

Small Group Discussion Guide

Love That Goes the Distance

Love Uncensored, Week 4

Gene · Weekend of November 14 and 15, 2026

Scriptures

Song of Songs 8:5–7 · Psalm 36:7 · Psalm 130:7 · Isaiah 54:4–5 · Romans 8:38–39

The Message

Falling in love can happen in an afternoon, but this last week of Love Uncensored was about the kind of love that is still around forty years later. By Song of Songs 8 the couple isn't young anymore. Their friends see her coming in from the desert leaning on him, and she's looking back at the apple tree where it all started. Then she asks him to place her like a seal over his heart, which back then was a permanent mark of who you belonged to. Gene walked us through covenant over convenience, faithfulness over feelings, and perseverance over pressure, and he told us about his daughter Alayna and her husband Sam, who have walked through more in eleven years of marriage than they could have pictured the night they got engaged.

None of us can pull that off on willpower. We get to love like that because God loved us that way first, with a love that didn't walk away when we disappointed Him and went all the way to the cross.

Before You Start

This message was written mostly to married couples again, so think about who is sitting in your group before you start. You probably have people who are divorced, widowed, or just came out of a breakup, and when they hear the word covenant they may hear a judgment on their story. It helps to know that Gene and Barbara both went through marriages that ended in the 80s when a spouse broke the covenant, and they talk about their marriage as a second chance God gave them. If that comes up, let it.

Covenant never means staying in danger.

Gene was clear that covenant doesn't mean putting up with abuse, repeated cheating, or abandonment. If someone tells you that's their situation, believe them, don't try to counsel the couple together, and connect them with your campus pastor this week. If they are in danger right now, call 911. The National Domestic Violence Hotline is 1-800-799-7233.

The story about Alayna and Sam may also stir things up for parents who have lost a child or are raising a child with special needs. If someone goes there, slow down and let them talk. Nobody needs you to fix it.

You won't get through all five questions, and you're not supposed to. Pick the ones that fit your group and take them in whatever order works.

Icebreaker

A man in the next booth at Denny's stopped Gene and Barbara on his way out to tell them they were the two best-looking people he had ever seen in that restaurant, and he eats there every day. ***What's the best compliment a total stranger has ever given you?***

Discussion Questions

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

1 She asks him, “Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm.” The message drew the line between a contract and a covenant. A contract says I’ll do my part as long as you do yours, and a covenant says I made a promise before God and I plan to keep it. Where do you see the contract mindset showing up in your relationships, even in small ways? If you’re single or dating, Gene said the goal is to become the kind of person the person you’re looking for is looking for. *What is God working on in you right now?*

Song of Songs 8:6

Married people will want to talk about their spouse here. Steer them back to their own side of the deal, since it’s always easier to name what the other person isn’t doing.

2 When the feelings run low, Gene said to start acting the way you wish you felt, and then he admitted nobody can keep that up on willpower alone. We need a love underneath ours. Psalm 36:7 calls it God’s unfailing love, and Isaiah 54 tells the person who has been left or widowed, “your Creator will be your husband.” *Who in your life have you been asking to love you the way only God can, whether that’s a spouse, a boyfriend or girlfriend, your kids, or your friends? What would change if you received God’s love first?*

Psalm 36:7 Isaiah 54:4–5

Every season of life can answer this one. For anyone in your group who has been through a divorce or lost a spouse, Isaiah 54 might be the most important verse in the guide, so give them room with it.

3 “Many waters cannot quench love, nor can rivers drown it.” She never says the waters won’t come. Alayna and Sam got engaged in 2015 with big smiles and big dreams, and eleven years later they are raising four boys, one with autism who doesn’t speak, and they have buried a baby girl. They are still leaning on each other. *What waters has your marriage, your family, or your closest friendship had to walk through? What helped you keep leaning on each other instead of drifting apart?*

Song of Songs 8:7

If someone is in the middle of the waters right now, don’t hurry them to the hopeful ending. Ask how the group can help them this month.

Go Deeper

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

GD1 The NLT says love "flashes like fire, the brightest kind of flame." In Hebrew that phrase ends with "yah," a short form of God's name, which is why some translations like the ESV read it as "the very flame of the Lord." If that reading is right, it may be the only time God's name shows up anywhere in Song of Songs. Read 8:6–7 in a couple of different translations. *What does it say about married love if the one place God shows up in this book is in a fire that floods can't put out?*

Song of Songs 8:6–7

Scholars are split on this one. Some read "yah" as a way of saying mighty or intense, which is how the NIV and NLT handle it. You don't need to settle it to have a great conversation.

GD2 Gene closed with one question: what is one faithful choice you can make this week to build a love you want to last? He gave a few examples, like planning a date, having the conversation you've been avoiding, asking for forgiveness, or finally reaching out for help. If you're not married, make it about the relationship that matters most to you right now. Say your choice out loud and pick someone in the group who will text you midweek to ask how it went. Thanksgiving is less than two weeks away, so if your group is taking a break, set the check-in now.

Make sure reaching out for help stays on the table. For some couples the faithful choice is calling a counselor, and they need to hear from you that it's a good and brave move.

Close Your Group in Prayer

Gene ended the weekend by inviting married couples to renew their commitment to each other, and you can do something similar. Read Psalm 36:7 out loud. If you have married couples, and it's safe and appropriate, invite them to take each other's hand and quietly say, "By God's grace, I choose you again today."

Then pair everyone up, couples included, and have each person pray for the faithful choice their partner named tonight, or for whatever they shared if your group didn't get to GD2. Close by praying out loud for anyone in your group who is grieving a marriage that ended or a spouse they have lost.