



Group Leader Guide “Character” - First Comes Love September 26-27, 2020

Group Creed

We come together as a Group with the goal of Spiritual Formation; encouraging one another to become the same kind of person that Jesus is, so that we can live out every part of our lives inside of His Kingdom.

// Message Summary

Lead Pastor **Jim Burgen** kicks off a brand new series this week called “**First Comes Love**.” During this series, we will be tackling the issue of becoming the kind of person you would look for in a dating partner or spouse, and also looking for that kind of person as a dating partner or spouse. Focusing on a few specific areas such as submissiveness, faithfulness, and honesty, Jim helps us do an assessment of where our character is currently, what Jesus is like, and how we can make up the difference.

// Word Study

Jeremiah 17:9: “The **heart** is **deceitful** above **all things**, and **desperately sick**; who can understand it?” (ESV)

Heart: Hebrew pronunciation: “lĕḇ”

In English, the metaphorical meaning of “heart” is that it is the seat of the emotions. This was similar in ancient Hebrew as well. However, the heart was seen not only as the seat of the emotions, but of reason and intellect. It was a combination of what we would refer to as the “heart” and “mind.” In other words, it was representative of the entire immaterial inner self. So, what this verse is saying is that not only can our emotions tend to be deceitful, but even our intellect, logic, and reasoning skills.

Deceitful: Hebrew pronunciation: “‘āqōḇ”
This adjective had 2 meanings. The first meant “fraudulent” or “deceitful,” exactly as

it is translated. The second gives us a visual to go along with it. It means “steep” or “hilly.” Think “slippery slope” or something that is difficult to traverse.

All Things: Hebrew pronunciation: “kōl”
The words actually just means “all.” It designates the whole of something, depending on the accompanying noun. However, it does not have an accompanying noun in this verse! “Things” was added in translations to help it make more sense, though saying “above all” is clear enough, in my opinion. The fact that there is no accompanying noun, such as “parts of the body,” “evil forces,” or something like that lets us encompass all of that and anything else that may come to mind. In other words, the “heart” is the most deceitful thing in the entire universe!

Desperately Sick: Hebrew pronunciation: “‘ānaš”

A verb meaning to be ill to the point of death. It usually describes the condition of being incurable. The verse leaves us wondering what hope there is for us, the owners of such a hopeless inner self. However, just a few verses later, we see the only cure: the Lord (**Jeremiah 17:14**)!

// In Preparation

Jim calls out the elephant in the room in his sermon, but I’ll call it out here as well. This series is geared toward people who aren’t married but want to be. Your group may be

full of people like that, but odds are it is not. Your group may be a group of married couples, or married men or women, or a mixture, or even a group of divorced people who never want to get married again. And that is awesome! However, some people in your group may check out when they hear that this is a series about dating and marriage. Jim challenges those of us who are married, or don't want to be, to do the math and figure out how this applies to our lives anyways. If you have people who are having trouble doing the math, or are having trouble yourself, hopefully this will help.

This sermon is all about being the kind of person you would want to date or marry. It really has nothing to do with the other person. It is about looking at your own life and where your character is not the same as the character of Jesus. This is something that all of us, despite our relationship status, should be looking into. The frame around this in the talk is so that you can have a successful romantic relationship, but the principle holds true in order to have successful friendships, run a successful, Christ-honoring business, be a successful parent, or even calm down that road rage during rush hour. This can easily be applied to couples who are already dating or married: what kind of person do you want to be going forward in your relationship?

So, if someone seems to be checking out or pushing back on the series' topic, just gently remind them of what this talk is *really* about, and see if that helps!

// References

Baker, Warren, and Gene Carpenter, editors. *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*. AMG Publishing, 2003.

Keener, Craig S Ph.d. *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. InterVarsity Press, 2014.

Group Discussion Questions “Character” - First Comes Love September 26-27, 2020

Group Creed

We come together as a Group with the goal of Spiritual Formation; encouraging one another to become the same kind of person that Jesus is, so that we can live out every part of our lives inside of His Kingdom.

