

Questions for discussion

1. Are you loved by others?

It could seem daunting thinking about how people view us. I have wondered if I would be surprised or horrified at my funeral. What legacy have I left? How do people view me? Am I loved? I do believe I am loved but I equally hope I've earned their love. Was I kind, compassionate, and giving. Do I look like the wizard of Oz or Scrooge? Leaving a legacy of being loved is far more precious than anything monetarily you might leave behind.

“That is exactly how I look at love. We spend a ton of time trying to make love perfect. We are building a defense before God on how we have loved. It seems, for most, it's not so much about how we are loved but how we loved. Unfortunately, time does not care how we loved. The people in our lives will tell the truth. The Wizard of Oz led a life of deceit behind a curtain. Once exposed, he became a man of wisdom. The Tin man was warned that hearts are not unbreakable. The tin man pleaded I still want one. The Wizard looked at the man with great compassion and tells him “A heart is not judged by how much you love; but by how much you are loved by others”” Chapter 9, p, 1

2. What is your view on love?

I must admit I have changed my view on love. I used to think I gave love in sex, presents, and showing up to a family dinner. I gave them my love. In reality, I gave them my presence. I gave them some effort. These days I view love differently. I love how people are made up. I want to know people better. I want to give to those around me so that their lives might be better. It's not about me. It's about them. How can I receive their love more openly? How can I serve them so life is a little bit easier? What is your view on receiving and giving love?

“This is such a cool topic. We can go anywhere with love. It's time to look one more time at bad love. This is the bridge to my book. We can be accused of making people feel dirty. We can be accused of walking around looking disheveled and dirty. It comes back to love. We expect too much from those around us. We expect too much from ourselves. Let's keep love in its proper place. Love is precious. Many people use it as a tool. That is too bad. It's such a great thing to have love. Why must we use it the wrong way? I think it's because it is powerful. Those who want it, treat it as a drug. Those who abuse it give it out as a drug to drive others nuts. It's either deny it or overdose on it. Let's talk about love baby!” Chapter 9, p, 4

3. Are there expectations with love?

If you say you love someone, is there something they must give you? Do people need to phone you, text you, or hug you? We all need love. I get that. A nice hug or present is great. Still, do you expect it? Do we try sex before marriage because we expect certain things in bed? Do we expect a raise for doing a good job? We are in a Santa society where being good brings gifts. You could say it brings us happiness. What are your expectations?

“I feel the problem with love pictures is that they are usually locked. These pictures are written in stone. We try out someone in bed because we were looking for something we like and want. If they do not fit our love picture then it’s over. There is no discovery or different way. I learned a valuable lesson on love with my current wife. We never slept together before marriage. I fell in love with the person first. I had no clue about love. Yet, on the wedding night I found out I had pre-conceived expectations in bed. I thought that was the crescendo of being in love. Over the years, I have come to love her more by what she is and offers rather than what I want. That was hard to do, trust me. That is not the way most of us are wired.” Chapter 9, p, 6

4. Understanding love begins with you.

I know you have heard this before. To love someone well, first you must love yourself. Unfortunately, it is true. The best person to practice love on is yourself. I went to the distress centre to find a way to fix my broken marriage. The lady was only interested in me. I did not like that. She said over and over a healthy “you” is the best thing for a healthy marriage. It took quite some time to see that logic. It is hard to love yourself. It takes work and time. Yet, without that work you will not love others well.

“I still shudder in the mirror. During my divorce, I was forced to recreate myself. I was forced to look in the mirror. Unfortunately for me I also changed my point of view on God at the same time. It is not recommended to do both at the same time. I spent countless hours looking at someone in the mirror I could not recognize. That was horrifying. To find yourself means you need to know yourself better than you think you do. To know God is to throw out much of what you think is true. To have those two revelations crashing together at once in the mirror is a nightmare. Yet, all the counseling and all the books pointed back to me. I needed to be comfortable with myself. I needed to be certain of what I know. My 33rd year has been lost forever. It is a black hole in my life. I lost me and found me all at the same time.” Chapter 9, p, 9

5. How do you identify yourself?

How do you describe yourself? I asked a lady to describe herself in 10 ways. She said she was nice, honest, giving and many other beautiful words. Yet, when it came to going deeper than that she was stumped. What was her passions? What did she love and what did she hate? Was she happy with herself as a body, person, and friend? I know a boy who identifies himself as gay. Is that it? Is a gay person in a career better than a hereto person? The answer is no, but they believe being a certain way like gay helped him. It might in the short term but bosses don't care if your gay. They care about the work. A spouse does not care what you are if there is no love. Who are you really?

“You can love being heterosexual but that does not affect your performance on the operating table. The patient does not care if your gay or hetero. Big deal if my teacher is shy. As long as I'm taught properly who cares. Being female is great. Being male is great. I know you might find this hard to understand these days but sexual orientation does not make you a better firefighter. This is connected to love because we make it that way. We love being female or gay. We love being a firefighter. Yet, a gay firefighter does not save any better than a heterosexual firefighter. They both do the same job the same way. Trained to fight fires. Not trained to fight fires the Heterosexual way.”
Chapter 9, p, 11

6. Is friendship unconditional love?

People assume a friend is unconditional love. Why then do we change friends a lot. Most people don't have life long friends. Divorce rates are high. Isn't marriage the greatest form of friendship? Why are family relations strained often? Isn't blood unconditional love? I know that churches say they are the love place, yet bad blood flows there too. Unconditional friendship is hard to come by. Yet, we want and need that type of friends. Choosing friends wisely is helpful. Being a better person at loving others is wise too.

“In regards to love, how will you be remembered? If you don't like what Scrooge saw of himself then maybe you need to learn to love yourself better. Possibly you need to love those around you better. Good friendships are void of expectations. We should not use love to get friends. We gain an abundant life by having good friends. Love is the wonderful by-product of friendships. Love is also the by-product of finding yourself. To love unconditionally creates good friendships.” Chapter 9, p, 14