

“LOVE STATIONS”

(Valentine’s Day Lesson)

For The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta

By Sally Ulrey

Key verses: 1 John 3:16-19

Objective: To practice showing true love, the kind that puts others first before our own needs or wants.

The Set up: Moderate

The Plan:

- **Hook:** What Is Love? (5-10 mins)
 - Start a discussion Valentine’s Day clichés vs. true love
- **Book:** What Love Is—1 John 3:16-19 (5 mins)
 - In contrast to the kind of love we typically think of at Valentine’s Day, Scripture tells us that true love is sacrificial action
- **Look:** Love Stations (30 mins)
 - Putting our love into action by participating in “Love Stations,” showing love to others in ways that *they* need most based on Gary Chapman’s “5 Love Languages”¹
- **Took:** Sharing the Love (5 mins)
 - Make an action plan to share true sacrificial love with someone this week

The Supplies:

- Copy of lesson
- Whiteboard/FlipChart & Marker
- (Optional) Projector/DVDs OR Copies of Cliché Movie Quotes
- Bibles or Copies of Verses
- Construction Paper
- Markers
- Scissors
- Glue
- Dessert & hot chocolate, napkins, forks, cups, etc. **OR** basins, pitchers, towels, water
- (Optional) Guitar player & worship music OR worship song on CD Player

¹ Chapman, Gary D. [The Five Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts](http://www.5lovelanguages.com/). Northfield Publishing: Chicago, 1992.

What is Love? (Hook, 5-10 mins)

(Baby don't hurt me, no more)

The point of this section is to explore the difference between the cultural understanding of what people think love means on Valentine's day and what the Bible really describes as true love. There are several options on how to do this, depending on what capabilities you have.

Option 1—Movie Clips (more prep required):

Watch clips that depict different types of love scenes, then evaluate if the group thinks they are "true love" or not. Some examples of clips you could use:

- "Nervous Phone" Call by Gru from Despicable Me
<http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/despicable-me-2/nervous-phone-call>
- "I Think I Love You" by Yvaine from Stardust
<http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/stardust/i-think-i-love-you>
- "As You Wish" from The Princess Bride
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niul8Hy-3wk>
- "What is Love?" from Casino
<http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/casino/what-is-love>

Notes on movie clips:

1. **Licensing.** *To be legit about this, churches need a license to show clips or movies (yes, they do...look it up). You can buy a CVLI License based on your congregation's size. Then, you can show a clip of a DVD you have, cue it up, and you are covered. CVLI also offers something called ScreenVue, which provides short clips to use as illustrations, so you don't have to buy and cue up a movie. If you like to use movie clips or watch movies as a group, this might be a good investment. You can also get a license through WingClips, which will let you download just the snippet that you want, and the cost includes a license. To show movies the right way at church, you will have to pay for licenses to show copyrighted work.*
2. **Evaluate.** *Before showing a clip, you may want to evaluate what you think of the movie as a whole, and if the movie as a whole is something you want your youth to be watching.*

Option 2—Movie Quotes (less prep; see handout last page or website below):

Laugh about some cliché movie quotes or make it in to a game to see if the kids can guess what movie each quote is from. Then evaluate whether they think it shows true love or not and why.

- Use the list of "25 Most Romantic Movie Quotes" (see handout below or website)
 - http://extratv.com/2010/05/15/25-most-romantic-movie-quotes/#25_most_romantic_movie_quotes
- **Pick a few** that are relevant to your kids. If you have a projector and internet connection, you could click through the list (however, you may have to skip a few that are not appropriate, and if you showed them all, it would take forever). Or you can read from the handout or print out copies ahead of time (but it doesn't have them all, and no pictures). You can also add your own if you have that kind of prep time.

After either option,

- Evaluate whether the clip or quote shows true love and why or why not
- End by writing on Whiteboard/Flip Chart characteristics of what the group thinks true love is.

Transition: Let's see if our idea of what "true love" is matches up with what Scripture says.

