

# LOVE LESSONS

A SERIES FOR FEBRUARY, THE LOVE MONTH

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## Lesson 1

# THE ART OF SELF-CONTROL

*“For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. – 2 Timothy 1:7*

## WELCOME AND WORSHIP

Ask your members how their week was then let each of them finish the following sentence: “I praise God because \_\_\_\_\_.” Lead the group in prayer.

## WORD

**HOOK:** Who do you consider your greatest crush (can be a celebrity or someone you really know)? What do you like most about the person?

**BOOK:** 2 Timothy 1:7; Judges 15.

Since February is love month, this is the best time to talk about the hottest topic amongst youth today: love. And to start this series, how about some love lessons from the strongest man in the Bible? Passion, desire, lust and romance surround the tragic story of Samson.

Who is Samson? His name means “like the sun” or “sunshine”. He was miraculously conceived after an angel of the LORD

appeared to his barren mother. The messenger gave an instruction to Samson's mother about how they should raise the child: *"Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."* (Judges 13:4-5). The meaning of Nazirite means *"to be separate."* His story might have ended in tragedy but we saw that God still came to his rescue until the very end. Samson's story encourages us to:

## 1. Practice Self-Control

*"A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls"* (Proverbs 25:28)

Samson was impulsive. Empowered by God with supernatural strength, he endangered his destiny with impulsiveness. (*Malakas pero marupok!*) His most basic problem was that he never learned how to control his emotions: lust, anger. . . lust, anger... He was riding an emotional roller-coaster! One moment he's worshiping God, the next he's flirting with a Philistine woman. Samson never learned to control his emotions and so they controlled him completely. He probably never heard this wisdom: *"a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city"* (Proverbs 16:32). In his day, Samson had taken more than one city. But he never learned to control his temper. He never learned how to rule his spirit.

Self-control is fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23). We need to learn the difference between being empowered by the Spirit and controlled by Spirit or we will fall just like what happened to Samson.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTION:

*When was the last time you exercise self-control?*

## **2 Listen to Wise Counsel**

*“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice” (Proverbs 12:15)*

Often, when we’re in a relationship that’s not healthy or about to begin one that is going to lead us down the wrong path, God will give divine insight to parents, friends, and sometimes even total strangers to deliver warnings. Samson’s parents warned him against pursuing both the Philistine woman and Delilah, but each time he defied them (see Judges 15:3). If we reject wisdom, then God has no other choice but to let us endure the consequences of the choices made.

We should not use “the Samson method” in finding a partner. We will ruin our love life if we don’t listen to those who are giving us godly instructions. If we hope to have a successful Christian relationship that is glorifying to God, in humility we must rely on the power of God and the support of other believers.

### 3. Follow God, not Your Heart

*“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice” (Proverbs 12:15)*

Samson, the Nazarite, was commanded **not to:**

- touch the dead (Judges 13:4)
- drink wine (Judges 13:4)
- eat anything unclean (Judges 13:4)
- intermarry with other cultures (Deuteronomy 7:3)
- cut his hair (Judges 13:5)

Samson ignored his Nazirite vow of godly devotion and relied upon his own strength and abilities rather than upon God’s. Strength must be used for God’s glory. Samson really was strong. But his strength ended up being his collapse because he relied on himself too much. He ruined his relationships, he ruined his life, and he suffered greatly because of his pride. The flesh is no ally in the battle against the flesh. It is a spiritual battle that must be won spiritually.

We are free to choose, but we are not free from the consequence of our choices. The actions we make will either bring us farther or closer to God. So we must be careful! There are many “Delilahs” in our lives that drive us away from God’s plan.

Samson’s problem was not his hair, but his heart! Love God more than yourself, anything or anyone! Samson’s fall happened when his love for women became more than his love for God; when His passion for women became more important

to him than God's expressed will. Stay set apart. Be in pursuit of holiness rather than in pursuit of happiness.

#### 4. A Note of Grace

Samson's life reveals how God can still use human imperfections and bad situations to fulfill His purpose. We also learn that God would rather forgive than judge. In the final analysis, God saw Samson as a man of faith (Hebrews 11:32). Despite all of Samson's weaknesses, he did turn back to God before he died (Judges 16:28-30). HAS THE SEARCH FOR REAL LOVE OR FAKE LOVE SUCKED OUT ALL OUR STRENGTH? KNOW THAT GOD CAN STRENGTHEN US AGAIN.

**LOOK:** In the aspect of relationships, what are some of the consequences of wrong decisions and impulsiveness in your life?

