five Love Languages*, Gary Chapman poses the fundamental question, “What happens to love after the wedding?” Certainly, not every aspiring love story ends in divorce. But as we know, relationships do change—for better or worse. And in the latter cases, we come to discover that we’ve lost something along the way.

Q:: What kind of changes can take place in love relationships?

Q:: Why do relationships tend down this road? That is, what happens over the years?

¹ To read more about the discovery of Janet’s message in a bottle, check out this link, as well as, Clint Buffington’s blog, “Message in a Bottle Hunter”, for more about his many other interesting discoveries:
<http://messageinabottlehunter.wordpress.com/2011/07/21/new-hope-part-one-finding-and-reading-the-message/#more-192>

Discussion:

Song of Solomon in the Bible is written as a love story. In it we find ourselves eavesdropping on the communications between a young lover and his beloved bride-to-be. The entire book is rich with poetic expressions of love for, and devotion to, each other. Romance abounds, as we peek into the thoughts and desires of the couple. For many of us who are married, their feelings would echo our own.

Q:: How would you describe the overall theme of the Song of Solomon?

Q:: What kinds of words and phrases does the man (the Lover) use to describe his beloved?

Q:: How does the woman (the Beloved) describe her lover?

Q:: What similarities and differences do we see in the descriptions each person has for the other? And, why might this be significant?

Q:: If you were talking to someone else about a relationship like this between two young lovers, how would you describe it?

Christ and His Bride

Repeatedly throughout Scripture we see Jesus Christ referenced as the Bridegroom, and the Church (us) described as His Bride. God uses this analogy to help us understand His love for us, and the love we should have for each other.

To be a disciple of Christ is to follow His example in how we interact with other people—to love as He loved, and serve as He served. But, to model ourselves after Jesus isn't always easy. For to take “the very nature of servant” (Phil. 2:7) runs counter to our natural inclinations toward selfish desires. As any spouse knows, giving our lives up for the ones we love would be far easier than getting up from the couch and helping with the dishes. 😊

Q:: Why does God use that analogy to describe the relationship between Jesus and the Church?

Q:: Read Ephesians 5:25. How does this verse describe the love Christ has for us, His Bride?

Q:: What might we learn from this about how we are to approach the significant relationships in our own life?

Application:

“Love” is a much-examined concept in our culture today. After all, if you were to Google the word, you get over 6,200,000,000 results! Many people have varying definitions of love.

Likewise, there can be a tendency to allow our love for each other to become so comfortable that it becomes stale. Our wooing already went early in our relationship. And the vitality we felt when we were younger has given way to a mentality which takes our significant other for granted. Imagine

what it could be to woo each other again. How can we strive to love those who mean the most to us the way God wants us to love?

In Gary Chapman's book, *The Five Languages*, he offers some compelling insights into the different ways that men and women feel love. He describes them as: 1. Words of Affirmation—verbally loving our spouse in the way we talk to, and about, them. 2. Quality Time—perhaps our spouse feels especially loved when we just spend time with them, 3. Receiving gifts—to get a gift from our partner can be especially meaningful, 4. Acts of Service—While we should always be looking to serve our spouse, for some of us, being served by our husband or wife means the most to us, and 5. Physical Touch—Physical affection may be that “language” in which we feel particularly loved.

Whatever the love language may be, it's important to intentionally determine how we can best “speak their language.” By understanding and showing love, we may come to discover a new level of love that we have never experienced before.

There is nothing more magical or compelling than the endearing love of an older couple whose bodies may have withered with age, but whose affections are as young and spry now as their courtship was then. What would the Song of Solomon look like if it were written by such a couple? Were we to eavesdrop then, we would presumably find a love forged through the years of faithfulness—amid the joy, the pain, and the redemption experienced in a life well-lived. It is a love whose depth cannot be mined. We can have that kind of love. It is, after all, the love God has for us!

Q:: What does “love” mean?

Q:: For both men and women, how might we love each other as Christ loves us?

Question for Reflection: What is/are the love language(s) of those who mean the most to you? How can you be even more intentional about loving them in a way that speaks their language?