// Bible References

Jeremiah 17:9; John 14:31; John 10:11; John 10:17

// Message Screenshots

- (I thought) A ring will change everything.
- (I thought) I won't repeat the same mistakes that my parents made with me.
- Dating, falling in love, marriage, and parenthood don't (primarily) build character, they reveal character.
- Character: the kind of person YOU are right now and are becoming
- Most Important Character Traits to Pursue:
 - Submissive
 - Faithful
 - Honest and Truthful
- Faithful: a willingness to SUBMIT and put aside your own wants and desires to provide for and protect the more important needs of others.
- A person of honest and truthful character is constantly taking an assessment of their life so that they can actively take responsibility for what God has entrusted to him or her and root out any passivity which may have crept into their life.
- I want to be a person who courageously SUBMITS themselves to God's Word and Truth even when it is painful, hard, inconvenient or unpopular.
- I want to be a person who regularly makes a brutally honest ASSESSMENT of my life so that I can actively take RESPONSIBILITY for what God has entrusted to me and root out any passivity which may have crept into my life.
- I want to be a person who is willing to SACRIFICE my own wants and desires to provide for and protect (definition of love) the more important needs of others.

// Community Questions

1. Did you think of anyone to invite to church over the past week?
2. Who was your big celebrity crush growing up?

// Core Questions

1. What are the top 4-5 characteristics you would look for in someone you would call your spouse one day?
2. Are those the things that would describe you?



3. Who or what authority would you say you submit to in order to run your life? (examples: my parents, whatever earns me approval, I just follow my heart, etc.)
4. Whatever it is, for better or worse, how has it worked out for when you have faced something hard, painful, inconvenient, or unpopular?
5. Have you ever been blamed for something you didn't do? How did it feel?
6. Has anyone ever been unfaithful to you, or put their own desires over yours and hurt you as a result? How did that feel?
7. Where in your life do you sense passivity?
8. Has anyone in your life ever sacrificed something they wanted or desired for your benefit? What was your reaction or response?
9. According to the definition up in the "screenshots" section, would you describe yourself as a faithful person? Why or why not?
10. Are you the type of person who takes responsibility for your faults and mistakes, or is your first response to blame others? Explain.
11. What might your life look like if you were submissive (to the proper authority), faithful, honest, truthful, responsible, and sacrificial? What might your dating life/marriage look like?

// Challenge

Whether you are married or not, take some time this week to do an assessment of your life in these specific categories: submissiveness, faithfulness, honesty, responsibility, and sacrifice. Get out your journal, phone, or something, and jot down where in your life you are doing well in these areas and where there is room for improvement. You don't have to share what you write down, but next week you will have the opportunity to share whatever you wish!



Student Group Discussion Questions
“Character” - First Comes Love
September 26-27, 2020

// Parent Resource

Share with your student the person in your life that you can “share your burdens” with. It could be a spouse, friend, or family member. Tell your student what that relationship means to you. Ask them if they have anyone they can share their burdens with.

// Student Questions

1. Have you ever helped a friend carry something and it was too heavy for you?
2. Has there ever been a time when a friend told you a secret and you told someone else?
What was your reason for doing that?
3. Have you ever told a friend a secret and they shared it with someone else?
How did that make you feel?
Did you trust that friend again?
4. Read **Galatians 2:6**.
What is a “burden” you have experienced since March 2020? (an example could be no school) Have you shared that with anyone?
What burdens could your friends be dealing with?
How can you help your friend with that?
What does Jesus want you to do about your friend’s burdens?
5. Are you a friend that can help a friend with their burdens?
What could you do to help with your friends’ burdens? Ask and listen
6. Pray that God will help us become the type of people that can share each other’s burdens.

// Leader Feedback

Please let us know how these questions went over in your group. Email your answers to caleb_flowers@flatironschurch.com

- What was good?
- What was bad?
- What was confusing?