**TOOK:** What are some practical ways we can do to practice self-control?

#### WORKS

The Word says, *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship”* (Romans 12:1) We all have made mistakes. We all have made bad decisions but God has been faithfully working in us to bring about his good and perfect plan for our lives. Encourage

everyone to offer their passion, attention and strength to the Lord then close the group in prayer.

*(This lesson is based on Rev. Jordan Escusa's sermon at Generation Congregation service on 03 February 2019).*

## Lesson 2

# The Original

*The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”*

– Genesis 2:18

## WELCOME

This is a simple game of charades using famous couples (movies, celebrities, fictional characters) as the category. You may do this by twos or by groups. You may use the following list, and you can add yours:

- Brad Pitt & Angelina Jolie
- Popeye & Olive
- Rome & Juliet
- Rose & Jack
- Barack & Michelle Obama
- Mark Anthony & Cleopatra
- Barbie & Ken
- Super Mario & Princess Peach
- Shrek & Fiona

## WORSHIP

Lead the group in prayer.

## WORD

**HOOK:** Who is your favorite couple of all time, and why?

God Himself is the Author of marriage. He created it with a beautiful purpose. As the author and perfecter of love, we can understand how His actions toward humanity is always love-filled. God is in a relentless pursuit to restore us, heal us and free us from guilt and shame. For today's lesson, we will be looking at the story of Adam and Eve, the very first couple on earth, for us to learn what God's original purpose and design for marriage is.

**BOOK:** Read Genesis 2:4-25.

### 1. Created in God's Image

*“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them”  
(Genesis 1:27)*

God created humans in His own image. This means that we are created holy and blameless. God created us with skills and attributes that can help us live well on earth. Some of these traits are leadership, problem-solving skills, creativity, and more. God also gave us emotions, the capacity to love, and the longing to be loved.

But the enemy wants to destroy this image and he successfully did it by tricking Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. Since then, sin entered the lives of human beings. As a result, we started having insecurities in relation to ourselves and violence in relation to others. All these lead to isolation from others and alienation separation from God.

## **2. Created for God's Purpose**

*And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to Him"  
(Genesis 2:18)*

God has a distinct purpose for each of us. This is true for couples as well. God did not only create an isolated Adam; He created Eve. This is not just because Adam was lonely; God has a higher purpose for their union. If Adam can do something great on his own, what more if there are two of them working together for a common purpose? Relationships must not be self-serving. Rather, they should be God-pleasing. It is easy to get broken-hearted when our priority is to please ourselves.

## **3. Created to be Free from Guilt and Shame**

*"Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame" (Genesis 2:25)*

The very first time Adam and Eve hid from God was when they knew they were naked. Sin has damaged the once pure and innocent relationship they had and replaced it with guilt and

shame. Shame makes you hide from God and from people. It makes it hate ourselves. It keeps us from becoming who God created us to be. It makes us hate our lives. It keeps us from God's best.

Deuteronomy 30:3 says, *“God, your God, will restore everything you lost; he'll have compassion on you; he'll come back and pick up the pieces from all the places where you were scattered.”*

Apart from God, it is impossible to be free and unashamed.

Full restoration is possible. It is a promise that comes with full repentance. God will not withhold anything that is good for us. If you are still single, keep waiting. God knows who you need and when you need him/her. If you know you're in a wrong relationship right now, the choice is always yours whether to keep living in shame or embrace restoration through repentance. As the Scripture says, *“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord”* (Acts 3:19).

**LOOK:** How has guilt and shame affected your life and relationships (with people and with God)?

**TOOK:** What important realization from today's topic will you strictly use in life from now on?

## **WORKS**

Affirm your members by telling them that they are not alone and that you love and care for them. Take time to pray for each other especially for those who might confess of their wrong relationships. Close the group in prayer.

*(This lesson is based on Ms. Faye Ann Medina's sermon at Generation Congregation service on 10 February 2019).*

## Lesson 3

# LOVE LESSONS FROM THE WISEST FOOL

*“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind” – Ecclesiastes 12:13*

## WELCOME AND WORSHIP

Ask your members to give three words that describe who God is in their lives based on their experiences throughout the week. (Example: “Provider” – I was able to eat meals the whole week). Lead the group in prayer.

## WORD

**HOOK:** What do you think is most stupid thing you’ve done in your whole life?

**BOOK:** Read 1 Kings 11:1-13.

In the previous lesson, we learned from the strongest – Samson. Now, if we are going to learn about relationships, why don’t we learn from the wisest?

