LOVE GOD, LOVE OTHERS  
Week 3: Love Others (Part One)

This includes:
1. Leader Preparation
2. Lesson Guide

1. LEADER PREPARATION

LESSON OVERVIEW
The more we love and worship God, the more we view life the way he does. Our love for God feeds our love for other people. In this lesson, we examine the second greatest commandment: Love your neighbor as yourself. This love for ourselves is rooted in an understanding of who we are in Christ, and it opens the door to Christ-like love for others.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE
Matthew 22:39-40

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES
Romans 12:9-10 and 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

LESSON OBJECTIVES
1. WHAT: Loving our neighbors is an extension of our love for God and our love for ourselves.
2. WHY: It’s important to take our love for God and extend it to the world around us.
3. HOW: Encourage your teenagers to look for people this week who are in need of Christ-like love.

TEACHING PREP
The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your teenagers, you’ll definitely want to refer to it as you lead your small group lesson.


Two lessons ago, we examined these words as part of the passage of verses 34 through 40. The greatest commandment was a familiar instruction for every Jew: Love God with all of your heart, your soul, and your mind. The second greatest commandment, as identified by Jesus here in Matthew 22, comes from Leviticus 19:18, which states: “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against a fellow Israelite, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”

The second greatest commandment has two components: Jesus instructed us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Our love for others is connected to our love for ourselves.

When we love God as the creator, to whom everything belongs, we recognize that we’re not an accident and we’ve been redeemed through his Son. How can we not love ourselves? God made us and saved us! We have value in him. In this, we can look outward and love others as we love ourselves.
TEXT MESSAGE QUESTIONS
We've provided a couple of different text message questions to send out to your students prior to your meeting. Feel free to use one or both of the questions below. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- How easy is it to love your neighbor as yourself? Let’s talk about it tonight at small group.
- Are we really supposed to love ourselves? Be at small group tonight to discuss it.

PARENT EMAIL
We've provided you with an email below that you can send to your parents following the lesson. Our hope is to encourage parents to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.

Dear parents,

We’re continuing our small group series on the topic of loving God and loving others. Jesus’ response in Matthew 22:34-40 to a religious leader asking about the greatest commandments has served as our foundation for these conversations. In this particular lesson, we examined the second greatest commandment—love your neighbor as yourself, which comes from Leviticus 19:18.

The more we love and worship God, the more we view life the way he does. Our love for God feeds our love for other people. Loving your neighbor as yourself is rooted in an understanding of who we are in Christ. The second greatest commandment actually has two components: Jesus wants us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

When we love God as the creator, to whom everything belongs, we recognize that we’re not an accident and we’ve been redeemed through his Son. How can we not love ourselves? God made us and saved us! We have value in him. In this, we can look outward and love others as we love ourselves.

I’d encourage you to take time this week to talk about this lesson with your teenager. Feel free to use these questions to fuel your dialogue:

- What does it mean to “love yourself?” How is this expressed in a healthy, Christ-like way?
- Which people in your world are easiest to love, and why? Which people are toughest to love, and why?
- Think of one person in your “world” who is hurting right now. How can you show your love for this person in the coming week?

Thanks for your support and prayers for our small group ministry. Have an awesome week!
WORSHIP GOD, LOVE OTHERS
Week 3: Love Others (Part One)

2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED [optional]
As you begin your small group, welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then SAY SOMETHING LIKE:

We all want and need good, honest friends in our lives. This week’s lesson looks at the importance of loving our neighbors as we love ourselves. A foundational piece to every friendship is trust. Can we trust the people who we call our neighbors or our friends? That question is explored in this clip from the movie The Truman Show (rated PG). Truman Burbank has been the unwitting star of a TV reality show since his birth, but he’s become increasingly aware that the world isn’t quite what he thought it was. Things reach a crucial moment when he sits on the pier to talk with Marlon, his “best friend.”

Start the clip at 0:55:20, as Truman says, “I don’t know what to think, Marlon.” Stop the clip at 0:58:20, as Marlon says, “I’m not in on it, Truman, because there is no ‘it.’”

ASK:
- How did you feel when you discovered that Marlon was simply saying words that he was getting from the show’s creator?
- Think of a time you discovered that one of your friends had ulterior motives for your friendship or was being dishonest. How did that affect your friendship? How was that friendship healed—or was it?
- What might this video clip teach you about the kind of friend—the kind of neighbor, using biblical language—God wants you to be?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: God calls each of us to be the kind of friend and neighbor that is trustworthy and loving. If we truly love our neighbors, we will look out for their best interests, pray for them consistently, and find ways to meet their needs.

If you came up with an opening activity, movie clip, or game that worked well with your group, and you’d like to share it with other youth workers, please email us at ideas@simplyyouthministry.com.

TEACHING POINTS
The goal of the Teaching Points is to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen here are (1) Love yourself and (2) Love your neighbor.

Remember: All throughout these lessons, it’s up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Matthew 22:39-40 together as a group. Consider allowing one or more of the teenagers to read the text.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Let’s dig deeper and explore the two aspects of the second greatest commandment—loving ourselves and loving others.
1. Love yourself

**ASK:**
- What does it mean to "love yourself?" How is this expressed in a healthy, Christ-like way?
- Why should we love ourselves? What proves we have value and are worth loving?
- Why does God care if we love ourselves?
- When have you struggled to love yourself? How did God help you through this season—or how is God helping you with that right now?
- If we don’t love ourselves very well, does this passage from the Bible give us permission to not love others very well? Explain why you feel the way you do.

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** I know it might feel weird to spend time talking about God’s commandment to love ourselves, but it’s an important truth for us as followers of Jesus. This is different from a selfish love that disregards other people and their needs. This is the kind of love that’s rooted in our relationship with God. We love ourselves because we’re unique creations who have been gifted and blessed by God. He has a special plan for each of our lives, and we are created to reflect God’s image. God wants us to have a healthy self-image.

2. Love your neighbor

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Once we understand what it means to love God—that was the focus of our first two lessons in this series—and what it means to love ourselves, we can fully explore the idea of loving others. Loving other people becomes an opportunity for us to demonstrate God’s love in our world. It’s a chance to help people discover life’s purpose and meaning through a relationship with Jesus.

**ASK:**
- When do you find it most difficult to love others, and why?
- What connections do you see between the way you love yourself and the way you love others?
- Which people in your world are easiest to love, and why? Which people are toughest to love, and why?
- If you don’t love yourself the way God does, how might that affect your ability to love others?

**ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [optional]**

**ASK:**
- What happens if you obey the second greatest commandment—love your neighbor as yourself—without obeying the greatest commandment—love God with all your heart, soul, and mind?
- Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. What are other examples of things we might try to do that are meaningless without love? Why are they meaningless without love?
- Read Romans 12:9-10. What are some ways Christian teenagers pretend to love others? What’s the effect of “fake” love for other people?
- How do you know the difference between real love and fake love?
APPLICATION
Pair up with another person in the group for these questions.

ASK:
- Think of one person in your world who is hurting right now. How can you show your love for this person in the coming week?
- Based on what we read in Romans 12:9-10, when have you recently shown “fake” love to a neighbor? What can you do to bring healing for what you did?

SUMMARY
End your small group lesson here. Provide your teenagers with a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) the content of this lesson, (2) the dialogue that took place during the lesson, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]
Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the verse below.

"Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39).