Small Group Discussion Guide

When Love Hurts

Love Uncensored, Week 3

Scriptures

Song of Songs 5:2–6:10 · Romans 5:8 · Psalm 56:8 · Revelation 2:4–5 · Matthew 18:21–35 · Revelation 3:20 · Ephesians 4:32

The Message

Most of us have a version of the night somebody wouldn't open the door. Maybe it was an actual door, or maybe it was a cold shoulder in the kitchen or a text left on read because we were still mad. Song of Songs 5 has one too. He comes home late and knocks, she's already in bed and doesn't feel like getting up, and by the time she opens the door he's gone. Nobody in the Song pretends that a fight means the love was fake. "Every love story has conflict. Lasting love isn't love that never gets hurt. It's love that won't let the hurt have the last word."

What she does next is worth copying. She tells the story with her own part first. When her friends ask what's so great about him, she spends the next several verses remembering what she loves instead of building a case. Her friends put their shoes on and help her look. And when the two of them find each other again, she leads with her own commitment, and he sings her the same words he sang at the beginning.

Jesus is the one standing at the door in Revelation 3:20, and when we kept it shut, He didn't leave. He carried the full report on us to the cross, which means we can say "I was wrong" to the people we love without it costing us everything.

Before You Start

Tonight is about what to do after the hurt, and your group will be carrying a wide range of it. Some couples are in an ordinary rough patch. Someone may be in a marriage that is in real trouble and hasn't told anyone yet. Someone divorced may have heard "your marriage is not too far gone" land very differently than it was meant. Single people will be thinking about a parent, a roommate, a friend, or an ex. Let each of them answer from where they actually are, and keep the conversation on what to do next instead of on whose fault it was.

Owning your part does not mean taking the blame for abuse.

The message described a counselor who asks each spouse to shade in their own slice of a pie chart of the marriage's problems. In a healthy relationship that's a great exercise. For someone who is being belittled, controlled, threatened, or hurt, it can sound like "try harder and it will stop," which they may already believe. If anyone describes something like that, believe them, don't try to counsel the couple together, and connect them with your campus pastor that week. If they are in danger right now, call 911. The National Domestic Violence Hotline is 1-800-799-7233.

Someone may say their love is already dead.

The message asked people not to walk out carrying it alone, and your group can be part of that. You don't have to fix it during group. Thank them for saying it, pray for them before you close, and follow up this week, including pointing them to your campus pastor or a counselor.

You will not get through all five questions, and you are not supposed to. Choose the ones that fit your group and take them in whatever order works.

Icebreaker

This weekend, AI turned Song of Songs 6 into an R&B slow jam, which means a three-thousand-year-old love song finally got a remix. If your life this past week had a theme song, what genre would it be and what would the title be?

Discussion Questions

Three here and two more in Go Deeper. Pick what fits your group.

1 When she tells the story of that night, she starts with herself: she was in bed, she didn't want to get up, she made him wait. Most of us start with the other person. The message described a counselor who asks couples to shade in their own share of the problems, and the couples who each shade in most of the pie have the best chance, because they are working on the only person they can change. When conflict happens with someone close to you, whether that's a spouse, someone you're dating, a parent, or a roommate, what is your first move: defend, explain, go quiet, or go on offense? Why is "here's my part" so hard to say, and how does Romans 5:8 make it any easier?

Song of Songs 5:2–6 · Romans 5:8

If the conversation stays on the surface, bring up the line that anger is usually a secondary emotion, with hurt, fear, or embarrassment underneath. Ask what tends to sit underneath theirs. If someone starts describing a relationship where they are afraid, see Before You Start.

2 She's hurt, and when she runs into her friends she doesn't recruit them to her side. They ask her what's so great about him, she answers with a long list of what she loves, and then they put their shoes on and go looking with her. *When you're hurt by someone, do the people around you help you remember what you love about them, or help you build the case against them? Which kind of friend are you when someone vents to you? And who, if anyone, is lacing up with you right now?*

Song of Songs 5:8–6:1 · Psalm 56:8

Dave and Rachel's nightly practice is to each name three things they're grateful for and one thing they appreciate about the other person. Singles can do the same thing with a roommate, a parent, or a friend. Some people will admit they've been carrying something alone. Don't try to solve it during group, but make sure they know this group is willing to go looking with them.

3 Back in chapter 2 she said, "My lover is mine, and I am his." After the fight she flips the order: "I am my lover's, and my lover is mine." She goes first. Jesus tells the church in Ephesus to do the works they did at first, which is about actions and not about trying to feel the old feelings again. *What is one thing you used to do in a relationship that matters to you, maybe a marriage, a friendship, or your walk with God, that has quietly stopped? What would it look like to do it again this week, even before the feelings come back?*

Song of Songs 6:2–3 · Revelation 2:4–5

The message quoted the NIV, "You have forsaken the love you had at first." The NLT link says, "You don't love me or each other as you did at first!" Either way, the instruction that follows is to do what you did at first.

Go Deeper

Two more for groups that move quickly. The first is for the people who love digging into the text.

GD1 Read the knock at the door in Song of Songs 5 next to Revelation 3:20, where Jesus says, "Look! I stand at the door and knock." Now read the verses around Revelation 3:20. Jesus isn't talking to people who have never heard of Him. He's talking to the church in Laodicea, believers who had become comfortable and lukewarm. *What does it change to realize that the knock is mostly aimed at people who already go to church? Where in your o*wn life have you heard the knock and stayed in bed, like the woman in Song of Songs 5:3?

Song of Songs 5:2–6 · Revelation 3:14–22

The verse is also used, rightly, as an invitation to someone opening the door to Jesus for the first time, and that is how much of the weekend's closing used it. Both readings are welcome here. If someone in your group is exploring faith, give them room to talk about it.

GD2 The weekend ended with a question: who is at your door right now, and what are you going to do about it before you go to sleep tonight? Name the person. Then pick one move for this week. You could say the twelve words, “I was wrong. I am sorry. Please forgive me. I love you.” You could start the nightly habit from Q2 and say one thing you appreciate about the other person. Or you could do one thing you used to do at first. Tell the group or one person in it which move you chose and by what day, and that person texts you midweek to ask how it went.

Ephesians 4:32 · Matthew 18:21–35

If the person at someone’s door is someone who has hurt them in a way that isn’t safe, their commitment is a conversation with a pastor or counselor, not reconciliation. Make sure every commitment has a name and a day attached before people leave.

Close Your Group in Prayer

Read Ephesians 4:32 out loud, slowly. Then ask everyone to picture the person they named tonight, or the person they’ve been keeping on the porch, and give the group thirty seconds of quiet to ask God for help with that person.

Close by praying out loud for anyone carrying hurt by themselves, and for anyone who believes their love is already dead, that they would trust the God who raises dead things. Pray by name for each person who made a commitment tonight. If you have married couples, invite them to pray for each other quietly before they head home, and if someone lingers afterward, stay with them.

smallgroups@eastside.com