Who is Solomon? Solomon was the third and last king of the united kingdom of Israel, following King Saul and King David. He was the son of David and Bathsheba. Solomon wrote the

Songs of Solomon, the book of Ecclesiastes, and much of the book of Proverbs. Solomon reigned for 40 years (1 Kings 11:42). In a dream, Solomon humbly acknowledged his inability to rule well and unselfishly asked God for the wisdom he would need to rule God's people justly.

God gave him wisdom and wealth (1 Kings 3:4-15; 10:27). In fact, "King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth" (1 Kings 10:23). God also gave Solomon peace on all sides during most of his reign (1 Kings 4:20-25). However, Solomon's story didn't end in greatness and splendor. His life teaches us some important love lessons that we should apply to avoid losing the most important relationship that we have: our relationship with God.

## 1. Don't Be Addicted to Love

*"But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites — from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, 'You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.' Solomon clung to these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart" (1 Kings 11:1-3)*

Imagine: Solomon could go for almost three years and never date the same woman twice! Solomon literally had everything and he could get anything he wanted with his power and fame, but he was not content. God had given him wisdom when he

asked for it but he didn't put it into good use when it came to relationships. The saddest thing is that he deliberately disobeyed God's command to not have many wives and to not intermarry: *"The king is not to have many wives, because this would make him turn away from the LORD; and he is not to make himself rich with silver and gold"* (Deuteronomy 17:17). He thought he could keep the compromise under control but eventually they outnumbered him. The problem is not really love, it is lust. *Matalino pero marupok!*

## 2. Be Careful of External Influences

*"For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord, as did his father David"* (1 Kings 11:4-6).

Those 1,000 women had an influence on him. This shows that relationships are powerful things. Relationships can and will eventually affect our spiritual lives as well. (See Exodus 34:16; 1 Kings 11:1-8; Daniel 1; 3; 1 Corinthians 15:33). No one is really immune to the influence of others. Solomon was not immune from the influence of those he chose to spend his time with. Being supremely wise and God's anointed did not protect him from this. We will become like those we chose to be close to—there is no escaping this reality. So let us choose wisely those

who will be our friends and influencers. The quality of your relationships determines your destiny.

Making good, wise decisions glorifies God. The reverse is also true—ignoring God’s Word and making foolish decisions dishonor God. True Wisdom glorifies God! If we are really wise, we won’t let our hearts dictate our direction. When we give in to our cravings, we give up our reasoning.

### **3 Guard Your Heart Against Idolatry**

*“Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. So the Lord became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the Lord had commanded” (1 Kings 11:7-10).*

Solomon didn’t just wake up one morning and discover that overnight he’d become a pagan. Gradually, his heart drifted away. So we should not ignore God’s warnings about sin. Solomon had matchless wisdom, yet was outsmarted by sin’s schemes.

Keep in mind:

- Sin is smarter than us.
- Sin wants us to trust our own wisdom.

- Sin wants us to underestimate small compromises.

If we don't allow restrictions, we allow temptations.

Relationships determine destiny progressively. It begins with a divided loyalty. Once our hearts become divided in our loyalty to God, sin enters the picture. Sin over time leads us to places we never thought we'd go.

Other than their link to his wives, Solomon's choice of gods made no sense. In the ancient world polytheists tended to worship the gods of nations who had conquered their armies or at least the gods of countries more powerful than their own. Ironically, Solomon worships the gods of people he has conquered and already controls.

Solomon's problem was not because he was not blessed, it was his excesses. It takes great integrity to handle success/prosperity. Life lived apart from God will be meaningless, regardless of education, fulfilled goals, the greatest of pleasures, and the greatest abundance of wealth (Ecclesiastes 1:2). God wants us to own things, but He doesn't want things to own us.

#### **4 God has Great Rewards, and Punishments Too**

*“Therefore, the Lord said to Solomon, ‘Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. Nevertheless, I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of the hand of your son.*”

*However, I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of my servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen” (1 Kings 11:11-13).*

Remember, God is a jealous God. We can sincerely ask God to incline our hearts toward Him (1 Kings 8:57–58), but we will wander off the path of righteousness if we choose to violate His revealed Word. If this happens, we must welcome God’s discipline, which is a form of grace. God’s grace is always greater than our greatest failures! *“My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in” (Proverbs 3:7-12).* The purpose of discipline is to restore. God can always restore whatever Satan has damaged.

**LOOK:** How can you relate with Solomon’s story based on the four points discussed?

**TOOK:** What are some practical ways we can do to avoid entering relationships that are not pleasing to God?

Take note of your members answers and make sure to follow them up throughout the week.

