

Deeper: Real Change for Real Sinners

Author: Dane C. Ortlund

Lesson Title: “Embrace” (pp. 152-164)

Session 11

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The main point of this lesson is: Real change comes only when we experience Jesus’s embrace of love.

Focus on this goal: To help adults grow deeper in Christ by allowing Jesus’s love to embrace them in the present

Key Bible Passages: Ephesians 3:16-19

Before the Session

1. Find a humorous image of a dog and cat embracing and prepare to share it with learners, either by sending it to them before class or showing it on a screen. (Step 1)

2. Find a great photo of Victoria Falls in Zambia to share with learners. (Step 7)

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

**Display** the image of a dog and cat embracing. (Hopefully it puts a smile on faces and changes the mood of the room!) **Point out** the reaction you get from learners; **ask** questions like: *Why does this make us smile? How does this kind of photo change our mood, our attitude, and even our outlook?*

If you have (or had) a person in your life who gave especially wonderful hugs, **briefly tell** about him or her and how one hug could change a situation. **Say:** *As wonderful as the hug of a friend or family member—or even a dog!—can be, today we’re considering the embrace of Christ.*

Step 2. God Is Love

Briefly **summarize** the previous sessions (knowing the real Jesus; despairing over our sin and recognizing our union with Jesus) and **enlist** volunteers to recall something they remember from those lessons.

**Enlist** a volunteer to read Job 42:5. **Explain** that today you will seek to see the divine love of Jesus. **Read** 1 John 4:8,16 and **emphasize** that love is not something God does or part of His character; it is who He is most deeply.

**Use** the second paragraph of Day One (pp. 152-153) to **help** learners start to grasp the love of Christ.

Step 3. The Unknowable Love of Christ

Invite a volunteer to read Ephesians 3:16-19. As a group, determine the three main words of that passage and instruct learners to underline them.

Read the Day Two paragraph (p. 154) that begins, “What is Paul praying for?” Communicate 1) that this prayer reflects the Session 9 emphasis of knowing the real Jesus and 2) that the love of Jesus yields strength, power, and filling of God.

Use the information from the section entitled “Unflappable Affection” (pp. 154-155) to help further define the love of Christ, particularly with the first sentence of the second paragraph (p. 155).

Step 4. Filled with the Fulness

**Reread** Ephesians 3:19. **Drawing from** the Day Three content (p. 156) **lead** the group to consider the astonishing claim that we can be filled up with the very fullness of God. **Brainstorm** what that means.

**Direct attention** back to Ephesians 3:16-19 to see exactly how it is we are filled (knowing Christ!). **Point out** that being filled is not something we *achieve*, but something we *receive*.

**Use** “His Settled Heart, Our Settled Hearts” (pp. 156-157) to **challenge** learners to see that God’s heart is settled on us, and we are called to settle our souls in His unrestrained love for us.

**Read** the Day Three paragraph (p. 157) that begins, “Divine love is not calculating and cautious . . . .”

Step 5. Experiencing Divine Love

**Invite** one volunteer to read Titus 3:5-6 and another to read Romans 5:5. **Use** the Day Four opening paragraph (p. 158) to **explain** that both of these verses use the same Greek verb (rendered “poured”). Together, they show that the love poured out on us (Rom. 5:5) comes through the Spirit (Titus 3:5-6).

**Discuss** what the author calls the affections: “the felt inner enjoyment of the heart, the soul throb only God gives, the joyous calm that blankets . . .” (p. 158). **Urge** learners to earnestly seek this experience of love, not just at salvation but as they walk by faith.

**Draw out** the idea of experiencing God’s love straight from His Word, which allows us to know Him fully and understand Him intimately.

Step 6. Blockages to Knowing His Love

**Invite** volunteers to read silently the first paragraph of Day Five (p. 160). If you have ever had similar thoughts to those expressed at the end of that paragraph, **share** how today’s truths have given you strength and power to take your eyes off yourself and willingly bask in the love Jesus offers. **Encourage** others with similar feelings to take some time in prayer this week to do the same.

**Read** the Day Five paragraph (pp. 160-161) that begins, “Your suffering does not define you. His does.” **Express:** *This is why we stay in the Bible, and we never stop reading the Gospels: the love of Jesus changes us from the inside out, not just at salvation, but each and every day.*

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

**Remind** learners of the opening image you showed. **Acknowledge:** *This is a sweet, heartwarming photo. But it doesn’t even begin to convey the love of Christ.*

**Show** learners the image of Victoria Falls as you read from Day Five (p. 161): “Whether the wreckage of your life . . . the very position in which He hung on the cross.”

**Close with prayer,** asking the Lord to help every learner fall into His embrace this week.

