Session 1: Truth or Love?

ICE BREAKER

Leader: *To start this session, play a lighthearted version of truth or dare with your students. Go around the room and have each student (or a selection of volunteers if your group is large) pick Truth or Dare. If they choose Truth, the student will have to answer a question as honestly as possible. If they choose Dare, they must complete a physical challenge of some sort. The point of the game is not to embarrass any students, but to have fun before the session starts. Here are some examples of Truths and Dares you can use.*

Truth:

- *Have you ever broken something in the house and blamed a sibling? Tell the story.*
- *What TV show are you currently watching? What do you like about it?*
- *If you could have any nickname what would you want it to be? Note: The nickname cannot be related to their own name. Ex: Katie cannot choose Kat and Andrew cannot pick Drew.*
- *What superpowers do you wish you could have? Why?*
- *If you had three wishes, what would you wish for?*

Dare:

- *I dare you to lick your elbow.*
- *I dare you to sing "I'm a Little Teapot" while doing all the motions to the song.*
- *I dare you to imitate a cartoon character until someone in the group guesses which character you are pretending to be.*
- *I dare you to only speak in questions for the next 10 minutes.*
- *I dare you to do a cartwheel.*

It can be difficult to choose between truth and dare. Either we risk sharing something about ourselves or we agree to do something we may not want to do. It can feel like a no-win situation.

As Christians, we seem to face a similar "no-win" situation when deciding between truth and love. Sometimes the truth can seem unloving, so we hide what we believe to protect their feelings. Other times, we share the truth with people in an unloving way and hurt them in the process. So, what should we do? Should we share the truth or love people?

Do you think you are more likely to choose truth over love or love over truth? Explain your answer.

In Christ, we do not have to choose between truth and love. We are people who share truth in love. In this series,

Marquise Cox will help us with some of the tough questions about our faith. But it all starts with understanding how truth and love are tied together.

Let's watch the first video.

VIEW

Show Session 1: *Truth or Love?* (11 minutes).

REVIEW

Leader: *In the video, we heard from students who struggle with how to balance truth and love. A lot of your students probably relate to the challenges, questions, and doubts they shared. Give space for your students to share their questions and experiences when appropriate. Often, sharing a doubt or frustration is the first step to finding a path forward.*

Marquise shared the Bible's view of truth and love with us. He said instead of choosing between the two, we should love people with the truth and share the truth with love. But Christians have not done a great job of practicing the truth in love. **What do people tend to think about Christians?**

Do you think we have earned a negative stereotype? Why?

Far too many Christians think they must choose between love and truth. When we choose to share the truth *without* of love, we become harsh critics. **What does it look like to talk about the truth without love?**

What do you think non-Christians think of the truth when it is shared without love?

Truth without love is harsh and hurtful. But, when we choose love *instead* of truth, we ignore our beliefs to affirm someone, even if their beliefs and behaviors are wrong. **What do you think are the problems with ignoring the truth in order to love others?**

None of us like to be contradicted by the truth. **How do you feel when someone tells you you're wrong or need to change?**

Our culture tells us that love means affirmation. Even if someone is wrong, the best way to love them is to agree with "their truth." **What do you think it means to love someone?**

Our culture says love is just a strong feeling. You know you love someone

because you feel it. And to love someone means that you let them live out whatever they feel is true. But both love and truth are more than passing feelings. Truth is a solid standard that never changes, regardless of how we feel. Love means sacrificing yourself for another person, putting others before yourself, seeking the best for others. Truth and love aren't at odds; they work together. It's like Marquise said, "Truth is the foundation for love, and love is the visible expression of truth." But that means loving someone may mean disagreeing with their "truth" and even calling them out for their false beliefs and actions. **What do you think it looks like to share the truth in love?**

In the video, Marquise shared Proverbs 27:6, a saying from Solomon that helps us learn about the right way to use truth. It says, "Wounds from a sincere friend are better than kisses from an enemy." Think of a time a friend shared an uncomfortable truth with you that you needed to hear. **What was your first reaction to that uncomfortable truth? In what ways was your friend loving you by telling you the truth?**

Sometimes, we might have to share an uncomfortable truth with a friend. Imagine that a friend is choosing to do something you disagree with. **What would you say to them?**

How would you share the truth with them in a loving way?

Being corrected is not fun. It is likely that sharing the truth might make someone feel ashamed of his or her actions or upset for being called out. **What could we do to assure someone of our love for them after sharing the truth with them?**

Marquise gave us two ways we can love others while standing on the truth. His first suggestion was to stay close. In other words, make friends with non-Christians and people you don't agree with. **What makes a strong friendship?**

What would it look like to make friends with people you don't agree with?

The second piece of advice Marquise gave us was to stay persistent. Sometimes, people abandon friendships when there is a small disagreement. Even if a person says he or she doesn't want to go to church with us or doesn't believe in God, we should be persistent in our friendship with him or her. **What can make it hard to be a friend to people who disagree with us?**

What would it look like to be a persistent, loving friend to people who do not know Jesus?

BIBLE JOURNEY

In the video, Marquise talked about the reasons Christians aren't seen as respectful. The truth is, we have not been very loving to the people around us. Seeing our faults can be painful but should direct us back to God's vision for how we should live. Can someone in the group read John 13:3–17 for us?

In the ancient world, washing a person's feet was a humiliating thing to do. Only a servant or slave could wash a person's feet. However, right after we read that everything was under his control in John 13:3, Jesus humbles himself and washes his disciples' feet. **According to verses 12–15, why did Jesus wash his disciple's feet?**

Jesus was setting the example for the way we should love one another. **What does Jesus's example teach us about his love?**

The love of Jesus is humble. It means never thinking of yourself as better than someone else and always looking for ways to serve people in big and small ways. **What do you think it looks like to "wash one another's feet" today?**

Can someone else read John 13:34–35?

Jesus gives his disciples a new command, one that should be the defining characteristic of his followers. **What is the new command? How well do you think we are doing at following this command?**

John 13:35 commands us to be so loving that it becomes our stereotype. The first thing people should notice about us is our love. **What might need to change in your life for people to know you by your love?**

God loved us when we were his enemies. He didn't love us because we were popular, likable, or impressive. He loved us before we had done anything to earn his favor. He loved us so deeply that he gave his Son to save us. Jesus sacrificed himself so that we can be forgiven, and he calls us to love others with that same self-sacrificial love. **What would it look like for you to love the people in your school, team, or neighborhood with self-sacrificial love?**

LAST WORD

Loving people is not an option for a Christian and, as Marquise said, love isn't really love if it is not wrapped around the truth. God commands us to share the truth in love. Our challenge is to follow his command.

Leader: *Brainstorm with your students one way your group can be known by our love this next week. This may be thinking of specific ways to befriend someone they disagree with, apologizing and reconciling a broken friendship, or even thinking of needs your group can meet for someone in your community. If the group comes up with multiple good ideas, you can practice one good idea a week during this series.*

God loves us beyond what we deserve. But he also doesn't shy away from the truth. With God, truth and love aren't opposing forces; they're two sides of the same coin. You can't have one without the other.

Let's pray and ask God to make us people known for our love.