

True Love... How Will I Know?

Study Guide

True Love... How Will I Know? is a talk designed specifically for high school teens. Patty Schneier invites teens to learn the meaning of real love, using four words: Free, Faithful, Total and Fruitful. With Christ as the supreme example, Patty explains how we are called to love one another as Christ loved us, in and through our bodies! True love, the “real thing,” speaks to the deepest desires of our hearts. We want it; we were created for this authentic love. But it is only when we know what true love is—and what true love communicates—that we can recognize a counterfeit. In discussing the many counterfeits that abound in our culture, Patty demonstrates how they pale in comparison with true love. She also shows how they lead directly to abortion and a culture of death. This talk is filled with personal stories and real-life examples. It directly addresses the many pressures that teens face, and equips them with the knowledge and tools needed to withstand these pressures. But most of all, this talk will help teens decide for themselves that the “real thing” is worth the wait!

Section I: True love is FREE

It is a freely given gift. Christ modeled this perfectly on the cross when he willingly gave his life for us. He could have come down from the cross, but he didn't: “I am the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. No one takes it from me. I lay it down on my own.” We are called to live this type of love in and through our bodies when we

desire to be a gift to our beloved. With freely given love, there is no pressure, no manipulation, no grasping, no underlying motive to “get something” from the other person. True love desires to give, to lay down one’s life, rather than to take. Counterfeits: Rape, any pressure/manipulation to engage in sexual activity, the pressure many girls face to perform oral sex. In order to withstand these pressures, teens must remember that NO ONE was ever, ever, ever meant to be used for anyone’s selfish gratification!

Section II: True love is FAITHFUL

It is a love that lasts forever—until death and beyond! Christ loved us unconditionally to his death, and he continues to love us into eternity. He never abandons us, but remains with us always through the gift of the Eucharist and the Holy Spirit. “Behold, I am with you always until the end of the age.” Faithful love remains unconditional in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health . . . until death. We can physically express these marriage vows in the sexual union of husband and wife. Real love communicates TRUTH when it renews the marriage vows and confirms the marriage covenant: “I will love you and only you ‘til death do us part!” Counterfeits: Having an affair, living together before marriage, any sex outside of marriage. None of these involve permanence of marriage, trust, faithfulness, or covenant. The meaning of any sexual union is distorted when no marriage vows exist. Deciding NOW whether or not to engage in any sexual activity outside of marriage is one of the most important decision teens can make regarding their body, their moral values, and their overall health and well-being.

2. Which words of Christ, said at every Mass, reflect his total gift of self?
3. How can we love another person TOTALLY, as Christ loved us?
4. What is included in the total package of a “one flesh union?” Why is this important?
5. What violates the aspect of a total gift of self? What do these counterfeits communicate?
6. How does contraception lead to abortion?
7. How did we become a society that could regard a child as a “mistake” rather than a blessing?

Reflection question

8. How can I prepare to give my whole self in love?

Section IV: True love is FRUITFUL

1. How did Christ model fruitful love?
2. How are we “created in the image and likeness of God”?
3. What does fruitful love desire and communicate?
4. How is fruitful love pro-life?
5. What are some distortions that violate the fruitfulness of love?
6. How does sterilization lead to a culture of death?

Reflection questions

7. God’s fruitful love means more than just having children. How can people in all stages of life bear fruit for God?
8. How do priests and religious bear fruit for God?

Discussion Questions:

Section I: True love is FREE

1. How did Christ model freely given love?
2. What does freely given love communicate?
3. What are some common distortions of freely given love?
4. How do these distortions lead to abortion?
5. Why is it so important to recognize pressure as a counterfeit of love?

Reflection question

6. How can I prepare myself to resist pressures and train myself not to pressure others?

Section II: True love is FAITHFUL

1. How did Christ model faithful love?
2. What is communicated in a sexual union that is faithful?
3. What is the difference in meaning between sex outside of marriage and sex within marriage?
4. How do we know that God intended sex for marriage?
5. What are some common distortions that violate the faithfulness of love?
6. How does sex outside of marriage lead to abortion?

Reflection question

7. What can I do to prepare myself for faithful love?

Section III: True love is TOTAL

1. How did Christ on the cross model for us the meaning of total love?

Section III: True love is TOTAL

Love involves a total gift of self. When Christ died on the cross, his ENTIRE body was crucified. At the Last Supper, he explained what real love demands: “This is my body, given for you.” Husband and wife are called to mirror these exact words: “This is my body, given for you. Take it.” This includes good days, bad days, our past, present, and future, eyes, ears, nose, heart, lungs, and soul, etc. It includes our fertility—which is a HUGE part of who we are! That is what makes us a man or woman! With a total gift of self, nothing is held back or omitted. Nothing is left out. We give all that we are. We receive and accept the total gift of our beloved as well. Counterfeits: All forms of contraception. WHY?!!!!! They speak: “I will have sex with you. . . . but not all of you.” With contraception, there can never be a total gift of self—never—because the reproductive organs have been rendered null and void. They are no longer “part of the package.” All forms of contraception violate total giving in love.

Section IV: True love is FRUITFUL

Christ said, “I came that you might have LIFE and have it to the full.” He also said, “Anyone who remains in me will bear great FRUIT!” God’s love is contagious, infectious, and life giving. It grows and lasts into eternity! It is never sterile or stagnant. The same can be said of authentic human love: Fruitful love is so beautiful, so powerful, so passionate, that it invites the Holy Spirit to be part of that union—the Lord, the Giver of Life! With fruitful love, the incredible power of fertility is appreciated and seen as a gift

from God. Fruitful love is open to the possibility of new life. It is not afraid of the moment of conception. Scripture says: “True love casts out all fear.” Counterfeits: all forms of contraception, as well as surgeries that sterilize our fertility. Vasectomies and tubal ligations violate the dignity of our own bodies, deny the possibility of new life, and prohibit the creative power of God to be present in that union.

Ideas for Further Discussion

This talk only begins to uncover some of the counterfeits that are so prevalent in our culture. Within the context of free, faithful, total and fruitful love, it is easy to expose homosexual acts, masturbation, pornography, prostitution, and pedophilia as counterfeits and distortions of real love as well. Students may wish to discuss these issues. For further information, I recommend the following resources from One More Soul:

Sex Has a Price Tag by Pam Stenzel
video/audio 55 minutes

Veteran chastity speaker Pam Stenzel persuasively discusses the many reasons to avoid sex before marriage.

If You Really Loved Me by Jason Evert
book 211 pages

Jason Evert takes 100 common questions from high school teens—and gives straightforward, moving answers to them.

Romance Without Regret by Jason and Crystalina Evert
video 90 minutes

Jason and his wife Crystalina enthusiastically demonstrate the value of chastity to a high school audience.

A Case for Chastity by Heather Gallagher and Peter Vlahutin
book 168 pages

Drawing on many personal experiences, Heather Gallagher and Peter Vlahutin clearly explain what is gained by chastity and what is lost by the misuse of sex.

The Theology of the Body for Beginners by Christopher West
book 149 pages

Pope John Paul II’s Theology of the Body is revolutionizing our world with a new understanding of God’s design for sexuality. This teaching is, in many ways, the heart of the New Evangelization. Christopher West opens this treasure for us with clear, concise language that speaks to our hearts.

See Discussion Questions on the next page.