*"Love Stations" by Sally Ulrey
for the Diocese of Atlanta*

What Love Is (Book, 5 mins)

In this section, we gain understanding about what true love is: sacrificial action, putting others first before ourselves. This is a SHORT discussion/summary. The bulk of the lesson time should be spent on the Look (action) part.

- Read the Scripture.
- Evaluate the group's idea of what "true love" is based on the Scripture
- Come up with new characteristics of "true love"
- Go back and talk about if the clips or quotes really showed true love based on the Scripture, and note if the first impression of whether the clips/quotes were true love was correct according to Scripture.

1 John 3:16-19

¹⁶ We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. ¹⁷ How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sisterⁱⁿ in need and yet refuses help?

¹⁸ Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. ¹⁹ And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him

Movie Clips: The discussion might include thoughts about how:

- We don't know if Gru had true love yet, because he hasn't acted at all, much less if it's for the benefit of his crush.
- Yvaine (Stardust) does know that love must be unconditional, but her thoughts on love include a lot of feelings, not necessarily action, although she does say she would give her heart.
- Even though the clip from Casino is not as romantic, the man does seem to truly love the woman, because he is willing to act in her best interest.
- In The Princess Bride, Wesley saying "as you wish" is always followed by an action that is in Buttercup's best interest.

Movie Quotes: The discussion might include thoughts about how:

- The Notebook talks about love as action and as work, and Noah is willing to do that even though it's hard
- The first Twilight quote, Dirty Dancing, Say Anything, Sleepless in Seattle, Pride and Prejudice, Wuthering Heights...they all seem to line up with the idea that love is more a feeling than an action, or it's what that person wants for him/herself or it's a benefit to him/herself (i.e., it makes ME feel good to be with you), not necessarily what the *other* person wants or what is best for the *other* person.
- As Good As It Gets and Groundhog Day and When Harry Met Sally do depict the person as truly *knowing* the other person and still enjoying them, but the action on their behalf may be unclear.

The group's opinions on a quote may differ from those listed above, but as long as they are trying to show how that scenario shows love as an action in the best interest of the *other* person, the discussion is serving its purpose.

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Transition: We are now going to put true love in to action, an action that makes the *other* person feel loved. There's a book called *The 5 Love Languages*, which is all about how we have a natural tendency to show love to others based on how WE like to be shown love, but to truly build a relationship, you have to show that person love based on how THEY like to be shown love. Each of you probably has a preference for certain ways that really make you feel loved. The 5 Love Languages are: Words of Affirmation, Physical Affection, Acts of Service, Quality Time, and Gift giving.

So we are going to do some loving actions for each other, and remember, your participation in these is for OTHERS to feel loved. Even if the activity wouldn't be YOUR favorite way to receive love, remember, that it is going to mean the world to someone. You're doing it for them! And they are participating in ones that might not be their favorite for YOU, too.

This is "challenge by choice," meaning you always have a choice about participating in ways that you feel comfortable, but I would encourage you to challenge yourself to get out of your comfort zone a little bit to show love to others! participating in ones that might not be their favorite for YOU, too!

Love Stations (Look, 30-35 mins)

In this part, youth will express love to others in 5 different "languages," so that everyone will end up feeling loved in their preferred way at the end. The point is to teach that loving action to others means that you go out of your comfort zone to love them how *they* like best.

You'll need to set up 5 different areas for the different activities. It will probably be best if there is an adult who remains at each station to help lead it, while the groups rotate. Put an instruction sheet for each station (below) at that station with the leader. We're aiming for 5-8 people max in a group. You are going to spend about 5 mins in each station, then switch. Someone needs to be in charge of the timer.

*****If you need to simplify or are pressed for time, I would do the Words of Affirmation activity as the "Look" and the "Gift Giving" activity as the Took. *****

Station 1—Words of Affirmation

(construction paper & markers)

(5-7 mins)

Some people feel most loved when they are told positive and encouraging things about themselves and their value.

This activity is designed to give youth the opportunity to love others and be loved through positive words of affirmation.

