



Established in God's Love Series

***Input / Session Outlines
For Local Youth Group Leaders***

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Established in God's Love Series - YES 2021

GUIDE | How to Use this Resource...

We are delighted to share with you the Session Overviews for the Established in God's Love Series 2021.

Structure

- **Title** - Each week is clearly titled with the name of the Session.
- **Schedule** - Below the title is a rough schedule which you are welcome to follow. You can also feel free to adapt & change this to suit your youth group and their needs.
- **Timings** - We have timed the sessions to last 45 minutes. You can shorten or stretch out activities to make them suit the time you have appointed.

Content

Each session will contain components of the following. It is entirely up to the Youth Leader how they want to utilise and facilitate these times with their youth.

1. Games
2. Video Input
3. Activity/Sharing Group
4. Prayer

Video Inputs

Below are links to each of the Established Series talks for your reference & for easy access. If you have difficulty accessing any of these video clips - please let us know!

Talk Title	Author
Established Series: Talk 1 - Loved by God	Phil Morrison
Established Series: Talk 2 - Loving God	Lucy Jackson
Established Series: Talk 3 - Loving Yourself	Ped & Leighanne Dunlop
Established Series: Talk 4 - Loving Others	Elias and Rodgee Vanderstuyft

Established in God's Love Series - YES 2021

TALK 1 | Loved by God

"Your steadfast love is better than life"

Psalm 63: 3

Activity	Duration
1. Game	10 minutes
2. Video Input: Loving God	10 minutes
3. Activity: Witness/Testimony/Sharing	10 minutes
4. Small Groups Discussion	15 minutes
5. Prayer	5 minutes

1. Game

2. Video Input - Loving God

Welcome to the first talk in our Established in God's Love series!

Here is the link to the video clip: [Established Series: Talk 1 - Loved by God \(Phil Morrison\)](#)

Video Script

Welcome to the first of our Established Series. My name is Phil Morrison, I am a member of the Servants of the Word, I live in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

This first session is titled 'Loved by God'. You see, before we start looking at anything else, we need to know this fundamental truth. You are loved by God. Yes you. YOU are loved by God.

God has created us... *in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* (Gen 1:27)

He is the one who created us out of love. To have a relationship with him.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. (Gen 1:29)

In Psalm 139 it says...

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. (Ps 139:13)

In Jeremiah there is a verse that says "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness. (Jer 31:3)

This is a fundamental truth – that God loves you.

However,

- this truth can be doubted – does God really love ME? I guess he loves other people – but probably not me.
- this truth can be dulled – a lot of distraction going on in our lives, we can fill our day and minds with many things that distract us from knowing God's love.
- this truth can be dismissed – you just don't believe it

But the truth is – God created you, you are his child and he loves you

Let me share a quick story with you. A few years ago I was supposed to meet a friend of mine on a Saturday to go for a walk. I texted him, but didn't hear from him, which was strange, because he would normally be pretty good at texting back. But I heard that afternoon that they night before he had been taken to hospital. He needed an emergency operation. Which was going to happen on the Sunday. This was a very serious operation. It was 50/50 as to whether he would survive the operation. He got the operation on the Sunday. During that long operation I took his parents and sister to go for a walk, we walked around this very park.

I am glad to say that he did survive the operation and more than that it had gone very well.

So the next day, on the Monday. I went to the hospital to see him. I found his hospital bed. I just said to him "It is good to see you". And then I asked him a very simple question. Do you need anything? Can I do anything for you?

He just looked me in the eyes and said. All I want to know is that I am loved. I responded you are and I prayed for him. His deepest desire was to know that he was loved. I think that is the desire of all of us. And the truth is, we are loved more deeply than we can know. We are loved with a love that is perfect, personal, secure, unfathomable, protective, faithful, merciful.

But in the midst of life we can get distracted, we can doubt, we can dismiss things. But when we spend time with God, we learn more who we are fully meant to be.

He is our father and we are his sons and daughters. He has loved us with an everlasting love.

So this weeks activity to focus on is prayer and reading. How do we experience the love of God through prayer and study?

Each day there is a different verse to read and a different word to reflect on

God's love is perfect, personal, secure, unfathomable, is a protection, faithful and merciful

Firstly what I want you to do is find a quiet space. One where you know you will be alone for a while.

This could be your bedroom or somewhere else in the house.

This is mine.

- 1) Go and find a quiet place in your house.

