

ROMANCE, MARRIAGE, AND FRIENDSHIP

STUDY GUIDE

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LOVE: CHRISTIAN ROMANCE, MARRIAGE, AND FRIENDSHIP
STUDY GUIDE

by
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How to Use This Video for Small Group Study

About This Video

This video is based on Diogenes Allen's book *Love: Christian Romance, Marriage, Friendship*. While it is designed for use by small groups in ninety-minute sessions, it can be modified for other study situations and is particularly appropriate for use in a retreat setting. Video segments run from thirteen to twenty-three minutes, as follows:

Part 1 — Love Defined—12 minutes

Part 2 — Friendship, Romance, and Marriage—15 minutes

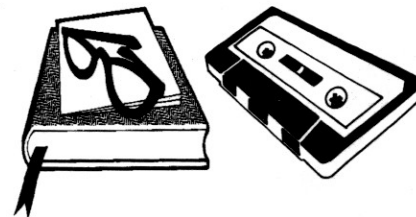
Part 3 — Community—9 minutes

Suggestions for daily reflection have been included at the end of each session and are strongly recommended. We also recommend that copies of the book be made available to each participant.

Before the Sessions Meet

Leader preparation: As facilitator of the group, it's important to remember that you don't need to be the "expert," but you will want to be well prepared by doing the following:

- Before the first session, read through the entire Study Guide. This won't take long, and it will give you a sense of how the study sessions are put together. Then focus on the appropriate section prior to each session.
- If possible, read Dr. Allen's book *Love: Christian Romance, Marriage, Friendship*.
- Before each session, view the video segment that you will be showing so that you know in advance what your group will be seeing. Jot down any impressions or questions that come to mind.
- Feel free to make copies of the study questions before each session for each member of the group, especially if participants will be journaling.



Equipment setup: Well before the meeting, check to make sure the television and the VCR are set up and working.

