

A LoveHate Relationship Series: 'Love Must Be Sincere'

Note: You may find the Message Podcasts & Group Guides in this series at actschurchlakeway.com. This may also be found on the ACTS Lakeway smartphone app, available for download in the app store for your phone or tablet.

Group Connection Point

What does it mean to have a love-hate relationship? How would you explain that concept to someone else?

Think of someone, or something, with which you have a love-hate relationship (a sports team, a person, an activity, or...) Take turns and have fun explaining the nature of your (complex) relationship.

Group Discussion Questions for 'Love Must Be Sincere'

1. We are told in Romans 12: "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:9, 21). Apparently, it is okay to hate. Talk about a time in history when an entire group of people learned to 'hate' something evil. What danger do humans face when they refuse to hate evil? Conversely, what dangers exist for those who allow themselves to hate?
2. Christians have a love-hate relationship with the world. In this series we hope to grow in wisdom, to better discern when and how to love, and when and how to hate. How would you rate yourself in this love-hate discernment? (Note the presence of both love and hate within the seasons of life, Ecclesiastes 3:1, 8).
3. Psalm 36 speaks of the importance of hating. Read verses 1 through 4 and discuss. What indictment, or strong message, does the psalmist have against 'the wicked'? What is his chief complaint against them? Have you ever connected your sin with 'self-flattery'? Have you ever thought of your sin being connected to your own refusal to hate? Discuss and share any other insights that come from your experience.

In this series we will return again to the important concept of hate. But for the rest of this particular session, we will zero in on LOVE. The Bible calls upon Christians to back up sincere belief with sincere love. Read Romans 12:9-16 and then answer the following.

4. What is 'sincere love' made up of, according to this section of Scripture? List out a few of the specific commands found within these verses. Which of these commands come most easily to you? Which is the most difficult for you to do?
5. What do you think it means to 'be devoted' to someone in love? How is this different from buying flowers for someone or taking them to lunch (Happy Mother's Day!)?
6. Who has been instrumental in helping you learn how to demonstrate sincere love? Tell stories of encouragement with one another! Get specific, telling who and when and how...

7. Close by praying for those you love dearly. Pray also for one another, that you might demonstrate sincere love to those you are most challenged to love. Pray also that God helps you grow in your discernment of when to love and when to hate.

Individual Journaling for 'Love Must Be Sincere'

Read this section at least three times, slowly: "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:9, 21).

- Reflect upon your life. Think of a time when you got this backward... when you clung to the evil rather than to the good. What was the consequence of 'not hating' your sin? Write out your thoughts.
- Next think of a time when you overcame evil with good. Again, get specific. Offer this humble action to God and thank Him for blessing and multiplying the good that you did.
- Finally, center your thoughts on what God is showing you about the nature of 'sincere love.' Who needs this from you? Picture one clear way in which your relationship would be different, if you devoted yourself to sincere love for this person. Write this down. Ask God to give you the strength to consistently do it. And now, go forward with confidence. Begin already to give God the glory. He is faithful to accomplish this in you!