- a. This is my one. Where I can close the door – and hopefully no-one will come in.
- b. Then I bring what I need
 - i. Bible
 - ii. Notebook
 - iii. Pen
 - iv. Sheet
 1. A cup of tea
 - v. Then I put my phone onto 'do not disturb'

I begin with a simple prayer.

Lord as I read your word, help me to know more fully your love for me.

Read the passage slowly. Read it twice. Allow it to sink in.

Ask yourself three questions

- 1) What is the passage saying? Literally – what is this passage communicating about God's love
- 2) What strikes you about this?
- 3) How will this truth of God's love impact your life today?
 - a. Think of action to do from it
 - i. Saying a prayer of thankfulness throughout the day for it
 - ii. Sharing this truth with someone you meet today
 - iii. A certain way you want to serve someone

End with a short prayer. Thanking God for his love and asking for more of his love this day.

Share with each other how you get on this week. At your next youth group meeting or your boys group or girls group.

3. Activity: Witness/Sharing

Last November we all began a journey towards becoming established in God's Love. During the YES Retreat, Peter, Jordan and Lea spoke about giving our lives and hearts more fully to God. They guided us towards the truth of recognising that God loves us and wants to know us more fully.

In advance of this time, prepare the youth for a time of sharing/discussion/question & answer. Give them a five minute break and encourage them to get themselves a cup of tea, drink, snack. Then choose to do **one** of the following:

- Ask **3** youth from your group to share about their experience of the YES Retreat. Ask them to talk about what stood out to them, what God was saying, etc.
- Have **3** youth leaders share about their own personal approaches to prayer and things that they've found works well for them.
- Have a 'Question & Answer' session where youth can write in questions about prayer in the chat directly to the youth leaders. Youth leaders can then anonymously answer some of the queries that have come up.

Then, as a youth group - decide how you are going to do the 'Established in God's Love Series' in a way that works well for you. Will you have

- Prayer Partners?
- Optional Prayer Events Planned throughout the week?
- A specific time to meet for the Established Sessions each week?

Decide/communicate a structure which will work best for you as a group. Decide upon a way to communicate as a group throughout this series as well. This leads on to the next section of small groups.

4. Small Group Discussion

This section can be done in discussion groups following on from previous activity, or in break out rooms allocated for each specific small group.

From Phil, we heard about the importance of knowing we are loved by God. Phil has given us a scriptural guide for daily prayer in the days after our group tonight. Have a look at these titles and discuss which one stands out to you. Why?

1. God's love is perfect
2. God's love is personal
3. God's love is secure
4. God's love is unfathomable
5. God's love is a protection
6. God's love is faithful
7. God's love is merciful

5. Prayer

End this week with a short prayer time as a group. A potential idea could be to guide this time using the ACTS Acronym in the Establish in God's Love Series: Extended Daily Prayer Guide.

A. Adoration: Acknowledge God for who he is. singing a song of Praise & Worship.

C. Confession: Have a brief moment of reflection, looking over the past day and asking God's forgiveness and mercy in moments of sin or difficulty.

T. Thanksgiving: Specifically Thank God for the good moments of today.

S. Supplication: Bring before God any prayers of intercession that you may have as a youth group.

Established in God's Love Series - YES 2021

TALK 2 | Loving God

"Your steadfast love is better than life"

Psalm 63: 3

Activity	Duration
1. Game	10 minutes
2. Video Input: Loving God	5 minutes
3. Testimony	5 minutes
4. Activity - Looking at my Life	10 minutes
5. Small Groups Discussion	15 minutes
6. Prayer	5 minutes

1. Game

Start your time together with a game to help everyone relax. One recommendation would be:

My Chair

Leave one chair empty and everyone sits in a circle with someone standing in the middle. The person in the middle has to try and sit in the empty seat.

1. The first person to the left of the chair (Person A) can claim the empty chair by hitting it, shouting MY CHAIR, and moving to sit on it.
2. The second person to the left of the original empty chair (Person B) can claim Person A's now empty chair by hitting it, shouting MY CHAIR, and moving to sit on it.
3. The third person to the left of the original empty chair **cannot** move one seat to the right as Person A and B have done. They have to shout the name of someone else in the circle and claim the chair for them (e.g. LAURA's chair). When Laura gets up from her chair, wherever it is... the process repeats. Whoever is next to Laura's now empty chair can hit it, shout MY CHAIR and move to sit on it.
4. The person in the middle has to run to the empty seat and claim it before some else does.