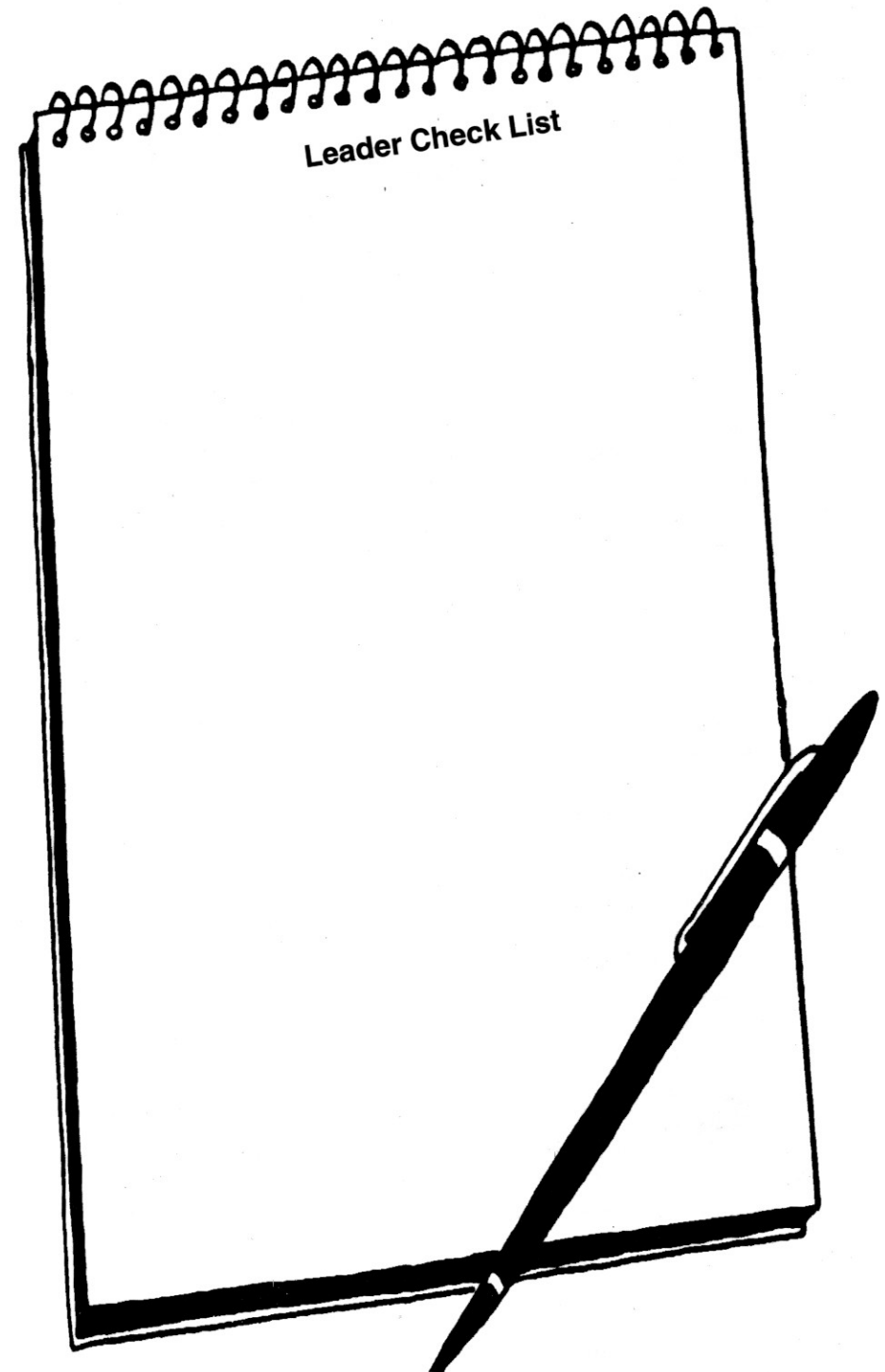
- You will need a nineteen-inch screen for up to six people to view comfortably, and a twenty-five-inch screen for up to twelve people. A larger group will need a larger screen or more than one monitor hooked up to the VCR.
- Just before the group gathers, make sure the TV and the VCR are turned on and the tape cued to the right spot so that the tape can be rolled with just a flick of a button. You may want to ask a group member to be responsible for playing the tape, so that you can concentrate on leading the discussion.

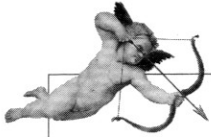
Room setup: While a circle is the best way to seat a group for discussion, it may not be best for viewing the video, depending on the size of the group.

- Consider some kind of flexible seating for the group that will allow a good view of the video and circle seating for the discussion that follows.
- If the group is larger than twelve, consider breaking into smaller groups of four to eight members to allow everyone an opportunity to participate.

Teaching aids: If using this resource with a group, you will want to have newsprint or whiteboard available to write down key points as noted in the guide.

Remember – the questions in this guide are only suggestions. You may wish to skip, modify, or add questions based on the needs and interests of your group.





PART 1

Love Defined

Scripture: John 15:12-15

Whenever we hear the word “love” we automatically think of romantic love. The media has reinforced this idea not only in telling stories, but in selling products ranging from personal care items to household cleaners. In this series, Dr. Diogenes Allen dispels the popular myth of love, then reframes and deepens the definition to include friendship, as well as romance and marriage.



Warm up 20–25 minutes

After introductions:

- On a sheet of newsprint brainstorm as many definitions of “love” as you can.
- On a separate sheet, list sources of common ideas about love. Examples include movies, literature, advertising.



Watch the video 12 minutes



Discuss 25–30 minutes

1. How does Dr. Allen define love? Did anything about his definition surprise you? What?
2. How did Dr. Allen’s definition of love compare with those the group listed earlier?
3. Dr. Allen points out that romantic love is in large part a creation of the Middle Ages, and that it has only recently come to be prized as the highest form of love between human beings. Prior to the Middle Ages, what was considered to be the most important form of love?
4. Why do you think our understanding of love has changed over the years?



