

UNIT GOAL:

Teach that

God's love is

unconditional.

LOVE

TRUTH:

God is love.

SLOGAN:

Caring for someone no
matter what!

BIBLE VERSE:

"Now these three remain:
faith, hope, and love. But the
greatest of these is love."

1 Cor. 13:13



LESSON 1: LOVE

DIFFERENT KINDS OF LOVE

Lesson Objective

To help the children understand the different types of love.

Materials Needed:

Bingo game sheets (for every student), small treats, love verses at end (1), love skits (1)

Scripture References

Isaiah 54:10

¹⁰ Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

Genesis 29:18, 20

¹⁸ Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, "I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel."

²⁰ So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.

1 Samuel 20:17

¹⁷ And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.

Jeremiah 31:3

³ The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.

1 Samuel 1:5

⁵ But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb.

Ephesians 1:4-5

⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.

Song of Songs 5:8

⁸ Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you— if you find my beloved, what will you tell him? Tell him I am faint with love.

John 11:5

⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

John 3:16

³For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

1 Samuel 18:20

²⁰Now Saul's daughter Michal was in love with David, and when they told Saul about it, he was pleased.

1 Samuel 18:1-3

¹After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. ²From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return home to his family. ³And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself.

John 15:13

¹³Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Genesis 24:67

⁶⁷Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

1Chronicles 16:34

³⁴Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.

Proverbs 17:17

¹⁷A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity

Romans 8:37-39

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Corinthians 16:14

¹⁴Do everything in love.

Galatians 5:22-23

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

2 Timothy 1:7

⁷For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

Proverbs 21:21

²¹Whoever pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honor.

Galatians 5:6

⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Philemon 7

⁷Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people.

1 Corinthians 13:13

¹³And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

1 John 4:11

¹¹Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

1 John 3:16-18

¹⁶This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? ¹⁸Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

Opening Activity

Love Bingo

Make copies of the Bingo game at the end of the lesson and bring some small treats. As kids arrive pass out the Bingo cards. Have them circulate around the room trying to find someone who "loves" the thing listed in each box. When they find a match have the other person write their name in that box. Award those who get a "Bingo".

Large Group

1. Share the "answers" from the Bingo cards. For example, ask someone "did you find the person that loves football? Is there anyone else who loves football? Emily loves dancing. How many others of you "love" dancing?"
2. It's fun to find out how many people love the same things. It is often because of having similar interests that we find good friends. But when you say you "love" ice cream or you "love" video games, do you really mean love or do you mean that you really like these things a lot?
3. Love is more than liking things a lot. This month we are going to talk about love but is all love the same?
4. I need some volunteers to help me out with some acting. (Print out love skits at the end of this lesson)
5. Do all three of these people have the same kind of love? How are they different? How can we describe these different kinds of love? Are there different ways to show each kind of love? (Make three columns on the white board and write down the answers you are given.)
6. We use the same word "Love", but we can see that all love is not the same. Can you think of a name we can use to tell the difference between the different kinds of love? (Let the kids come up with answers. They might include: romantic/lovey dovey/Valentine, friendship/best friend/loyal, extreme/sacrificing/best love)
7. Let's get into our small groups. You will have some verses. Let's see if we can figure out what kind of love is being expressed in these verses. Then we will come back and compare our answers.

Small Group

Print out the list of verses at the end of the lesson. Make a copy for each group. The answers are listed here with the references.

- Isaiah 54:10 (Unconditional-never fails)
- Genesis 29:18, 20 (Romantic-Jacob loves Rachel)
- 1 Samuel 20:17 (Friend/Brotherly-David and Jonathan)
- Jeremiah 31:3(Unconditional -everlasting)
- 1 Samuel 1:5 (Romantic- Hannah's husband loves her and gives her twice as much as he gives someone else)
- Ephesians 1:4-5 (Unconditional -chose to love us before the world was created, to be a part of His family)
- Song of Songs 5:8 (Romantic-someone is looking for their beloved)
- John 11:5 (Friend/Brotherly-Jesus and Mary, Martha, and Lazarus)
- John 3:16 (Unconditional -gave His son to the whole world)
- 1 Samuel 18:20 (Romantic-Michal loves David)
- 1 Samuel 18:1-3 (Friend/Brotherly- David and Jonathan)
- John 15:13 (Unconditional -giving up your life for someone)
- Genesis 24:67 (Romantic-Isaac loves Rebekah)
- 1Chronicles 16:34 (Unconditional -forever love)
- Proverbs 17:17(Friend/Brotherly-someone who is loyal)
- Romans 8:37-39 (Unconditional -nothing can keep us from this love)

OPTION: Use movie characters from familiar movies to help highlight the different types of love.