2. Video Input - Loving God

Talk Outline:

Introduction:

Hi All - My name is Lucy Jackson. I'm from Glasgow, Scotland - I've been around Kairos and the YES Retreat for a few years and today we are going to talk about 'Loving God'

We'll begin with **Part 1: What is Love?**

Dictionary Definition

- An intense feeling of deep affection
- A great interest or pleasure in something

Many love songs, many stories that explain love. Today we are going to look at this in the context of Loving God.

What are some of the things we find easy to love? We asked a few of the team what are some of the things they loved, and after you hear from them please pause the video and answer the question for yourself. It could be a food, a feeling, a hobby or a person. Talk to the people around you and have a short discussion, and let's hear these ideas to get us going. What is something that you love?

Brief Discussion

Ok great, thanks for doing that. Let's hold on to these things and we'll come back to them later.

No we're moving on to **Part 2: The Greatest Commandment**

Mark 12: 28-31

(Deuteronomy 6:1-19; Matthew 22:34-40)

28 Now one of the scribes had come up and heard their debate. Noticing how well Jesus had answered them, he asked Him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?"

29 Jesus replied, "This is the most important: 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these."

No pressure - the greatest commandment of all.

Let's think back to some of those examples you just discussed. Remember them. Briefly we're going to break down now what it means to *love* something with your heart, soul, mind and strength. We will come on to some activities around this verse at the end of the video but for now Let's get started. The verse firstly calls us to love God with all of our heart. What does this mean?

Heart

- Attention, desires, focus. What you value most.
- For where your treasure lies, there your heart lies also.

- The place of decision making

What are some of the things that your attention is on just now? Later we're going to do an activity around this.

Loving God with our heart calls us to stop and evaluate.

At the twilight of life we will be judged on love alone. We can only love if we make room to do it. If we make room for our hearts to grow in this area.

What are the things filling up your daily life? Is there room set aside to prioritise loving others? Or loving God?

If not - can you make room? What does loving someone look like to you? Spending time with them. Listening to what they have to say. Affirming them and acknowledging the gift of who they are in our lives. These are all things we can do to others and to God.

Soul

Translated to 'breath' in the scriptures.

In this we recognise how interlinked our breathing is with our existence, many bible translations also use the word 'life' rather than 'soul'

Are you willing to give up your life to God - your daily breath?

- Our desires and aspirations (hope or ambition of achieving something)
- This talks about how intimately intertwined our goals and ambitions are with our life.
- Do you trust God with your eternity?

Proverbs 3 says; 'Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Dreams, hopes. Ambitions, plans. You can do amazing things. With God - you can do incredible things. In him he can take your dreams and transform them, and transform others.

How can we love God with our soul? By entrusting it to him. Literally by just saying the words until he reveals how you can put this into action. Entrust your plans to the Lord... he will bring them to wholeness. He will help you realise your dreams in ways beyond what you can imagine.

Mind

- Goals, thoughts, intelligence and plans. .
- We have been given an intellect and a will. We have been given instinct, and the ability to reflect. God calls us to love him with this will. With this mind. How can we love him? Use it for him. To know him more, to seek to understand his scripture and the word of God. TO think of ways that we can bring his love and his kingdom into our professions, traders, areas of interest. He desires this for us.

Strength

- Your effort. Your fortitude.
- It's not easy. Life.
- It's exhausting at times, in fact it can be devastating. With great joy comes great sorrow too.

This reading we've been talking about today. Mark 12: 28-31. It goes on. It then speaks about a widow.

41 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. 42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

This is what God wants.

Everything.

There's times I've looked at my life and that has seemed like a lot.

There's times we're I've been ashamed because it's felt like nothing.

I don't want to do anything - I don't have desires - I don't feel like I have strength. I'm just trying to get by.

God wants that.

He wants that feeling.

He wants it all.

Once you get that fixed, once you get all of these things in line. God becomes your compass. your true north. Once you have him as your True North and established in your life... everything else falls into place. E.g. Relationships, Fitness, Concerns around others perception of me, my ability to do my job well, University/A job/ Escape. It all gets put back into its right place.

Perfect Love casts out fear.

When we trust in this love it transforms that way we deal with all of these areas we've mentioned.

When our decisions are about what brings me closer to God - then he guides the rest. The job, the success, the exams, all of it.