## **WORKS**

*“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you” (James 1:5).* Pray that we will always rely on God’s wisdom and

not on our own knowledge when making important decisions, especially when it comes to romantic relationships.

*(This lesson is based on Rev. Jordan Escusa's sermon at Generation Congregation service on 17 February 2019).*

## Lesson 4

# WORLDLY LOVE

*“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.” – 1 John 2:15-17*

## WELCOME AND WORSHIP

Let us worship the Lord by testifying about His goodness in our lives. Choose 2-3 members who would like to share about how they experienced God this week. Then lead the group in prayer.

## WORD

**HOOK:** Where do you spend most of your time? money? energy?

**BOOK:** Read 1 John 2:15-17.

In conclusion to this series, we will talk about another kind of love that is competing with our love for God. Sometimes, we’re not even aware that we are prioritizing something else over our

relationship with Him, or that we are spending more time with the world instead of the Word.

## 1. Lust of the Flesh

Apostle John warns us against the wrong desires of the heart and the appetite of indulging all things that excite and inflame sensual pleasures. Humans have carnal desires that can easily devour us if we are not careful. In the previous lessons, we have learned how lust caused the downfall of the strong Samson and the wise King Solomon. No one is immune to carnal desires; even strong Christians. This is why Paul warned: *“So the one who thinks he is standing firm should be careful not to fall”* (1 Corinthians 10:12). We should not let our guard down. We must feed more on God’s Word.

Lust must not be mistaken for love. Today’s society might have accepted premarital sex as a normal thing but God’s call to purity remains. Keep away from things that stir up the desires of the flesh such as pornography and other related things.

## 2. Lust of the Eyes

If we were to assess how many hours each day we spend on social media, what would the numbers be? Check our app histories and details to see the reality of our social media apps use. Aside from taking so much of our time, what’s more saddening is that we have unconsciously succumbed to the standards brought about by what we see in it. We yearn for *instagrammable* photos and search here and there for places to

visit. We fall to the false notion that we need to let our friends (or even the whole world) know about what we're doing. We choose to see the world through filters and start comparing our lives with the highlights of someone else's. The social media's not to blame. In fact, it was meant for good. But the enemy, as crafty as he is, has its ways of turning something good and beautiful into something destructive.

If what we see makes us question our lives, then it's time to pause and recalibrate. The enemy will make us believe that we are missing out on life but God says, "As long as you are walking with me, you are on the right track, my child." The enemy will make you to want more, to gain more, but God says, "I know what you need and when you need it, I will never fail you." Matthew Henry once wrote, "The world draws the heart from God; and the more the love of the world prevails, the more the love of God decays."

God's promises stand true even when our houses are not as fancy as what we saw in YouTube. We are loved by God even when our bodies do not look as fit as a certain model's we follow on Twitter.

### **3 Pride of Life**

Ecclesiastes 1:12 says, "*I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.*" For a king who literally had everything say this, it means there is truth in it. In this world where success is measured by wealth, fame and power, it is so tempting to seek entitlement.

As a student, we may be seeking for recognition. As an employee, we may be seeking for a higher position. As newly-weds we may be seeking for a beautiful home. We all want to gain something out of the hard work we are doing. God honors and will surely bless our hard work. But when we seek all these things more than we seek Him, it will be an endless cycle of wind-chasing. Let us all be reminded that when we seek God first, all these things will follow (Matthew 6:33).

1 John 2:17 gives us a good reason not to love these things of the world. It says, *“The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”* Lust, greed and all the vanities of this world will come to an end. What we desire today may not be our greatest desire in the years to come. But those who hope in the Lord and walk with the Lord will surely live forever. So let us not love the world, which is temporary, more than God who is eternal.

**LOOK:** Among the three things mentioned above, what are you most guilty of right now?

**TOOK:** 1 John 2:15-17 encourages us not to prioritize things of this world over our relationship with God. What should you stop or spend less time doing so we won't fall too much in love with the world?

## **WORKS**

Which aspects of blessed subtractions listed below are most needed in your life right now?

- Solitude - Subtracting convivial company
- Silence - Subtracting talkativeness and noise
- Fasting - Subtracting food for the body; adding food for the soul
- Subtracting pleasures and entertainments
- Subtracting acquisitiveness

Take note of your members answers and encourage them to do it for at least a week. Close the group in prayer.

*(This lesson is based on Rev. Jordan Escusa's sermon at Generation Congregation service on 24 February 2019).*