

# Relationship Goals - 2: Love vs. Lust

**Big Idea: Lust is selfish. Love is selfless.**

## INTRO

Did you know its possible to love someone and not be “in love” with them? You probably did, in fact this would be true of most of the relationships you have had (family & friends). Everyone shows or has some kind of love for the people they like. Many of us will even naturally show some love towards people we don't like. Have you ever had a former friend have something good or bad happen in your life and you have sympathy for them? We have many uses for the word love and tonight we are going to talk about what the Bible says about love and its role in relationships.

## WHAT IS LOVE?

The Bible has a lot to say about love, but there are two places in Scripture that take a pretty lengthy look at love. The first is written by John.

1 John 4:7-8 pg.492

*7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

- God is the source of love.
- He is so much the source of love that John went so far as to say, God IS love.
- So if we really want to know love, we need to get to know God.

The second big section of Scripture that talks about love is in 1 Corinthians 13. In fact, many people call it the “love chapter.” In it, Paul gives this definition of love in almost poetic form.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 pg. 559

*4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

There are a couple of things that really stick out to me in this passage.

- The first is that love takes a lot of work.
- Expressing and staying true to all those attributes in that passage are a pretty tall order.
- However, it's pretty awesome to consider that Jesus expresses all these qualities all the time.
- Verse 5: “it is not self-seeking.” Love isn't about what we get out of it. Love is selfless.

We loosely we use the word love in the English language. Think about it... in one breath a woman can say, “I love my husband,” and in the next say, “I love tacos.” I don't think she is attaching the same weight and meaning to both “loves.”

At the same time, we limit the love's meaning to just a feeling. Love is a feeling, but it is also an action and a choice. When we limit love to a feeling, we sell it short.

1. Love is about people. Love is showing care and concern for another person
2. Love is a choice. Some people are easy to show love to, often its connected to good and healthy feelings and desire we have for them. Some people are less easy to love, and even people you do love do can do things that make it hard to love them. In those moments showing love to them is choice to act in way towards them you may not want to or a way they do not deserve.
3. Love is selfless - Truly loving a person is devoid of any personal objectives or gain. You act in love towards them simply because you want to, not because of anything they are going to do in return.

## WHAT IS LUST?

I think we call certain actions and attitudes love that really aren't love at all. Sometimes we are really "in like" with someone, but we are so emotionally charged in the freshness of the feelings that we call it love. Then, there are the other times where love is nothing more than selfish desires to get what we want emotionally or physically. It's in these moments where we are mixing love up with lust.

For many of us, when we say the word lust we immediately jump to looking sexually explicit pictures or videos (pornography). Although it definitely plays into that action, there is much more to lust that is valuable for us to understand. Lust is something that takes place in our thoughts and minds. Here are a few things the Bible teaches us about lust.

**1. Lust is about things.** True love is always directed toward people. When we "love" things, we are really lusting, and when we lust over a person, it is because we have turned that person into an object (a thing).

**2. Lust is a feeling.** The Bible often talks fleshly desires. Fleshly desires are basically our desires void of God. When we limit love to just a feeling, we are really in danger of lusting.

**3. Lust is selfish.** It is focused on personal gain and satisfaction. This may be the biggest place where we can see a difference its difference with love. In fact, if I could sum lust vs. love up with a simple statement, I would say... **Lust is selfish. Love is selfless.**

In that simple statement, do you see the drastic difference between these two words that look so similar? Yet, in life, do you see how we can get these two mixed up if we aren't careful? And when we are driven by lust instead of love, it can have some nasty effects on us.

Lust is an obvious problem in your romantic relationships. If we were to have a heart to heart conversation, no one *wants* to be in a relationship with someone who only wants be with them because of how they look or what they will do with them.

However, if you have any kind of relationship solely for your own personal gain, then that relationship is based on lust and not love for the other person.

- Lust for power, prestige, or social status - Being in a relationship with someone simply because it gives them access to certain positions or connections
- Lust for money/things - Being in a relationship because have money or something they want but can't get on their own
- Lust for what they can do - Being in a relationship because they can do something you can't or struggle with. (ex. they are good at math, can fix your car, etc.)

## THE EFFECTS OF LUST:

*Ephesians 4:18-20 pg. 569*

*18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. 20 But that is not the way you learned Christ!*

As we read this passage, there are a few ways we can see how lustful living affects us.

1. It darkens our understanding.
2. We lose sensitivity.
3. It leaves us wanting more.

And if we aren't careful, lust can end up controlling us or to act in a controlling way towards others.

## THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM (PORN)

This can be incredibly awkward to talk about, because there is something with this struggle that fills us with shame. I don't want you to feel shame tonight. Shame is that feeling that tells you, "I'm a terrible person." This struggle does not make that statement true for you (remember our identity series?). If this is a struggle for you, shame is an inappropriate unbiblical response. The appropriate biblical response is conviction. It's that feeling that says, "I'm involved in something terrible." Do you see the difference?

Here are some steps I want to encourage you to consider. These steps are for those of you who are struggling with pornography, but they are easily transferable to any kind of lust struggle:

**STEP 1: Come Clean.** First, come clean with God. Be honest that this is a struggle and you don't like it. Admit that lust is driving you and that you want to pursue God's love.

**STEP 2: Get help!** You don't need to face this struggle alone. In fact, it is incredibly difficult to overcome any struggle by yourself. This is often the toughest step, because it involves breaking the silence and putting your struggle out for someone else to see. You don't need to share with the entire world, but it will help you to share it with someone you trust who is a little further down the road on his or her journey with Jesus. This could be a small group leader, a mentor, or me. If I could push you a little more, a parent may be the most valuable for you to talk with, because they are likely the ones who will help you through the next steps even more.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS:**

I know I've challenged some of you big time tonight. I know we've taken a dive into a heavy subject. Know this: I love you. We love you. Most importantly, Jesus loves you with a selfless love that caused Him to lay down His life so you could have freedom from death and sin.

*John 13:34-35 pg. 525*

*34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

- The single most identifying factor of those who follow Jesus the way they show love to others
- Jesus followers are not selfish, controlled by their feelings, or treat people as objects
- Instead we follow and imitate the example of Jesus by showing love others with no expectation of getting anything in return, and because that would Jesus would do, even if we don't feel like or they don't deserve it.

## **Small Group Questions**

- What is the best love story you've ever seen or heard? What made it great?
- If you were to only be able to pick one, which would you say love is: a feeling, a choice, or an action? Why?
- What comes to mind when you hear the word "lust"?
- In your own words what are the differences between love and lust?
- We read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 What stuck out to you and why? (You may want to reread the verses.)
- What did you learn about lust that you didn't know before?
- What does selfless love look like? How do you do that without having someone take advantage of you?
- In what ways has God shown love to you?
- How can you use that as an example to show love to others?