God Bless you all as you continue on this journey. May God be with us to help us as we grow in this gift and this area. Amen.

2. Testimony

Organise for someone in your team or from the wider community to share a testimony about a situation where they grew in their ability to Love others and Love God. Try to give practical examples of the things they did that helped them to grow in this area.

3. Activity



Draw a picture of a heart (or a shape) somewhere on your page. Split your 'heart' up into sections of the things that are currently filling your daily life, your time and your thoughts. It can be people, commitments, anything at all. Some of these things might be going well, and some might be causing you stress or worry.

Discuss with your group some of the things you wrote down. Ask God to come into these areas. Ask him to help you to see the ways his love can come into them.

4. Small Group Discussion

1. What (if anything) stood out to you from the talk?
2. What are some things you can do to grow in your ability to love God with your heart, soul, mind and strength?

5. Prayer

End this week with a short prayer time as a group. A potential idea could be to guide this time using the ACTS Acronym in the Rooted Series: Extended Daily Prayer Guide.

A. Adoration: Acknowledge God for who he is. singing a song of Praise & Worship.

C. Confession: Have a brief moment of reflection, looking over the past day and asking God's forgiveness and mercy in moments of sin or difficulty.

T. Thanksgiving: Specifically Thank God for the good moments of today.

S. Supplication: Bring before God any prayers of intercession that you may have as a youth group.

Established in God's Love Series - YES 2021

TALK 3 | Loving Truth

"Your steadfast love is better than life"

Psalm 63: 3

Activity	Duration
1. Video Input: Loving Truth	5 minutes
2. Activity/Group Discussion: Brainstorm Session: Counteracting Negative Thoughts	15 mins
3. Prayer (ACTS)	5 mins
4. Games	20 mins
5. Follow up Resource	

1. Video Input - Loving Truth

Welcome to the third talk in our Established series

Please click on the link provided on Established Series page on our website:

Video Script

Intro

- Who we are- Ped and Leighanne: community members from Glasgow, Scotland.
- What we do- We're a social worker and a photographer.
- Today we're going to talk about our Thought Life. This is something Ped has worked on in his Christian life but also I help young people and adults with this through my work.
- The concept: Our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are all connected
- How we think about ourselves on a day to day basis shapes our feelings and also how we behave and if we don't spend time making sure we are thinking positively then we can find ourselves often upset, unmotivated and frustrated.
- The amazing thing for us as Christians is that we have The Bible with the most powerfully uplifting passages that can teach us Truth about how who we are in our identity as sons and daughters of God.
- We can challenge our negative thoughts and thought patterns through repeating the truth we find in the script.

How we can use scripture to help us think positively

- Speaking scripture aloud that directly counters negative thoughts you have can help us have a stronger Christian life that is focused on the power of Christ.
- “I’m ugly” | I am fearfully and wonderfully made
- “it all relies on me working hard” | I can do all things THROUGH Christ who strengthens me
- “my life is lame/I have no purpose” | No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind conceived what God has prepared for those who love him
- “I am not important” | But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. - 1 Peter 2:9

Some ways that we can remind ourselves of scripture passages

- Write scripture passages down in a visible place such as on a mirror. write them on your mirror in your room/bathroom/hallway/where ever you keep a mirror!
- Type them in a note on your phone
- Post notes all over your house.
- Send yourself an e-mail, put it in your calendar.
- If you can’t think of scripture off the top of your head you can google “what does God say about feeling unworthy/unloved/etc.” and BAM, thanks search engine optimization - you’ll get hit with a ton of links to scripture that will uplift and encourage you and most importantly directly contradict those neg thoughts/feelings.

Summary

- Negative thoughts can drain us of energy, our hope, and our faith.
- We have a wonderful gift in the scriptures that teaches positive uplifting truth about who we are in Christ
- Making a note of scripture passages and keeping it close to our hearts will help us love ourselves well.

2. Activity - Group Discussion & Activity

Have a look at the sheet below which outlines common negative thought patterns. These are things people easily/regularly do -choose some of these that jump out to you and with your team, think about scripture passages, actions and attitudes that would help you counteract these negative thought patterns. Write these down on flipchart paper and then share your ideas with the wider group.

Small Group Discussion Questions

- How am I doing in my thought life? Do I allow negative thoughts to shape how I feel and behave?
- What are the positive thoughts that I have on a regular basis about who I am and what I do?

