

Called to Love Teaching Plan

Developed by Joyce Mitchell

Introduction: This plan outlines several approaches to enable church leaders to guide their churches in studying WMU's 2009 emphasis book *Called to Love: Stories of Compassion, Faith, and God's Amazing Grace* by Kaye Miller. A single leader or multiple leaders may facilitate the group learning experiences. These suggestions may serve as the starting point for leaders who will customize a plan to fit their church. God's blessing on all!

Objective: Learners who read this book and participate in a study will be challenged to consider the primacy of God's love as an organizing principle for their lives. Learners will engage in reading Scripture through the lens of God's love and how they might become instruments of His love in the world.

Audience for the study of this book: This study accommodates a variety of adult audiences, including Women on Mission[®] organizations, churchwide groups of adults, Adults on Mission[®] organizations, groups of young women and/or men, a Wednesday night study, and many other configurations. Ideally each learner (or small group) will have access to a copy of the book.

Consider making copies of the book available for sale at the session. Let the learners know where they can obtain copies of the book: by calling 1-800-968-7301, visiting www.wmystore.com, or from their local Christian bookstore. Learners are often inspired to read a book after having been introduced to it in a study and discussion session.

Leader Tips for Use with Small Groups: Note particularly the practical suggestions found on pages 204–5 in the book.

Schedule: May vary based on church calendar parameters. Consider a single session (of 1½ to 3 hours), or a multisession learning experience such as three 1-hour sessions spread over 1 or more weeks. This book also contains sufficient content to be a small-group study for up to 12 weeks (based on a chapter per session).

Learning experience elements: There are four basic elements of the learning experience, regardless of the schedule you select. The four elements include an introductory activity, transition, guided learning, and closure. The major portion of the learning session should be reserved for the guided learning portion of the experience.

Room setup: Whether the designated space is the church sanctuary, the fellowship tables during a Wednesday night supper, or a classroom, consider the needs of the learner. Make sure that the sound in the room is adequate for all the participants, particularly if you are relying on a facilitator-leader to provide instructions and/or minilectures.

Decor: Many people who lead book studies enjoy “decorating” the learning space as part of the teaching experience. The title of this book, *Called to Love*, lends itself to using heart motifs (representing love) as well as the cross on which Jesus was crucified as a symbol of the greatest love of all: God’s love. The book features stories of those who have dared to love, so the concept of storytelling is another theme which would be apt. An enlargement of the cover of the book (at a print shop) would make an inviting interest center as you focus on stories that Kaye Miller tells.

Introductory Activity

On half sheets of paper, duplicate the following fill-in-the blank questions. Each participant will randomly receive a copy of one of the two questions.

“It is *easy* for me to love (*fill in the name of a person, a group of people, an activity, etc.*) _____”.

“It is *nearly impossible* for me to love (*fill in the name of group of people, someone who demonstrates a certain characteristic, an activity, etc.*) _____”.

Allow 2 to 3 minutes for individuals to reflect and record their responses.

Then ask the participants to pair up with someone who has a different question, and compare and discuss their answers.

Transition

Lead the participants to consider that each of our lives is full of people and things that we love . . . and people and things that we are not so fond of. God has created us capable of loving others. And after being on earth a while, we also identify those things (and people) who are not as lovable to us.

Our lives are an unfolding story of how God nudges us and causes growth to happen, which enables us to express more and more of His love.

During our time together, we are going to explore how to be more attentive to God’s call to love others. How do we sensitize ourselves? How do we pay close attention in order to discern God’s call?

This very book study may be the experience that God will use with each of us in that refining process.

Guided Learning

Option 1: If you have copies of *Called to Love* available for all participants, divide the large group into as many small groups of four or five as feasible. Assign each group one of the chapters of the book and ask the group to do a glance read of the material; then discuss the *first question* found at the end of the chapter. Allow at least 20 minutes for this activity. Reconvene the large group to hear brief reports of the small-group findings. The first question *topic* from each chapter includes:

- Chapter 1: Paraffin bath story
- Chapter 2: Supergirl images
- Chapter 3: “Love eyes, please”
- Chapter 4: God speaks in different ways
- Chapter 5: Encountering a famous person
- Chapter 6: Alike and different
- Chapter 7: Things you’re passionate about
- Chapter 8: “I’m good at _____”
- Chapter 9: Dramatic doctor’s visit
- Chapter 10: Groupie or loner?
- Chapter 11: Surprise gift
- Chapter 12: “_____ gets on my nerves”

Although time may not allow a report from each group, give several groups an opportunity to recap their discussions.

Option 2: If schedule and circumstances dictate that you present the content of the book (and that possibly participants will not have access to copies), consider in advance which chapters may be of greatest interest to those who will be attending the study session.

Select several chapters and be prepared to summarize the main story line to the group. For example, the first chapter with the paraffin bath story is a riveting one, and would lend itself to sharing with the group.

After giving the participants the flavor of the book by sharing a few stories, use questions from the “For Reflection and Discussion” section at the end of each chapter to facilitate a discussion about the concepts Kaye raises.

Closure

As the session ending time draws near, lead the participants in a time of closure. Have blank construction paper, pencils, and scissors available. Ask the participants to trace an outline of their own hand, and cut out the handprint.

Lead the participants to consider who God might be nudging each of them to reach out to . . . to touch . . . to bless . . . to encourage . . . to affirm . . . to strengthen. Ask the

participant to write down the name of another individual whom God is calling them to love, or how you will try to act out God's love during the upcoming week.

The handprints can be tucked into their Bibles as a reminder of their intention to love as God loved.

Conclude with a directed prayertime in which you thank God for the time of learning and expressing the desire of the group to be intentional in their love of their world.