Return back to large group.

Large Group

1. *Bring everyone together and have them place the verse in the category that matches best and say why.*
2. We can see that the Bible talks about at least three different kinds of real love.
 - a. Romantic love- This is the kind of love God wants you to have for your husband or wife. Jacob love Rachel so much that he was willing to work 14 years to be able to marry her. We also read about Isaac and Rebekah, Michal and David, Hannah (and her husband Elkanah) and some lovey dovey words in Song of Solomon.
 - b. Another kind of love is a loyal love that you have for a good friend or for your family. David and Jonathan is the best example of this in the Bible. Jonathan loved his friend David so much that he was willing to protect David even though his father, King Saul wanted to kill David.
 - c. Then there is the last kind of love. We call it unconditional or sacrificial love. From the verses we read we can see that it never fails, is everlasting-even before the earth was created, is willing to die for the other person, gives its best to the other person, and nothing can keep it away from us. It is the amazing love that God has for all people which includes each one of us. But it can also be a love that we can show others.

3. We will learn more about God's kind of love next week but meanwhile let's look at some other verses and see what the Bible says about love.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 16:14 (everything we do should be with love)
 - b. Galatians 5:22-23 (love is a Fruit of the Spirit-a gift we are given when we become a Christian)
 - c. 2 Timothy 1:7 (God's spirit gives us love)
 - d. Proverbs 21:21 (pursuing/choosing to love leads to good things)
 - e. Galatians 5:6 (we can do all kinds of things for God-even circumcision-but the only thing that counts is showing our faith through love)
 - f. Philemon 7 (love can give others joy and encouragement)
 - g. 1 John 4:11 (we love because God loves us)
 - h. 1 John 3:16-18 (We know what love is by Jesus' sacrificial example. We need to show love by helping others in need and by the things we do, not just by words we say.)
 - i. 1 Corinthians 13:13 (faith and hope are important, but love is the most important)
4. Love is very important. Everything God does is out of love. The Bible is sometimes called "God's Love Letter" to us because it tells how much God loves us and what He does for us because of that love.
5. He created you because He loves you. Because He loves you, He lets you choose whether or not you want to love Him back. And if you choose to love God back, you can really find out how amazing His love is.

Application

1. What kinds of things do you "love"? Are you really loving those things or is it better to say that you really like those things a lot?
2. Romantic love may come later in your life, but have you ever experienced the other kinds of love? Do you have a friend or family member that you are very close to, someone you would do anything for? Why are you close to that person? What makes you love them?
3. How about unconditional/sacrificial love? Is there someone in your life that loves you no matter what you do? Someone who wants what is best for you even if it is not best for them? Who are they and how do they show sacrificial love?
4. Do you know God's love for you? Did you know that God is so crazy in love with you that He can't take His eyes off of you?
5. How does that make you feel, knowing that God loves you that much?

Prayer

Pray Psalm 136 with your class. Read the first line and have them respond "His love endures forever" or "everlasting" or "lasts forever"-whatever makes more sense to your class.

- ¹Give thanks to the Lord, because he is good;
his love endures forever
- ²Give thanks to the greatest of all gods;
his love endures forever
- ³Give thanks to the mightiest of all lords;
his love endures forever

- ⁴ He alone performs great miracles;
his love endures forever
- ⁵ By his wisdom he made the heavens;
his love endures forever
- ⁶ He built the earth on the deep waters;
his love endures forever
- ⁷ He made the sun and the moon;
his love endures forever
- ⁸ the sun to rule over the day;
his love endures forever
- ⁹ the moon and the stars to rule over the night;
his love endures forever
- ²⁵ He gives food to every living creature;
his love endures forever
- ²⁶ Give thanks to the God of heaven;
his love endures forever!

Craft

1. Handful of Love

- Fold a piece of skin colored construction paper in half. You can also use fun foam to make it sturdier.
- Place your hand on the folded paper with the outer edge of your palm (near the pinky) lining up with the fold. Trace around your hand except for the edge on the fold.
- Remove your hand and cut then open up the folded paper.
- Cut hearts out of construction paper/foam.
- Paste a large heart in the center so it overlaps both hands. Add other hearts for decoration.
- Write message "A Handful of Love" or a message of your choice on the card and sign.
- Optional: put a magnet on it when completed.



