



## WEEK FOUR: TRUE LOVE WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

In our culture today, we use the word “love” to describe how we feel about everything from romantic relationships to our favorite sports teams and everything in between. But what is love? And what does it mean to truly love others as God has loved us? This week we will explore these questions by reading four “relational” passages in the New Testament and five excerpts from John Ortberg’s book: *Everybody’s Normal Till You Get To Know Them*.



# DAY ONE

## DAILY FOCUS

Today we will . . .

- ◆ **EXPLORE:** John 8:1-11
- ◆ **READ:** *Everybody's Normal Till You Get To Know Them*, pgs. 88-95
- ◆ **REFLECT:** On the difference between acceptance and approval

### ◆ EXPLORE

As you start the study this week, take a couple moments and ask God to meet you in a powerful way and to show you what true love really looks like. Then **read John 8:1-11** in The Message (MSG). (You can find this on YouVersion.)

1) This passage describes one of the most powerful encounters in Jesus' ministry, but it's easy to miss the deep emotions running through this story. Take a couple moments to picture the scene in your mind. How do you think this woman felt as she was being dragged before Jesus on that early morning? Write down what sort of thoughts and emotions she may have been experiencing.

2) How do you think the religious leaders who brought her to Jesus felt about her? Write down what thoughts and feelings they may have had about her.

### ◆ READ

Read pages 88-95 in *Everybody's Normal Till You Get To Know Them*. Start at Chapter 5 and stop at the heading *A Church of Stone Throwers* (Audible Ch 3 – 22:24-39:04).

### ◆ REFLECT

1) In Chapter 5, John writes,

*To accept people is to be for them. It is to recognize that it is a very good thing that these people are alive, and to long for the best for them. It does not, of course, mean to approve of everything they do. It means to continue to want what is best for their souls no matter what they do.*

*-Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them, p.89-90*

How would you describe the difference between acceptance and approval?

How does Jesus model this distinction in His encounter with this woman?

2) On page 93-95, John describes the difference between “sins of the flesh” and “sins of the spirit.” Make two lists with several examples of specific sins that would fall into each category.

3) Later, John quotes C.S. Lewis, who wrote,

*The sins of the flesh are bad, but they are the least bad of all sins. All the worst pleasures are purely spiritual: the pleasure of putting people in the wrong, of bossing and patronizing; ... the pleasures of power, of hatred. For there are two things inside of me, competing with the human self which I must try to become. They are the Animal self, and the Diabolical self. The Diabolical self is the worse of the two. That is why a cold, self-righteous prig who regularly goes to church may be far nearer to hell than a prostitute.*

*-Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them, pgs. 94-95*

Do you agree or disagree—and why?

Which kinds of sins (sins of the flesh or spirit) do you think are most common in churches, and why?

5) Do you ever find yourself struggling with “sins of the spirit”? If so, which ones? How do these sins hinder you from living a life of love?

6) Spend some time praying and asking God to give you insight on any “sins of the spirit” in your life and how they are impacting your ability to love others well.

# DAY TWO

## DAILY FOCUS

Today we will . . .

- ◆ **EXPLORE:** I Corinthians 13:1-13
- ◆ **READ:** *Everybody's Normal Till You Get To Know Them*, pgs. 95-99
- ◆ **REFLECT:** On “stone throwing”

### ◆ EXPLORE

I Corinthians 13 is one of the most famous chapters in the Bible. It's often read or quoted at weddings, but it was actually written to teach Christ-followers in Corinth about the priority of love and what true love really looks like. At the time, the Corinthians were measuring their spiritual maturity by their spiritual gifts. The Apostle Paul corrects them in this passage by explaining that the best way to measure spiritual maturity is by their love. **Read I Corinthians 13:1-13** in the New Living Translation (NLT).

- 1) What stands out to you the most from this passage? Is the Holy Spirit highlighting any key words, phrases or verses for you? If so, which ones, and why?

### ◆ READ

Read pages 95-99 in *Everybody's Normal Till You Get To Know Them*. Start with the heading *A Church of Stone Throwers* and stop with the heading *Letting Go of Our Stones* (Audible Ch 3 - 39:05-47:08).

### ◆ REFLECT

- 1) On page 95, John asks the question: “Why do churches produce so many stone throwers?” What do you believe is the answer? What do we think we gain when we criticize and condemn others?
- 2) Spend a couple of minutes journaling any thoughts or insights you gained from today's study—and then process them with God in prayer.



# DAY THREE

## DAILY FOCUS

Today we will . . .