THE “WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?” TEAM

“All or Nothing” Allen (All-or-nothing thinking)



Allen only sees things in “black and white” or “right or wrong.” Nothing is ever in the middle. When he got a 92% on his math test, he thought he was a failure because he didn’t get a 100%. Even though he got a lot of great presents for his birthday, he was very unhappy because there was one present that he didn’t get.

“Blaming” Blake (personalization)



Blake is always blaming somebody for a problem. Sometimes he blames himself; sometimes other people. He’s so busy blaming that he never really deals with the problem! Sometimes it’s not even his fault or the other person’s fault! One time he blamed himself for not giving his friend a birthday present, even though he didn’t know it was his birthday. Another time he blamed his teacher for a bad grade on a test even though he didn’t study for it.

“Over and Over” Oliver (overgeneralization)



When something bad happens to Oliver, he thinks it’s going to happen over and over again. When his basketball team lost a game, he decided that he didn’t want to play anymore because he thought they were just going to keep losing. He thinks he has really bad luck and that he never catches a break. He doesn’t think anything is ever going to turn out okay.

“Negative” Nate (mental filter, disqualifying the positive)



Nate only notices the bad stuff that happens to him. He thinks nothing good ever happens to him, and if something good does happen he acts like it doesn’t mean anything. When he got an A on his science test, he said, “I’ll probably still fail the class anyway.” When he finally got the pair of shoes he’d been wanting forever, all he noticed was that they weren’t the color he had wanted.

“Not a Big Deal” Norman (minimization)



Norman always plays off important things as not being a big deal. When someone at school stole \$20 from him he told the teacher, “Don’t worry about it. It doesn’t matter that much.” When his coach congratulated him on a great shot he made Norman just said, “No big deal. I just got lucky.”

The “WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?” TEAM

“Shoulda” Sharonda (should statements)



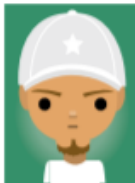
Sharonda always talks about the things she “should” do or she “must” do even though nobody else is telling her she has to do them. When she’s hanging out with her friends she thinks, “I should be studying so I can be a straight “A” student. No matter how much she does, she always thinks she should be doing more. Then she feels guilty. Sharonda also thinks a lot about what other people “should” be doing. If they don’t do it she gets very angry and frustrated.

“Drama Queen” Jean (catastrophizing)



Jean blows everything out of proportion. Even if a really small problem happens, she acts like it’s the end of the world. People are always telling her she’s making too big of a deal out of things. One time she got into a huge fight with a friend because the friend couldn’t come over to Jean’s house after school. Jean made a big deal out of it and said, “I hate you!” to her friend. Now they aren’t friends anymore.

“Psych Out” Sam (mind reading, fortune teller error)



Sam always psychs himself out by expecting the worst. He usually thinks people don’t like him or that they’re out to get him, even though he doesn’t really know for sure. He decided his teacher thought he was stupid just because she didn’t call on him in math class. Sam also thinks things are going to turn out bad before he even starts. One time he decided not to talk to a new girl at school because he was sure that she would be mean to him if he did.

“Bad Mouth” Brandy (labeling)



Brandy likes to call people names... Even herself! If she makes a mistake, instead of trying to fix it, she just focuses on what a “Loser” she is. If her friend makes her mad she thinks, “She is such a jerk!” Once Brandy “bad mouths” someone, she doesn’t change her mind very easily. Even if Brandy does something really well she is probably thinking, “I’m still a loser!”

“Emo” Emily (emotional reasoning)



Emily always lets her feelings be in control. If she feels upset, she thinks that means everything must be awful even though it really may not be that bad. She thinks, “If I feel it, it must be real.” For example, Emily felt nervous and scared when she met her mom’s new boyfriend so she decided that he must be a really awful person... Even though she doesn’t know anything about him!

3. Prayer

Have a short time of prayer where you bring your ideas and discussions before the Lord. If possible - use the ACTS guide which is available in the Established in God’s Love Series Daily Prayer Guide:

Adoration: Spend a minute or two thinking about and praising God for an aspect of his Character, his Goodness, Mercy, Loving-kindness, Justice, etc. Pick one that is important to remember when working, growing and building his Kingdom alongside one another.

Confession: Spend a moment asking for grace, forgiveness and healing in your relationships with one another. Ask God to build you closer together in unity and fellowship.