2. Puzzle Heart

- Paint some puzzle pieces red (or have them prepared ahead of time)
- Glue them together into a heart shape. You may glue the pieces onto cardboard and add a pin backing to make a heart pin or you can leave the center open like the example shown here to make a heart frame for a picture.



Find someone who loves each of these things:

| L | O | V | E |  |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|---|----------------|---|
| Video games | Ice Cream | Soccer | Mom | Horses |
| Pickles | Skateboarding | Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwiches | Cats | Sleeping |
| School | Going on Vacation | Ask someone what they love and write it in this free space | Dancing | Football |
| Going to the Movies | Reading | Gymnastics | Recess | Dogs |
| Swimming | Pizza | Pop | Babies | Singing |

(Love Bingo)

Love skits:

LOVE SKITS:

Person 1: (with great drama) My darling! I love you so much! Your eyes are like stars. Your teeth are like pearls. Your kindness is like no one else. I love everything about you! Let's get married!
I love you!

Person 2: (cheerfully) I love that we can do things together and that we get along so well. I want you to know that I have your back and that if you ever need anything, you just have to ask. I love that you are my friend!

Person 3: (seriously) I love you. I love you even when you don't love me. There is nothing you can do to make me stop loving you. You can tell how much I love you by the things I do. I would die to save you, that is how much I love you.

Love verses:

- Isaiah 54:10
- Genesis 29:18, 20
- 1 Samuel 20:17
- Jeremiah 31:3
- 1 Samuel 1:5
- Ephesians 1:4-5
- Song of Songs 5:8
- John 11:5
- John 3:16
- 1 Samuel 18:20
- 1 Samuel 18:1-3
- John 15:13
- Genesis 24:67
- 1Chronicles 16:34
- Proverbs 17:17
- Romans 8:37-39

LESSON 2: LOVE

GOD'S LOVE IS UNCONDITIONAL

Lesson Objective

What does it mean that God's love is unconditional?

Materials Needed:

- Names of famous couples on separate pieces of 8.5 x 11, *For younger kids-Read Luke 15:11-32 or watch a dvd on the Prodigal Son (Veggie Tales DVD-"The Wonderful Wizard of Ha's")*,

Scripture References

Jeremiah 31:3

³ The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.

Isaiah 54:10

¹⁰ Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

Nehemiah 9:17

¹⁷ They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them,

1 Chronicles 16:34

³⁴ Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.

Psalms 6:4

⁴ Turn, Lord, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love.

Psalms 63:3

³ Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.

1 John 3:1

¹ See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

Ephesians 5:1-2

¹ Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

1 Thessalonians 1:4

⁴ For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you,

Romans 5:6-8

⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Psalms 36:5

⁵ Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.

Psalms 103:11

¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;

Ephesians 2:4-5

⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

Ephesians 3:17-19

¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Romans 8:35-39

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 5:8

⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 John 4:19

¹⁹ We love because He first loved us.

1 John 4:9-10

⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Revelation 3:19

¹⁹ Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.

Lamentations 3:32

³² Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love.

1 John 4:9-21

⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

¹³ This is how we know that we live in him and He in us: He has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷ This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

Opening Activity

Heads Up-

Write down the names of famous couples on separate pieces of 8.5 x 11" paper with letters large enough to fill the paper.

Choose someone to be the "guesser". Have the guesser stand facing the rest of the group. Stand behind the guesser and show the first names so that everyone except the guesser can see. Those facing the guesser will give clues to help the guesser name the couple. They can move, sing, dance, and do anything except use the names of the couple. When the guesser answers correctly, they will sit down and it will be someone else's turn to be the guesser.

Couples can include: Adam/Eve, Romeo/Juliette, Jacob/Rachel, Ruth/Boaz, Miss Piggy/Kermit the Frog, Ariel/Prince Eric, Cinderella/Prince Charming, Abraham/Sarah, Beauty/Beast, Joseph/Mary, Elizabeth/Zachariah, Pricilla/Aquila, and any others you can think of. The last one should be Hosea/Gomer. Most kids will not know the answer to this one so let them know they'll have to wait until later to learn more about this couple.

Large Group

1. (You can do some other Knock Knock jokes to warm up)
2. Knock, Knock. (Who's there?)
3. Olive (Olive who?)
4. Olive You!

