

LOVE DOES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION: LOVE DOES

1. Where is your Tom Sawyer Island? Name four things you've been dreaming about or putting off doing for some reason or other, and hold them in mind as you read the next chapters.

CHAPTER 1: I'M WITH YOU

1. Is there a time when someone has been "with you," as Randy was for Bob? What difference did it make in your life?
2. What's the difference between treating someone as a project and treating them as a friend? In your experience, how might the line get blurred?
3. Are there times when you have loved with presence and sacrifice? What was the outcome?
4. Bob describes "a love that operates more like a sign language than being spoken outright." What kind of sign language might you be most fluent in? How do you show love in your life right now?

5. Think about Jesus' role as "Immanuel—God with us." How has he been "with you" so far, either in your life or in the life of someone you know?

CHAPTER 2: SNIPER FIRE

1. How is God inviting you into "a life that's moving away from typical"? Have there been any clues so far?
2. Everyone has a sneaking suspicion that they're a little bit weird—a little bit atypical. How do you react to those suspicions in yourself? What are the quirks God gave you?
3. What are the pros and cons of being typical? How do you know if something's coming from a genuine place, or one of conformity?
4. What's an example of someone you've witnessed being 100 percent themselves? What about being themselves and following God at the same time? How did that affect those around them?
5. Bob says, "There's nothing wrong with being typical, I guess, but there is nothing fundamentally right about it either." Discuss the notion of conformity having become "right" in Christianity. How do you think Christians got that reputation? Do you believe that is changing?

CHAPTER 3: RYAN IN LOVE

1. How does Ryan exemplify the concept of "audacious love"? How did Bob audaciously love him back?
2. What do you think it was about Ryan that made Bob agree to do all those extreme things to help him? What was it about Bob that made him willing to cross the line?

3. Bob says, “Being ‘engaged’ isn’t just an event that happens when a guy gets on one knee . . . Being engaged is a way of doing life, a way of living and loving.” How are you engaged at this time in your life?
4. If we are the beloved of Jesus, and He keeps expressing his love for us through the world around us, how and where do you feel it most?

CHAPTER 4: THE REACH

1. What failure in your life are you most grateful for? Why?
2. Have you ever had a fantastically spectacular failure like Bob’s? What did it do to you?
3. Bob says, “The thing I love about God is He intentionally guides people into failure.” Have you felt this in your life? How?
4. Are you benefiting from a failure right now, from either recent times or the past?
5. Bob says, “Finding things and losing things is what the Bible is all about.” In what stories does this show itself?

CHAPTER 5: THE REARVIEW MIRROR

1. Have you ever wanted something so bad you were blinded by it? What was the outcome?
2. Bob says, “When we want something that bad, it’s easy to mistake what we truly need for the thing we *really* want.” How is this true for us culturally? What idols or golden calves are standing in for real needs?
3. When, in your experience, has God known what you needed better than you have?

4. What “Dear Bob”-type letters have left creases in you? Could they be forming something new?

CHAPTER 6: “GO BUY YOUR BOOKS!”

1. How have you experienced the power of the right words being said to you?
2. Bob says, “Ordinary people like you and me can launch each other.” Have you ever launched someone else, or witnessed it?
3. How can you know when it is right to kick down a door that has been shut? Do you have any experience with this?
4. Bob wonders “if we can launch people better than a dean [or someone with a lot of power] because we’re ordinary.” Why would this be?
5. What are some things that stop us from launching people?

CHAPTER 7: SWEET MARIA

1. Have you ever felt love that was like “an energy that has to be dissipated”? If so, what did it lead you to do?
2. What costs have you or those close to you paid for love? What was the pay-off?
3. Have you experienced God convincing you to love Him back? How does He do this?
4. What makes you stop and stare in amazement? How might that be God pursuing you?

CHAPTER 8: WEDDING CAKE

1. What kind of grit tends to keep us from allowing ourselves to be “served up” to others?

2. For a lot of people, serving a wedding cake with rocks in it (or allowing ourselves to be used when we're broken) is something we just can't get behind. But what are some ways God could use your specific brokenness?
3. How is Jesus' logic different from our logic, or from the logic of the world?
4. Discuss the difference between "believing the right stuff" and "doing the right stuff." What does that mean to you?
5. Bob says, "The only thing Jesus said He couldn't serve up were people who were full of themselves or believed the lie that they were who they used to be before they met Him." What keeps them from being served?