- Youth sit in a circle.
- Have each youth write his/her own name in the center of a piece of construction paper.
- Everyone passes their paper to the left.
- Tell the youth they need to write something they love about the person who's name is on the paper. This should be something about their personality (not their physical appearance or cute shoes).
- Keep passing the paper, until everyone has written on everyone else's

Station 2—Physical Affection

(one option requires playing a worship song on guitar or on a CD)

(5-7 mins)

Some people feel most loved through (appropriate) physical touch (like hugs, pats on the back, high fives, etc.)

Here you have several options (you probably only have time to choose one) of activities that use appropriate physical touch. Some of these activities are a little more serious than others, so depending on the feel of the group, you can use what you think will be the most meaningful and still meet that need. Since sometimes kids are funny about this, they don't have to do it ("challenge by choice"), but even if they don't want to be the recipient of physical affection, you might challenge them to try giving appropriate affection to others.

- **Group Hugs.** Have everyone hold hands in a line. The person on one end stays where they are, while the rest of the group rolls up around that person (picture the spiral on a snail's shell). Everyone says, "We love you, ____ [Name] ____". And people take turns being in the middle. You can also do this with one person in the middle and everyone just hugs from all around for a short, non-scary/non-claustrophobic-inducing amount of time)
- **Laying on of Hands.** Have one person sit in the middle, and everyone lays hands on that person. The leader prays a short prayer (you only have 5 mins per station!), like the following prayer from Ephesians 3:16-19.
 - *"We pray that out of God's glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being,¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."*
- **Huddle.** Have everyone stand in a circle with arms around their shoulders. Without breaking the circle, have them play the story game, where take turns creating a story with just one word each.
- **Human Knot Game.** Have youth stand in a circle, and grab two different people's arms (not right next to them), then they have to "untie" the knot without releasing their hands until they are in a big open circle.
- **Sway.** Have the group put arms around each other's shoulders and sway to a worship song of your choice.

Station 3—Gift Giving

(construction paper, markers, scissors, glue, misc craft supplies)

(5-7 mins)

Some people feel most loved when people give them a thoughtful present, one that represents the love and time that went in to choosing or making it.

Have youth create a Valentine's Day card for someone they know needs love or encouragement, or for someone who has inspired their faith.

If you are crafty and have a lot of time to prep, and are not pressed for time during the lesson, you can totally upgrade this craft into something cooler, like a key chain or scarf or you can even have many different options of gifts youth can choose to make. The idea is that the gift be handmade, a representation of all the love, time, and thought that went in to making it for the recipient.

Station 4—Quality Time

(5-7 mins)

Some people feel most loved when others give them their undivided attention and want to get to know them.

- Using these questions, facilitate the group in sharing about themselves and learning about each other.
- Make sure that only one person speaks at a time, and that person has the group's undivided attention while he/she is speaking.
- Make sure they are in a tight knit circle, and everyone is sitting up, with all eyes at the same level, and everyone can see everyone else.
- As the facilitator, it would be good for you to set an example in SHOWING undivided attention through non-verbal and short verbal responses to whatever each person says (nodding, eye contact, smiling, saying, "Wow" or "cool" or "I didn't know that").

Have each youth share the answer to these questions (you will have to pick and choose as time permits)

1. What's the funniest Valentine's Day card or meme you've seen?
2. Describe a time when you felt really loved.
3. What do you think your "Love Language" is?
4. How are you doing deep down inside these days?
5. What are the three biggest things on your mind?
6. When did you laugh out loud this week?
7. What do you think the "Love Language" is for other people who are close to you (parents, siblings, close friends)?
8. When did you feel close to God recently? Or what pointed you to God recently?
9. If you were called upon to give advice to kids a couple years younger than you, what would it be? (another way to phrase: what do you wish someone had told you when you were that age?)
10. What is something most people don't know about you?
11. Describe a situation you've been through recently that was hard, but you were proud of how you handled it.
12. What's your favorite part of the church service?
13. What's your favorite Valentine's Day candy?
14. When's the last time you gave out Valentine's Day cards, like to your class, and what were they?
15. Do you have a favorite romantic movie scene/quote, and if so, what is it?