Thanksgiving: Thank God for all the blessings he has given you all from big things like important relationships (family/friends) to small things like the warm tea in your hand or the weather outside today. Try to go round and all thank God for one thing each.

Supplication:! Pray for any Intercessions that you have as a youth group. Bring your idea for building community before the Lord and ask him to bless it.

4. Games

5. Follow Up Resource & Discussion

Here is a link to the 'negative thoughts' discussed earlier in today's session:

[Thinking-Mistakes-Character - Negative Thoughts](#)

Remember - These are things people easily/regularly do - if any of these jump out to any of the youth, or feel like a pattern for them, encourage them to get together with their pals who attended the Yes retreat or youth leader to think more about scripture passages that would help them counteract these negative thought patterns.

Established in God's Love Series - YES 2021

TALK 4 | Loving Others

"Your steadfast love is better than life"

Psalm 63: 3

Activity	Duration
1. Game	10 mins
2. Video Input 1: Loving Others	10 mins
3. Activity - Brainstorm/Small Group & Whole Group Discussion	20 mins
4. Testimony	10 mins
5. Prayer	5 mins

1. Game

Start with a fun and competitive game. Ideal if it's boys vs girls or involves a time challenge. (e.g. Roaming Pictionary). Aim to get the youth really engaged and competitive. As we begin this session around 'Loving Others' - we want to already be highlighting situations where we can begin to inject 'love' in small and simple ways.

If you want to invent a game around 'Loving your neighbour' - go for it.

2. Video Input - Loving Others

Video Script:

One of the things that I miss about the Philippines the most is the beach. We have beautiful beaches with blue water and white sand, and along the sandy shores are tall coconut trees. That's why whenever I see coconut trees, it instantly brings good memories. Now I have a question: if I would bring a coconut shoot from the Philippines, and plant it here in Belgium, do you think it will grow? Coconut is a tropical crop and grows well in a hot climate. It may grow for a few months here when it's summer, but it's very cold-sensitive and thus will not survive winter. This means that I can't keep it for the long term.

Just like trees, humans also need the right climate in order to thrive. We need an environment in which we can grow and bear fruit; an environment that provides love, support, care, and formation. As Christians, God has called us not to live as "Lone Ranger" Christians, but to belong to a Christian community of brothers and sisters in Christ.

We need committed, stable, healthy, and supportive brotherly/sisterly relationships.

What are brotherly/sisterly relationships?

What are brotherly/sisterly relationships?

Brotherly/sisterly relationships are Christ-centered. The basis of our relationships with one another is Christ. It means treating each other as "brothers and sisters" in the full sense, that is, linked by "spiritual blood-ties". The key to our relationship is that we are God's sons and daughters; we belong to one family.

Brotherly/sisterly relationships are crystal-pure, with no pretensions or hidden agenda. We relate with one another purely, not because someone is popular or pretty. We relate just as we are, and we accept others just as they are keeping in mind that we are all God's work in progress. [Video: take Bible and read 1 Tim 5:1-2]

Brotherly/sisterly relationships are also committed, generous, faithful, and life-giving. As brothers and sisters in Christ, our love for one another is founded on a decision, and not on our feelings. We are generous with our lives, time, and resources. We are quick to encourage, offer help, honour, and respect others. We do not choose whom we serve or love.

Boy/girl relationship

In brotherly-sisterly relationships, we want to encourage and build strong brotherhood and sisterhood. This means brothers having strong relationships with other brothers; sisters having strong relationships with other sisters. These are our *primary* relationships for us to grow as men and women of God. Those who can teach men to be men are other men. Those who can teach women to be women are other women.

Brotherhood: Characteristics

When you hear the word "brotherhood", chances are that you would associate it with violent gangs. But that's not what Christian brotherhood means. Christian brotherhood binds boys and men together based on having the same faith and striving side by side for the kingdom of God. Everyone is accepted and loved as sons of God, therefore our relationships are stable and lasting. Quite a difference from the world's type of friendships.

Firstly, we - brothers - are to be faithful. Think a moment about it: can your brothers rely on you? Are you committed to help your brother whenever he is in need?

Secondly, we need to be inclusive. Real brothers have respect for new brothers and they make an active effort to introduce and welcome a new brother so that he can fit in, no matter what that new brother looks like.