CHAPTER 9: JUST SAY YES

1. Has God ever asked you or someone you know to do something completely inexplicable? How'd it go?
2. If we have the choice "to say yes, ignore it, or tell God why He has the wrong person," what can we make of the story of Moses' protestations when he was first called?
3. Can you think of a time you've said yes, no, or ignored a call from God? How do those times give you insight into God's plan and character?
4. When has saying yes to a hunch paid off for you? When has it not? What can be learned from these situations?
5. What are some examples, past or present, of God using the least likely people to achieve something great?

CHAPTER 10: THE INTERVIEWS

1. If Bob's kids showed up in your office and asked what you were hoping for, what would you tell them?
2. Why do you think the leaders opened up to the kids?
3. How can we relate to each other more on this kid-level?
4. What are the risks and rewards inherent in opening our lives and homes to one another? Does one outweigh the other?
5. Bob says, "There's a big difference between being pen pals and being real pals . . . Friends *do*—they don't just think about it." Can you think of a time in your friendships when you experienced the shift from pen pal to real pal? How can that magic be recreated?

CHAPTER 11: THERE'S MORE ROOM

1. If "life is like a sweepstakes where you must be present to win," what does *present* look like to you? How does one become fully engaged with Jesus?
2. Has "the Christian life" ever felt like the set of *National Treasure 2* to you? Or have you ever felt like an outsider? What might Jesus do about this?
3. Discuss a time when you received a surprise invitation you were glad you took. What about one you regret rejecting?
4. Is "there more room" in your church? In your life? How can more space be made for those Jesus would have included?
5. Have you ever experienced the disappearance of an obstacle after accepting an invitation from God? If so, how can that spur you on?

CHAPTER 12: WOW, WHAT A HIT!

1. Recall some words of encouragement that really stuck with you. How did they change you?
2. Do you really believe you are the apple of God's eye? What evidence is there for this?
3. Bob describes his coach "telling me I was a real ball player—he saw it in me and was just calling it out." List some opportunities you can make to do this for people in your life.
4. What's the relationship between God's encouragement and our humility? How does one inform the other?
5. Recall a time someone encouraged you despite (or even because of) your shortcomings—calling out something that may not have been there yet. Did their predictions come to pass?

CHAPTER 13: BIGGER AND BETTER

1. Bob draws a connection between the dime in the Bigger and Better game and our pride and self-preservation. What's an example of a dime you're holding on to rather than trading up?
2. What specifically keeps you holding on to that dime in your life?
3. What's the difference between sacrificing something for God and trading up for Him?
4. Bob says, "When we get our security from Christ, we no longer have to look for it in the world, and that's a pretty good trade." How have you experienced this? How would you like to?
5. What in your life tends to make you think you "matter" in the eyes of the world? What might it be like to give it up to God?

CHAPTER 14: A NEW KIND OF DIET

1. What are the major “head-fakes” that you’ve encountered when talking to people who have rejected religion? How have these things tainted religion for them?
2. If you’re still in contact with those people, what’s a good way to lovingly show them the real thing?
3. Is something about faith or religion faking you out? Or has it in the past? How did you discover it, and what did you do?
4. Even the best of Christians are sometimes tempted to present themselves as A+ religious people at the expense of sincerity and authenticity, for various reasons. In what way are you tempted? How might your authenticity in that hard area be a gift to others?
5. What fake thing angers you the most? “Lite” cream cheese? Fake leather? Fake sympathy? How might you be called to combat it?

CHAPTER 15: A WORD NOT TO USE

1. What are some examples of Christian “spin” you’ve encountered? What could be the antidote?
2. How do you think the church may have gotten to the point where it sometimes “presents God’s plan like a prospectus promising a return on investment”? What’s the real need?
3. Pinpoint a couple of words in your faith language that are in danger of losing their power. What are some alternatives? (Thesauruses encouraged.)
4. Discuss the line between making an effort to keep things fresh and authentic and selling ourselves out to appear cool or desirable. What is our responsibility and what isn’t?

5. Bob says God “doesn’t spell out everything for us in life, but He does tell us how we can write our lives better; and trusting Him implicitly is always the right place to start.” In what way might God be asking you to trust Him?

CHAPTER 16: HUNTING GRIZZLIES

1. Regardless of your feelings on guns, what personal lessons can we learn from these two pieces of shooting advice?
 - “You need to look through the scope at the things that are far away, but you also need to take your eye away long enough to see what’s close.”
 - “It’s all about how you pull the trigger . . . If you pull hard, it will jerk the gun off target. So you need to pull the trigger super slow.”
2. What is Bob’s issue with the definition of sin as “missing the mark”? How do you feel about it?
3. What’s the best approach to take when we see people messing up?
4. What about when we mess up?