Station 5—Acts of Service

(5-7 mins)

(brownies&ice cream/dessert, milk/hot chocolate, accoutrements)

(OR big bowls or tubs, pitchers, towels)

Some people feel most loved when others serve them and do things for them.

One simple and fun way is to serve each other food. Of course, one of the ultimate ways Jesus served his disciples was through washing their feet, asking us to do the same, so that's an option that shows love, too. Choose the one that works best for your group based on the time you have and the atmosphere you are going for.

Option 1: Serve each other dessert

- Put youth in partners.
- One group of partners sits down at a table, while the other group takes their order, and serves them the food, waiting on them and standing up behind them in case they need anything while they eat it.
- Once the first group is finished eating and the waiters have cleaned up, the groups switch.

Option 2: Wash each other's feet

- Everyone who wants to participate should, even if it's only washing someone else's feet or only getting their own feet washed. Because some might opt out, rather than putting youth in partners, it might be better to have them wash feet in a line (first person's feet are washed by second person; first person goes to back of line. Second person's feet are washed by third person, etc.)

Transition: Now that we have shown love to each other and been filled up, it's time to go out and share the love with everyone else!

Sharing the Love (Took, 5-10 mins)

This is the in-the-world challenge. The purpose of the activity is to serve as a reminder that loving others doesn't end at youth group, but we are called to love EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE, all the time.

- Their job is to actually deliver the gift they made to the intended recipient. If you have the capacity, they can post this to the youth group Instagram account or other social media account, or text or email it for inclusion in a youth e-communication if you do that. Or they can bring a picture to show the next week.
- They can take it a step further by doing Random Acts of Kindness when they see someone who has a need or could use a pick-me-up.

Close in prayer, using the words of 1 John 3:16-19:

Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus to show us true love by laying down His life for us. Help us to show that kind of love to others by laying down our lives for others, putting them first. Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and in action this week.

Most Romantic Movie Quotes

Abridged from ExtraTV “25 Most Romantic Movie Quotes” May 15, 2010

http://extratv.com/2010/05/15/25-most-romantic-movie-quotes/#25_most_romantic_movie_quotes

"The Notebook" (2004)

“So it’s not gonna be easy. It’s gonna be really hard. We’re gonna have to work at this every day, but I want to do that because I want you. I want all of you, forever, you and me, every day. Will you do something for me, please? Just picture your life for me? 30 years from now, 40 years from now? What’s it look like? If it’s with him, go. Go! I lost you once, I think I can do it again. If I thought that’s what you really wanted. But don’t you take the easy way out.”

—Noah (Ryan Gosling) to Allie (Rachel McAdams)

"The Twilight Saga: New Moon" (2009)

“I love you. You’re my only reason to stay alive... if that’s what I am.”

—Edward (Robert Pattinson) to Bella (Kristen Stewart)

"Dirty Dancing" (1987)

“Me? I’m scared of everything. I’m scared of what I saw, I’m scared of what I did, of who I am, and most of all I’m scared of walking out of this room and never feeling the rest of my whole life the way I feel when I’m with you.”

—Baby (Jennifer Grey) to Johnny (Patrick Swayze).

"As Good As It Gets" (1997)

“...I might be the only one who appreciates how amazing you are in every single thing that you do, and ... I watch them, wondering how they can watch you bring their food, and clear their tables and never get that they just met the greatest woman alive. And the fact that I get it makes me feel good, about me.”

—Melvin (Jack Nicholson) to Carol (Helen Hunt).

"Romeo and Juliet" (1968)

“But soft; what light through yonder window breaks? It is my lady! O, it is my love. O that she knew she were.”

—Romeo (Leonard Whiting)

"Say Anything..." (1989)

“What I really want to do with my life — what I want to do for a living — is I want to be with your daughter. I’m good at it.”

—Lloyd (John Cusack) to his girlfriend Diane’s (Ione Skye) dad (John Mahoney)

"Titanic" (1997)

“Winning that ticket, Rose, was the best thing that ever happened to me... it brought me to you ... You must do me this honor, Rose. Promise me you’ll survive. That you won’t give up, no matter what happens, no matter how hopeless. Promise me now, Rose, and never let go of that promise.”

