

Seeing the Heart in Marriage

Quarter 3 | Lesson 4 | Spiritual Formation

1. **Connecting:** See an object lesson about how outward appearances can be misleading.
2. **Teaching:** Learn that God values what is in the heart (1 Samuel 16:1–13).
3. **Responding:** Pray for relationships and choose how to express what is in the heart.

SUPPLIES

- Bible
- Clean, nice cloth or box
- Dirty rag or box
- Stone or stick
- Small gift item such as a colourful pencil, flower, sweet, etc.

Optional Supplies:

- Memory Verse poster
- The Action Bible, image of Samuel & anointing David
- Paper
- Pencils
- Coloured pencils or markers
- Student Pages

Before class, prepare for the object lesson used in the Connecting section. Wrap a large stone or stick nicely in a decorated box or with a beautiful cloth. Wrap the small gift item in the rag or dirty box.

Teacher Devotion

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

1 Samuel 16:7

What do you notice most when you first meet new people? Their clothes or physical appearance? Whether they are friendly or quiet? As humans, it is natural to notice someone's appearance. In 1 Samuel 16, God sent His prophet Samuel to anoint the next king. Naturally, Samuel looked for someone who looked like a king. God, however, chose David, a young shepherd boy. God did not look at outward appearance—He looked at what was in David's heart.

God knows your heart, too! He knows the things that give you pleasure and the things that cause you to worry at night. He knows your love for Him and for others. Hold on to the knowledge that He sees what

is in your heart and loves you for who you are! He also knows the hearts of your students, and He has brought you into their lives to help them to experience acceptance, love, and understanding. Ask God to give you His eyes for each of your students—eyes that see past outward appearances, words, and attitudes and see the heart.

Lesson Time

1. Connecting: See an object lesson about how outward appearances can be misleading.

Welcome your students warmly. Ask them if they were able to show unselfish, biblical love for someone since your last meeting. Ask them how the experience made them feel—and how they think the other person felt. Congratulate them for their efforts to love the way Jesus does.

Teacher Tip: You may have students in your group who do not seem lovable on the outside—those who are disrespectful or difficult, those who are shy and barely speak, those who are making poor choices in life. Your students' negative behaviour may be the result of traumatic experiences or a difficult home life. People often mask their hurt, fear, or insecurity by using negative behaviours or withdrawing from others. This lesson is an opportunity to see them as God sees them—and to show them the kind of love that will help them to overcome their unlovable behaviours.

Show the 2 wrapped items or boxes to the class.

Let's see an object lesson. Look at these 2 gifts I have. You can choose 1 to open and keep. Imagine what might be in each gift.

Ask a couple of students to guess what might be in each gift. Ask students to indicate which gift they would like to receive by raising their hands.

- **How many of you would want to receive the beautifully wrapped gift?**
- **How many of you would choose the other gift?**

Choose a volunteer who indicated she wanted to open the beautifully wrapped gift and allow her to open it. Have her show the contents to the class.

- **Were you surprised by this gift? Why?**

Choose a volunteer who indicated he wanted to open the ugly gift, and give it to him to open. Have him show the contents to the class.

- **Were you surprised by this gift? Why?**

Ask the following questions of the whole class, allowing 2–3 students to respond to each.

- **Would you like to have these presents? Why or why not?**
- **Why did you choose the gift you wanted to open?**

Students might answer that they thought the more beautiful package would contain the best gift. Some might answer that they figured the packaging might be intended to fool them, so they chose the gift that was less attractive on the outside.

- **How many of you would have chosen differently now that you know what was in each gift?**
Allow students to raise their hands if they changed their minds.

The wrapping did not really match what was inside the package, did it? In fact, the nice gift looked ugly on the outside while the useless gift appeared to be beautiful. Sometimes we can be fooled by the way things look on the outside.

Do you ever feel that people judge you by your appearance—not by who you are on the inside? People see how you look, but they do not see that you are kind and honest. People see that you struggle to get good grades in school, but they do not notice how caring and considerate you are.

- **Think of a time when someone judged you based on what he could see. How did it feel when that happened?**

Allow 2–3 students to share. If possible, share a personal experience.

- **Do you ever judge other people that way? Why do you think we do that?**

If possible, share a personal experience. When you are vulnerable and admit times when you have struggled or made mistakes, it helps students feel more comfortable opening up about their lives.

Sometimes we judge a person's value based on what we see on the outside. We notice appearance, skills, status, and manners. But when God looks at us, He values something very different than the world does. He looks at our hearts. God is the one who gives value to people.

2. Teaching: Learn that God values what is in the heart (1 Samuel 16:1–13).

Listen to this story from the Bible about the way God sees people.

God was disappointed in King Saul and told the prophet Samuel to go appoint Israel's future new king. He told him to go to Bethlehem and anoint 1 of Jesse's sons as king. Samuel probably thought he was looking for someone like Eliab, David's older brother.

Ask a student to read 1 Samuel 16:6–7 aloud from the Bible. Show the *Action Bible* image if possible.

When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD." But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

1 Samuel 16:6–7

- **When Samuel first met Jesse's sons, what do you think he was looking for in a future king? Why?**

Students might answer that Samuel may have been looking for the next king based on his outward appearance, skill, experience, and physical size.

- **This passage tells us that "people look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." What do you think that means?**

Students may answer that to look on, or at, the heart means to pay attention to who someone is on the inside—what he cares about, how she treats others, whether or not he loves God.

- The Bible tells us that God rejected all 7 of David's brothers. What characteristics do you think God wanted Samuel to see in the future king of Israel?

Samuel may have been looking at the physical appearance, skills, or experience of the future king. But God looked at something Samuel could not see—David's heart. Now let's read about the son of Jesse whom God chose to be the king of His people.

