

DEVOTED

Study Week One

Loving

Leaders guide for "Devoted" group facilitators.

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Pastor Arron is requesting that all groups continue the **Devoted** emphasis one more week and use the sermon and this discussion guide this week. Thank you for doing so.



The first image is a healthy, mature blue spruce adorning the front yard of a home.



The second tree to picture is a mature, weathered, hardy, tree at timberline. One might see this tree at timberline in Rocky Mountain National Park.

Breaking the Ice:

Call upon the group to use their individual imaginations to prep for this DEVOTED to LOVING discussion. Have them, in their mind's eye, imagine two trees, both blue spruce. These images are to help you...

Ask the group:

- *to describe what each of these two similar trees, but in different environments, "look" like in their minds.*
- *Which one is more lovely to them?*
- *If they were a tree, (of the two) which one would they wish to be?*
- *If they were God, which one is the more lovely?*

Read Hebrews 11:32-38 and Isaiah 55:8, 9

Facilitator: the point to be made is that God "sees" things and us differently than we do. He values things and us differently than we typically value things and ourselves, too. To Him, He loves all equally and values all equally, but the tree at timberline represents what the passage just read in Hebrews describes as being unworthy (not loveable) to the world, but precious to Him.

Unpacking this week's message:

Arron opened this week's message by asking the question, who did Jesus love the more, Judas the betrayer, or Peter the denier? Ask the group, which one was more "worthy" of Jesus' love? Explain why. He also described Dulcinea, from the movie Man of La Mancha, ask ... was she "worthy" of Don Quixote's love and devotion? Why or why not? Ask further what makes a person "worthy" of the love of Jesus? Ask, did anyone catch the following in Arron's message "Jesus did not call Peter 'Liar'" and "Jesus does not call you by your sin"?

Pose these questions to the group:

- *Do we identify ourselves by our sin?*
- *Do we identify others by their sin? (for example ... I have a friend who is a homosexual etc.)*

In many ways the message spoke of God's unconditional love. Read Romans 5:6-8, for whom did Christ die? (The helpless and sinners). Are we helpless as it relates to our salvation (rhetorical question)? What was our condition when Christ died for us? (We were and, are, sinners).

Ask, do we love others unconditionally? If no, why not? Read John 13:34, 35 what did Jesus say would be a telltale sign that one is His disciple? How can we truly love others the way (unconditionally) Jesus loves us? (We can't, He must love others THROUGH us.

Bringing the session to a close:

Facilitator: close the session by, in your own words, leading the group by presenting the following ... It is well understood that we cannot fully love others until we learn to love ourselves. The problem with loving ourselves is that we put conditions upon ourselves. Have the group identify some conditions they place upon themselves, or in a negative sense, what they do not like about themselves. Help the group grasp that Jesus places no such conditions upon us to love us; when this reality is fully grasped, we **CAN'T NOT LOVE HIM AND OTHERS**. In other words, we will effortlessly be fully DEVOTED to Him and others.

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*GIVE IN TO THE LOVE
OF YOUR LIFE.*