CHAPTER 17: CORNER STORE ECONOMICS

1. How have you witnessed grace like the storekeeper showed kid-Bob?
2. When have you come up short and been shown generosity? Or shown it to others?
3. How has Jesus’ “reverse economy” of giving and receiving played out in your life?

4. List a few people you could be the shopkeeper for. How can you add value to their pennies this week?

CHAPTER 18: CATCHING A RIDE

1. When have you had to bail out of a “creepy-van” situation or relationship? What was the turning point that made you realize it was time to go?
2. Discuss the relationship between showing grace to people and limiting your involvement with those who get creepy. How might Jesus handle this?
3. What are some good ways to “ask people where they are going before you get in with them”? In your professional life? In personal relationships?
4. What do you think of Bob’s statement, “You become like the people you hang around, and to a great degree, you end up going wherever they’re headed”? Has this been true in your experience?

CHAPTER 19: JEEPOLGY

1. Is there something you keep apologizing to God for, as Lynn kept apologizing to Bob? Why?
2. Everybody struggles with the fear of becoming dependent on others. Where can you stand to rely on others more?
3. How might your life be different if you consciously sought to be less independent?
4. Bob describes wanting to “leak Jesus” after having his life flipped upside down by Him. How does this play out for people you’ve known? For you?

CHAPTER 20: TEN-YEAR-OLD ADVENTURES

1. What is “the difference between an adventure and a program”? How might some of the programs in your life be turned into adventures?
2. Bob says, “God asks what it is He’s made us to love, what it is that captures our attention, what feeds that deep indescribable need of our souls to experience the richness of the world He made. And then, leaning over us, He whispers, “Let’s go do *that* together.” Does that evoke anything for you? What has He made you to love?
3. When have you crashed and burned in a spectacularly awesome way? How is that part of your adventure?
4. What kinds of fears most keep you from engagement? Fear of getting hurt? Lost? Stranded? Why?
5. Bob describes faith in Jesus as “an invitation without a lot of details.” How has your faith defied expectations or surprised you so far?

CHAPTER 21: HEARING AID

1. Bob lists some of the ways a person might hear from God: “Through flowers, other people, an uncomfortable sense, a feeling of joy, goosebumps, a newfound talent, or an appreciation we acquire over time.” When do you feel you are hearing from God? And what happens when your internal tuning fork goes off?
2. If God’s plan for us is based on our hardwired loves and passions, and His character, what clues has He given you about what direction to go in?

3. What are the major things you can “triangulate off of” to see which direction God is going?
4. If *we* are God’s plan for the whole world, how might that play out for you and the people you’re on this trip with?
5. Name a specific time God has spoken to you through another person. What did they say, and did it change you?

CHAPTER 22: THE PUPPETEER

1. It seems to be human nature to protect ourselves by putting out a fake version of our priceless originals, in case of damage. What elements of your fake self are different from your real self?
2. When have you taken a hit for being the real you? How did it affect you?
3. When have you felt loved and accepted for being the real you? What does that show us about God’s love?
4. Our culture presents many ways to concoct a convincing fake version of ourselves—social media, image management, self-marketing, appearance obsession, etc. What can we do to supplant these things and be more vulnerable as our true selves?
5. How can a fake be spotted? In what loving ways can we encourage people to bring out their own priceless originals?

CHAPTER 23: FRIENDS, WELCOME HOME

1. What’s the importance of taking your bearings to figure out where you are with God? How can we be tempted to do this too much?
2. Bob talks about “dead reckoning” off two fixed points: Jesus

- and a group or cabinet of trusted people. Do you have a cabinet? Who is on it, or who would you want on it, and why?
3. What are ways you can keep Jesus in your sights and determine where He is?
 4. Bob talks about overmeasuring our distance from God as an ineffective means to getting closer to Him. Are you tempted to do this? If so, how can this be turned around?
 5. If the “Book of Life” in heaven is actually a “Book of Lives” or stories, what would you want to be recorded about you when you get there?

CHAPTER 24: LOSE THE CAPE

1. Why be secretly incredible instead of publicly incredible? What impact might this have in our culture?
2. How does “just doing things”—being secretly awesome without an overworked mission statement—free us up from potential snags?
3. Have you ever had to come up with a mission statement or statement of faith? How similar to or different is it from reality? How similar to or different is it from “Be Awesome”?
4. Concoct a plan for perpetrating secret awesomeness in some small or large way this week, and record your progress to learn from. (Okay, you can share it with anyone you’re doing this study with if it’ll help.)
5. Have you ever discovered someone else’s secret goodness? What did it mean to you?