- ◆ **EXPLORE:** I Corinthians 13:4-8
- ◆ **READ:** *Everybody's Normal Till You Get To Know Them*, pgs. 99-103
- ◆ **REFLECT:** On true love, condemnation, and judgement

### ◆ EXPLORE

Today we will continue our study of **I Corinthians 13** by reading **I Corinthians 13:4-8** in the New International Version (NIV). Before reading this passage, take a moment to ask God to speak to you through His Word and your reading today.

- 1) In I Corinthians 13:4-7, Paul gives us 15 descriptions of love. Make a bulleted list of these characteristics in your journal.
- 2) Look back over your list. Which of these 15 characteristics would you like to see grow (or diminish) the most in your life—and why? (Put a check next to them in your journal.)

### ◆ READ

Read pages 99-103 in *Everybody's Normal Till You Get To Know Them*. Start at the heading *Letting Go Of Our Stones*. (Audible Ch 3 – 47:08-58:25)

### ◆ REFLECT

1) In Chapter 5, John writes,

*Do you have any stones you need to let go of? Condemnation and judgment have become so deeply rooted in the human spirit that most of us can't imagine having to function without them. We must let people know how much we disapprove of them—particularly those we don't like. And of course, we are richly rewarded by the sense of superiority such condemnation breeds in us.*

*-Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them, p. 99*

Are there any “stones of criticism” the Holy Spirit is calling you to let go of so you can love others more? If so, explain.

2) If you could ask God for only one thing based on today's study, what would it be and why? Jot it down in your journal and then ask God to answer your request.

# DAY FOUR

## DAILY FOCUS

Today we will . . .

- ◆ **EXPLORE:** James 2:1-13
- ◆ **READ:** *Everybody's Normal Till You Get To Know Them*, pgs. 185-189
- ◆ **REFLECT:** On our natural tendency to include some and exclude others

### ◆ EXPLORE

Read **James 2:1-13** in The Message version (MSG). Then answer the following questions:

- 1) How would you summarize this passage in just one or two sentences?
- 2) Why do you think we tend to show favoritism to certain kinds of people and look down on others?
- 3) How does the “Royal Rule of the Scriptures” (v.8) speak to this natural tendency?

### ◆ READ

Read pages 185-189 in *Everybody's Normal Till You Get To Know Them*. Start at chapter 10 and stop at the heading *Women, Dogs, and Other Outcasts* (Audible Ch 6 – 33:27-42:53).

### ◆ REFLECT

- 1) On pages 186-189, John introduces the concept of “The Inner Ring.” How would you describe this concept in your own words?
- 2) What are three or four examples of “inner rings” you’ve witnessed or experienced over the course of your life from childhood until now?
- 3) In Chapter 10, John writes,

*It is part of our fallenness that makes us want to be in not just any group but an **exclusive** group... We exclude others because of pride or fear or ignorance or the desire to feel superior...*

*In the act of exclusion, we divide the world up into “us” and “them.”*

*-Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them, pgs. 186, 187, excerpts*

Who are some of the people (or types of people) you naturally tend to exclude from your life?

4) This tendency towards exclusion is often the driving force behind racism. Have you ever felt like you were a victim of racism either in society at large or in the church? If so, explain.

5) How does the message of Jesus speak to the sin of racism?

6) Spend some time praying about what you learned today and ask God to help you become more inclusive in your love.

# DAY FIVE

## DAILY FOCUS

Today we will . . .

- ◆ **EXPLORE:** Philippians 1:9-11
- ◆ **READ:** *Everybody's Normal Until You Get To Know Them*, pgs. 197-199
- ◆ **REFLECT:** On God's vision for His new community

### ◆ EXPLORE

- 1) **Read Philippians 1:9-11** in both the New International Version (NIV) and the Message (MSG). What does Paul ask God to do in the lives of these Christ followers **in regard to their love**?
- 2) In Philippians 1:9 (in the Message), Paul prays we will learn to “love appropriately.” What do you think he means? What is the difference between loving others “appropriately” vs. “inappropriately”?
- 3) Can you think of a situation where you tried to show love to someone, but your actions were actually counterproductive or not in the person's best interests? If so, explain.

### ◆ READ

Read pages 197-199 in *Everybody's Normal Until You Get To Know Them*. Start with the heading *The Greatest Gift* and stop at the heading *The Woman Who Wouldn't Give Up* (Audible Ch 6 – 1:01:27-1:06:13).

### ◆ REFLECT

- 1) How does this story illustrate what we've been learning about true love?
- 2) Take a few minutes and review your journal entries for this week. What are one or two of your most important insights from this week's study?

# WEEKEND MESSAGE REFLECTION

After you listen to the fourth message in this series (True Love. . .What's It Look Like?), answer the following question.

1) This weekend we explored seven important principles about true love. Which one was most helpful or challenging, and why?