Ask a student to read 1 Samuel 16:11–13 aloud from the Bible. Show the *Action Bible* image if possible.

So he asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" "There is still the youngest," Jesse answered. "He is tending the sheep." Samuel said, "Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives." So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; this is the one." So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David.

1 Samuel 16:11–13

- Why do you think Jesse did not bring David to Samuel at first?

He may have thought David was too young or not important enough. He may have thought that, because David was a shepherd, he was not clean and presentable.

- Why do you think God chose David? What did He see in David's heart?

He knew David would be a wise king and a mighty warrior. He knew that David loved and trusted Him.

We can learn the way God values people by looking at the story of David. God valued David long before he was the king of Israel—before he fought a battle against a giant, before he was a mighty warrior and a wise king. God was not impressed by David's skill in battle or his family background. God saw David's value when he was working as a shepherd when he was about your age. He knew David's value even before he was born. The Bible tells us that David was a man after God's own heart.

We have been learning about God's plan for marriage. We learned that God wants husbands and wives to experience unity through fellowship, teamwork, and unselfish, biblical love.

- How do you think looking at the heart relates to God's plan for marriage?

Students may answer that people should not judge their future husbands or wives by their appearance, abilities, or status.

- What do you think God wants us to value most in a possible future husband or wife? Why?

Students may answer that He wants us to look at things that are inside, such as character and faith.

Many people pay more attention to outward appearance when they are considering a potential spouse. It is natural to notice someone's appearance or status. However, God wants marriages to be based on much more than a future spouse's appearance or wealth. God wants us to experience His plan for marriage, which is much more meaningful and lasting than physical attraction or security. God wants us to value what He does—what is in someone's heart.

One important aspect of looking at the heart is considering if a potential husband and wife share a common faith in God. Listen to what God's Word says about this.

Ask a student to read 2 Corinthians 6:14 aloud from the Bible. Show the Memory Verse poster if possible.

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?
2 Corinthians 6:14

The word "yoke" refers to a wooden crosspiece that lies across the necks of 2 animals to connect them. The yoke is then attached to a plough or cart, which the animals pull together. When we think about marriage, it is like the husband and wife are "yoked"—they are connected together in life. Being yoked with someone who does not share your faith in Christ means that the burden is unequal, which makes it much more difficult to carry the load.

Teacher Tip: Consider each student's situation as you listen to the class. Some of your students may eventually have their marriages arranged for them by their families. Others may feel pressure to marry someone based on the political or social influence the marriage would bring to the family. Help them to realize that they can find unity in marriage, even in these situations.

- **Would it be difficult to achieve unity in marriage if 1 spouse is a Christian and the other is not? Why or why not?**

Students may share answers such as "It would be difficult to share your faith with your children," "They would hold different values," or "They would not share experiences at church." They may also say that the unbelieving spouse would not follow what the Bible says about marriage and about how husbands and wives should treat one another.

God's plan for marriage can help a husband and wife to make their relationship the best it can possibly be. Married couples who work to have fellowship, teamwork, and unselfish love and value what is in the other person's heart are better equipped to face problems and trials. They are also more likely to experience joy and contentment in their marriages.

Sometimes a person may marry someone who is not a Christian, or a married person may become a Christian after getting married. What should that person do? God's Word tells us that we can still live in peace and try to have the best marriage possible by following His ways. However, if you have a choice, it is best to marry someone who shares your beliefs.

3. Responding: Pray for relationships and choose how to express what is in the heart.

At the beginning of the lesson, we saw 2 wrapped gifts and were surprised by what was inside. Close your eyes now and imagine you are unwrapping what is in your heart. Can others tell from the outside what is inside your heart?

Think of 3 words to describe what is inside your heart now. You may choose words such as love, kindness, anger, jealousy, or fear.

Give students time to think quietly.

Now think of 3 words to describe what you want to have in your heart. If you are a Christian, you can ask God to help your heart be filled with things that reflect Him, such as kindness, peace, joy, or patience.

Give the students time to think quietly.

Optional:

Give each student a piece of paper and a pencil. If you have coloured pencils or markers, allow the students to share these. Ask them to draw a heart shape on their papers. Inside of the heart, they should draw symbols or write words to represent what they would like to have in their hearts.

If you are using the Student Pages, the teens can record their ideas on their pages.

End of Option

The Bible tells us that what is in our hearts will be seen in our lives. If we are filled with anger, then others will see anger in us. If we are filled with love, that will be clear in the way we treat others.

Some families give more guidance than others about whom their children will marry. Families may look at status, wealth, and other characteristics before they look at the heart of the person they are considering as a possible husband or wife. If this is true for you, think about how you will live with your future spouse in a way that honours what God has put in your heart.

Let's spend a few minutes thinking and praying about our relationships. Think about how what is in our hearts affects our relationships with family and friends today.

Give students time to think and pray quietly.

Now spend time thinking and praying for a possible marriage you may have someday. For all these relationships, you can ask God to help you so that fellowship, teamwork, unselfish love, and valuing what is inside others comes out in your relationships.

Allow students time to pray quietly for a few minutes.

Now think of 1 way you can show others what is inside your heart. What can you do to let others know who you truly are? Find a partner and share your plan to let your actions reflect what is inside your heart. You can ask for God's help with this also.

Give the students 2–3 minutes to share their plans and to pray together, if they choose to do so. Then end the class with this blessing based on Galatians 5:22–23.

Blessing: May our gracious God, who looks at our hearts, fill you more each day with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Family Connection: Encourage the students to ask their family members, "What is the most important quality in someone you want to marry?" They can then share what they learned about valuing what is inside of a person.

Lead the students in singing this quarter's song if possible.

"Waymaker" by Sinach: <https://youtu.be/DFGDU3XZmms>