CHAPTER 25: GOD IS GOOD

1. Don Valencia treasured his failures. How could this be considered “living on the edge”?

2. What risks or dangers make you feel most alive, if any? What is to be gained from them?
3. How might Don's experiences with risk, pain, and danger have informed his statement that "God is good, all the time," even in the midst of deadly cancer?
4. In what ways could you make a "spirit of risk and adventure" more tangible in your own life?
5. How has fear of death informed some of the things you have and haven't done or adventures you've taken or avoided? How might the idea that "death is just a doorway to something better" change things?

CHAPTER 26: JAILBREAK

1. Bob observes that love "always assumes it can find a way to express itself." What does this mean? Have you found it to be true in your experience?
2. Have you ever seen an answer to an audacious prayer? What's the most audacious prayer you can pray out of love today?
3. God "invites us to leave perfectly fine careers like Charlie did, and rather than having us apply for a position, He says our lives are the position." What would a job description of your current "position" be? Your ideal one?
4. What doors might God be waiting to rip off their hinges for you? What injustices or setbacks are in your sights? See what prayer does to them.
5. The Ugandan judge's day in court started with mass forgiveness. How is forgiveness the first step in God's justice?

CHAPTER 27: THE STORY

1. Is there a difference between the story your life is telling and the one you hope it ends with?
2. Bob says, “We each need to get into something [a vehicle] of our own each day, something that will take us to a new place, a place that needs us.” What might those vehicles look like to you?
3. Adam bet on finding adventure in a boat most people would have dismissed as junk. Is there a fixer-upper in your life that could be a gateway to whimsy? A relationship? A faded passion or hobby? An underdeveloped interest?
4. Bob defines *whimsy* as “a combination of the ‘do’ part of faith along with doing something worth doing.” What are some examples of this kind of whimsy that you’ve witnessed?
5. How is whimsy “a renewable resource that multiplies”?

CHAPTER 28: SKIN IN THE GAME

1. Have you ever witnessed or been in a dispute that was resolved in a truly godly way? How’d it go?
2. What about a dispute where it was more about gaining power through fighting than resolution? Was there a resolution?
3. Bob mentioned that Jesus commented on “a small list of things worth having a fight about.” What are those things? And what’s on your list?
4. Discuss the logic of Jesus finding the person with the least credentials to decide the big disputes. How does this “reverse economy” work?
5. Think about the difference between dealing with conflicts from

a safe distance and getting some “skin in the game.” How might that play out in your life?

CHAPTER 29: MEMORIZING JESUS

1. What’s the difference between a stalker of Jesus and a friend of Jesus? How does one turn into the other?
2. Try turning your personal Bible study into a “Bible doing.” Pick five or so key verses you’ve been meaning to memorize and record how *doing* them sticks in your memory.
3. Bob talks about thinking of people rather than political issues. What issues could be more personalized for you? How can you meet people who will bring them to life and tenderize your heart?
4. If you were getting to know Jesus as a child would, what kinds of things (kid stuff or otherwise) would you do together?
5. What elements of your faith are like memories from a love story? How can you build more?

CHAPTER 30: PALMS UP

1. Is your job a day job? Are you fundraising for a passion?
2. Experiment with Bob’s “palms-up” technique. How was Jesus palms up?
3. One of the biggest hesitations people have about being totally available and loving is the fear that they will be taken advantage of. How can being palms-up change this?
4. What do you think of Bob’s statement that with Jesus, we “have nothing to gain or lose”? How could this free up your life, and for what?

CHAPTER 31: TWO BUNK JOHN

1. Did you ever vow to yourself not to be typical? What did that look like to you?
2. In your business or area of expertise, what might it be like to have more friends instead of presidents or organizations? What specifically would it change about the way you go about things day by day?
3. Bob has talked a lot about the virtues of not having a plan. He says about himself and Two Bunk John, “Just because we weren’t going to plan everything didn’t mean we weren’t going to be strategic.” What do you think are the key differences between a plan and a strategy?
4. When was the last time you took no for an answer? What’s the worst that could have happened if you’d loved past it?
5. Are you facing a “no” answer in your life now for something you love? Why? How can it be subverted?
6. We all make plans. What are a few of your plans that you could swap for a big idea?