Thirdly, being part of a brotherhood gives you strength. We brothers fight together for the kingdom of God. In this fight, we are to encourage one another, we are loyal to one another. This builds manly character. As Solomon said: "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." (Proverbs 27:17)

Last but not least, make a difference when relating to sisters in Christ. We men are to treat women with dignity and respect. Be a gentleman, open doors, offer your help to carry heavy

stuff, be the one to walk at the side of the street closest to the cars. Watch your speech and the way you address a sister.

Sisterhood: Characteristics

[Video: water the plants, do some arts, or work in the kitchen.]

As girls and women, God has also called us to sisterhood. Each one of us has been called to God's family; thus, we become sisters to one another regardless of our interest, backgrounds, and talents. Our relationship to each other is based on our identity as God's daughters and thus, we are in his family.

We are called to be girls and women of STYLE:

- S- Servant-heart: We look for the needs of others. We find practical ways to serve one another.
- T- Trust: We show trust and openness in getting to know other sisters in a personal way.
- Y - Yields to God: We pray for one another. Building sisterhood takes time and effort, and we cannot do this on our own. God is there to help us love those whom we think are "unlovable", and to be open to receive love from others.
- L - Loyalty: We defend one another and remain committed. We avoid gossiping, we don't talk negatively about our sisters. We show that our sisters can rely on us.
- E - Enthusiastic: We delight to be with one another. We spend quality time with each other. We express concretely love and joy in being with one another regardless of our emotional conditions.

Some expressions of love for one another

OK, now we have a question for you:

List as many practical ways as you can how to express brotherly/sisterly love to others?

Take a moment to think about this.

List as many practical ways as you can how to express brotherly/sisterly love to others?]

You were probably able to list a lot of things. I'll try to add a couple more to your list. You can start by intentionally greeting your brother or sister. This is a simple thing you can do to everyone, even people you don't know yet. It opens the door to friendship. Secondly, encourage someone! Do some effort to affirm what someone is doing and encourage him or her to continue the good work. Give your brother or sister some upbuilding speech! Thirdly, honour someone for the wonderful person he or she is. Do an intentional effort to list his or her strengths or the things he or she is an example for. There is no better birthday gift than that, so this is a great alternative if you ever forget to arrange a birthday present for

someone! Last but not least, go beyond words and serve the person. Jesus was a great example of this: even though He is the Son of God, he served his disciples by washing their feet. If you don't know how to serve, just ask your brother or sister: Today I want to help you out with something, where can I start?

When I was on a mission trip to Tanzania two years ago, after a few days my brothers and I were all sick and unable to do the volunteer work we planned to do. We didn't understand why this was happening, but we all prayed to God and asked what He wanted us to do. He responded: someone from a local retreat centre that was running a retreat around healing asked for more speakers and we volunteered. It was hard work, but it was an unforgettable time. I saw God's healing power and many miracles happening.

Conclusion

The world upholds independence -- the "Me", "Mine" and "Myself" culture. But the Lord calls us to interdependence -- that we love one another, to give and to receive from one another. (Jn 13:34). The Lord calls us to a Christian community of brothers and sisters in Christ.

3. Activity/Brainstorm/Small Group

How can we express brotherly/sisterly love to one another? Three tiered discussion: Split into boys and girls, and discuss what sort of things make you feel loved/ appreciated/ acknowledged by one another. Brainstorm and write down your ideas on flipchart paper or someone's phone.

Then come together and discuss ways you can respect and love each other as guys and girls when you come together. Girls share what are some of the things you appreciate. Guys, be honest about what makes you feel respected. You might be surprised by the things that your youth raise. Give them some examples if it helps to get the conversation going. E.g. Guys might appreciate girls taking a compliment when it's given rather than reading into it or dismissing it.

4. Testimony

Ask a male and female youth leader to share a testimony (to the whole group). It can be really helpful for the men and women to be given insight to the opposite sex in this area. The testimony could include:

- How they've grown in building strong mens/womens relationships & loving others
- Things they have found difficult when striving to love others.
- Things that have worked well when striving to love others.

5. Prayer

End this week with a short prayer time as a group. A potential idea could be to guide this time using the ACTS Acronym in the Rooted Series: Extended Daily Prayer Guide.

- A. Adoration: Acknowledge God for who he is. singing a song of Praise & Worship.
- C. Confession: Have a brief moment of reflection, looking over the past day and asking God's . forgiveness and mercy in moments of sin or difficulty.
- T. Thanksgiving: Specifically Thank God for the good moments of today.
- S. Supplication: Bring before God any prayers of intercession that you may have as a youth . group.