Close 15–20 minutes

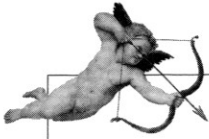
Read John 15:12-15.

- In this passage, Jesus describes his relationship with his disciples as one of friends rather than master/servant. What does Jesus’ treatment of his disciples teach us about how we are to treat one another? About the importance of friendship?
- Close with prayer.



Prepare 20–30 minutes

Before the next session, read I Corinthians 13:4-7. Choose one word or phrase from the passage describing love, and consciously practice it throughout the day. Read chapter 1 in Dr. Allen’s book *Love: Christian Romance, Marriage, Friendship*.



**PART
2**

**Friendship, Romance,
and Marriage**

Scripture: I Corinthians 13:4-7

Dr. Allen opens this section with the observation that, though they are different forms of love, friendship and romance share a common ingredient: the need to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Without the ability to truly appreciate the beloved as “other,” love can turn into possessiveness and jealousy. Dr. Allen points out that for love to thrive, we must balance our own need to be properly recognized with the need to recognize the independence of another.



Warm up
20–25 minutes

- Read I Corinthians 13:4-7. What are the characteristics of love described in the passage?
- Are there any differences between those characteristics and the characteristics our culture ascribes to love? What are they?
- If you practiced one or more of those characteristics during the week, what effect did it have on you? On those around you?



Watch the video
15 minutes



Discuss
25–30 minutes

1. According to Dr. Allen, friendship tends to play second fiddle to romantic love in our culture. Why do you think that might be true?
2. What does Dr. Allen identify as the key ingredient in friendship, as well as in romance?
3. Many people believe that marriage is the enemy of romance and that, in time, life at close quarters actually kills its spontaneity and excitement. Dr. Allen disagrees, asserting that marriage actually enhances romantic love. How is that possible?
4. Dr. Allen points out that when people fall in love they seek to be united to one another, but that the union or oneness that Christianity endorses is not absorption; it is shared life. What is the difference between absorption and shared life? What are some examples of each?



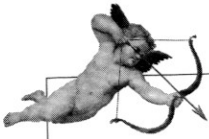
Close
15–20 minutes

- Reflect on the quote, “Love is the otherness of things.” How does that apply to friendship and romance/marriage?
- Close with prayer.



Prepare
20–30 minutes

Before the next session, read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. Think of an important person in your life. How do you and that person support each other? Using the language of the passage, define the cords you are creating together. How do you reflect God’s love in your relationship? Read chapters 2 and 3 in *Love: Christian Romance, Marriage, Friendship*.



**PART
3**

Community

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Defining *community*, Dr. Allen describes a place in which “each of us is one reality among many, but pays proper attention to others and in turn receives the affectionate attention of others.” Though it may not be obvious to us initially, marriage and friendship can become two such communities. Ideally, marriage and friendship are relationships in which there is plenty of room for the individual to thrive while supporting the other.



Warm up
20-25 minutes

- Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.
- What does this passage teach us about the importance of community?
- Give an example of how this passage has been true for you.



Watch the video
9 minutes



Discuss
20-30 minutes

1. Dr. Allen says that we all need to be properly recognized and loved by others, and that we seek communities in which the proper affection and attention are given and received. How do friendship and marriage become such communities?
2. According to Dr. Allen, it is easy to learn to give and take with people to whom we are attracted. But what about people to whom we have little or no attraction? How are we to treat them?
3. Describe a time when you have been moved to compassion, or even love, for someone you might otherwise never have noticed, or by whom you might even have been repulsed.
4. What does it mean to love our neighbor? What does Dr. Allen say about relative value versus the absolute value of every person?



Close
20 minutes

- How does love of neighbor enhance friendship? Romance? Marriage?
- What do friendship and romance teach us about love of neighbor?
- What new insights have you gained regarding friendship, romance, and marriage during this study?

Close with prayer.