—Jack (Leonardo DiCaprio) to Rose (Kate Winslet)

"The Last of the Mohicans" (1992)

“...You stay alive, no matter what occurs! I will find you. No matter how long it takes, no matter how far, I will find you.”

—Hawkeye (Daniel Day-Lewis) to Cora (Madeleine Stowe)

"The Princess Bride" (1987)

“As you wish.”

—Westley (Cary Elwes) to Buttercup (Robin Wright)

"When Harry Met Sally" (1989)

“I love that you get cold when it’s 71 degrees out. I love that it takes you an hour and a half to order a sandwich. I love that you get a little crinkle in your nose when you’re looking at me like I’m nuts. I love that after I spend day with you, I can still smell your perfume on my clothes. And I love that you are the last person I want to talk to before I go to sleep at night. And it’s not because I’m lonely, and it’s not because it’s New Year’s Eve. I came here tonight because when you realize you want to spend the rest of your life with somebody, you want the rest of your life to start as soon as possible.”

—Harry (Billy Crystal) to Sally (Meg Ryan)

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"Sleepless in Seattle" (1993)

"It was a million tiny little things that, when you added them all up, they meant we were supposed to be together ... and I knew it. I knew it the very first time I touched her. It was like coming home. ... only to no home I'd ever known ... I was just taking her hand to help her out of a car and I knew. It was like ... magic."

—Sam (Tom Hanks)

"Pride & Prejudice" (2005)

"...If, however, your feelings have changed, I will have to tell you: you have bewitched me, body and soul, and I love ... I love ... I love you. I never wish to be parted from you from this day on."

—Darcy (Matthew MacFadyen) to Elizabeth (Keira Knightley)

"Love Story" (1970)

"Love means never having to say you're sorry."

—Jennifer (Ali MacGraw) to Oliver (Ryan O'Neal)

"Jerry Maguire" (1996)

"You had me at hello."

—Dorothy (Renée Zellweger) to Jerry (Tom Cruise)

"Sense and Sensibility" (1995)

"My heart is, and always will be, yours." — Edward Ferrars (Hugh Grant)

"The Twilight Saga: Eclipse" (2010)

"Isabella Swan, I promise to love you every moment of forever." — Edward Cullen (Robert Pattinson)

"Groundhog Day" (1993)

Phil (Bill Murray): "You like boats, but not the ocean. You go to a lake in the summer with your family up in the mountains. There's a long wooden dock and a boathouse with boards missing from the roof, and a place you used to crawl underneath to be alone. You're a sucker for French poetry and rhinestones. You're very generous. You're kind to strangers and children, and when you stand in the snow you look like an angel."

Rita (Andie MacDowell): "How are you doing this?"

"(500) Days of Summer" (2009)

Tom (Joseph Gordon-Levitt): "What happens if you fall in love?"

Summer (Zooey Deschanel): "Well, you don't believe that, do you?"

Tom: "It's love. It's not Santa Claus."

"Wuthering Heights" (1939)

"Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest so long as I live on! I killed you. Haunt me, then! Haunt your murderer! I know that ghosts have wandered on the Earth. Be with me always. Take any form, drive me mad, only do not leave me in this dark alone where I cannot find you. I cannot live without my life! I cannot die without my soul." — Heathcliff (Laurence Olivier)

"High Fidelity" (2000)

Laura (Iben Hjejle): "I'm too tired not to be with you."

Rob (John Cusack): "What, so if you had a bit more energy we'd stay split up, but things being as they are, with you being wiped out and all, you want to get back together? Is that it?"

Laura: "Yeah."

"A Room with a View" (1985)

"He's the sort who can't know anyone intimately, least of all a woman. He doesn't know what a woman is. He wants you for a possession, something to look at, like a painting or an ivory box. Something to own and to display. He doesn't want you to be real, and to think and to live. He doesn't love you. But I love you. I want you to have your own thoughts and ideas and feelings, even when I hold you in my arms. It's our last chance." — George Emerson (Julian Sands)