

HUGS AND KISSES [romantic love]

THIS WEEK

Your kids may have mixed ideas about what love is. The media portrays romantic love as warm fuzzy moments while kissing and cuddling. A lot of teenagers think love is a feeling. Others think it's physical attraction or sexual intimacy. The purpose of this TalkSheet is to discuss what love really means. Jesus taught that love was more than a feeling—and he lived it! It's an action, a commitment, and a way of life.

OPEN

Send your group on a Love Scavenger Hunt. For example—how many titles of new release movies does Blockbuster (or some other video store) have with *love* in the title? How many magazines have the word *love* on the front cover? How many current radio songs are there with *love* in the title or that talk about love? What CDs do they have that have *love* in the lyrics or title? Have them bring specific examples of titles or lyrics. Use your creativity and use what time you have. Then talk about what they learned from finding these.

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Have your kids share what they think love is. Encourage them use the words from item 2 as a springboard. Write these on a master list on a whiteboard or poster board. You'll use this list later on.
2. Have them share their choices and add these to your list from question 1. Be careful not to judge the words they've chosen. Ask why they have chosen the ones they did. Does the rest of the group agree or disagree? Why or why not?
3. & 4. These tension-getters offer an opportunity to discuss true love versus feelings of love. You may want to discuss them from different angles. For example in the first scenario suppose Chandra was not a Christian, or was pregnant, or had fallen in love with another guy. In the second scenario you could suppose Erika is only 16 or that both Antonia and Erika are Christians. As you give each variable to the kids, ask them if it would make any difference in their advice. Why or why not? Another idea is to divide the kids into smaller groups, giving each one of these situations. Let them decide what should be done, then present and discuss their conclusions with the rest of the group.
5. Talk over each statement and let the kids debate them. What are the different opinions? Do they

agree with each other? Why or why not? Point out that girls and guys may have different opinions. Some of the items may bring up the subject of divorce. Remember to be sensitive when discussing this issue—several in the group may have divorced parents.

6. Allow the kids to read and reflect on each of these stories and share their opinions of them. Point out that not all Bible characters were perfect. What does the story say about love?

THE CLOSE

Using your list from items 1 and 2, make another list of what love is according to God. Using 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, make a list of what love is and isn't—what does love mean in everyday life through our actions? Challenge them to give specific examples of how to show love. Then, encourage them to think of one area of love that they need to work on. Who do they need to try harder to love? What actions to they need to change?

Focus on and discuss the three kinds of love the Greeks described: agape, phileo and eros. Agape is God's love for us—a genuine, sacrificial love that is unselfish and giving. Phileo is friendship love. Eros is love on a more physical, sexual level. Concentrate on agape, the love Christ exemplified. Healthy marriages and relationships involve all three types of love. Communicate that love is much more than a feeling of infatuation or romance. It involves responsibility and commitment. It's a decision, an act of will.

MORE

- Divide the kids into groups and have them each find (or you can do this beforehand) and research the lyrics of a popular love song—most can be easily obtained on the Internet. Then examine what it implies about love. What is it saying? How would they evaluate the song based on the discussion of love? What does the song mean to a Christian? How is it different?
- What is sacrificial love? You may ask the group to find examples of sacrificial love in the Bible. What characters showed agape love? What did they do? What did God say or would've said? Point out that agape love means swallowing our pride and sacrificing ourselves! It must have been for Christ to give it up and die for us. If he could do that for us, think of all the smaller things we can do!