5. It's nice when someone tells you that they love you. Usually when someone says, "I love you," the other person says, "I love you too," but what would happen if they didn't?
6. Let me tell you a love story from the Bible:

Hosea was a dude called by God to be a prophet. He was in love with a senorita named Gomer-what kind of girl's name is that? God told Hosea that Gomer wasn't the kind to stick to one man, but to go ahead and have the wedding bells. Hosea married her and they had three kids, Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah, and Lo-Ammi (and we thought the name Gomer was bad).

It didn't take long before Gomer started looking at other guys. Hosea couldn't do enough for her. He bought her candies, did the dishes, watched the kids...but she wouldn't stay. It broke his heart watching her go.

Wait-what kind of love story is that? Why would God put a story like that in the Bible?

That wasn't the end. God told this guy to find his wife and bring her back home. If it was anyone else, they would have said Adios! Gomer never treated Hosea kindly. Hosea loved Gomer so much but she didn't seem to care.

But when God told him to find Gomer, he was out the door in an instant. It took some doing, but he finally found her. Do you know what she was doing when he found her? She had become a slave. Do you think this is where she wanted to be? How do you think Hosea felt, knowing that Gomer had left him to become a slave? Maybe she was getting what she deserved, for running away. But it hurt Hosea to see Gomer like that. He didn't want her to be a slave. Hosea paid to free Gomer from her master and brought her back home to be with their family.

5. That's kind of a weird love story, isn't it?
6. We are learning about love this month. Can anyone remember the three kinds of love that are written about in the Bible? (loving a friend, romantic love like between a husband/wife, unconditional love)
7. Of the three kinds of love the Bible tells us about, which kind of love does it look like Hosea has for Gomer? How did Hosea show his love? (by doing things for her, taking care of her and her family even when she didn't appreciate it)
8. When you first read Hosea's story, it looks like he has romantic love for Gomer, why else would he have married her? But Gomer didn't seem to love Hosea back. What things did Gomer do that made it hard to love her? (not showing she was interested in Hosea, running away)
9. When Hosea continued to love Gomer no matter what she did to him, he was showing Gomer unconditional love. What things did Hosea do to show Gomer this kind of love? (buying her back from slavery, bringing her back, and accepting her back, to his family) Do you think it was hard for Hosea to do these things?
10. So Hosea brought Gomer back home, end of story...well, not quite. What was Hosea's job? (He was a prophet-he gave people messages from God)
11. So what was God's message? God wanted His people (Israel) to know that He loved Israel the same way Hosea loved Gomer.
12. Why did He have to tell them? Didn't they know it? Couldn't they tell? Even though the Israelites were God's special people, they were not following God. Just like Gomer, they weren't being faithful. They had the one true God who had

- done everything for them, but they wanted to worship other gods, false gods who could do nothing for them.
13. But like Hosea loved Gomer no matter what she did. And when she wandered away, Hosea went to find Gomer and bought her out of slavery to be with him again.
 14. Because the Israelites were following false gods, they would be caught up in some bad times, they would even become slaves of other kings. But God promised that no matter what, He would still love them and when they were ready to follow Him again, He would go get them and bring them back to His family forever.
 15. Hosea's story shows us what God's unconditional love is like. The dictionary says that "unconditional" means "not limited in any way." God's love being unconditional makes it different than other kinds of love. The Bible agrees that God's love is absolute. That means it never changes. Think about a cat. Is it still a cat if you:
 - Make fun of it
 - Paint it a different color
 - Give it a dog house
 - Dress it up in doll clothes
 - Call it a monkey
 16. No matter what you do to a cat, it will always be a cat. That is an absolute, it will not change. Look how the Bible describes God's absolute love:
 - a. Jeremiah 31:3 (everlasting)
 - b. Isaiah 54:10 (unfailing)
 - c. Nehemiah 9:17 (doesn't give up even when others don't return love)
 - d. 1 Chronicles 16:34 (endures forever)
 17. God's love is also complete; there is nothing you can add to it to make it better. Think of a scoop of ice cream. What could you do to make it more delicious? Chocolate syrup? Sprinkles? Whipped Cream? Bits of candy? No matter what you added to your scoop of ice cream it still would not be better than God's love.
 - a. Psalm 6:4 (never fails)
 - b. Psalm 63:3 (better than life)
 - c. 1 John 3:1 (great)
 - d. Ephesians 5:1-2 (the best example)
 - e. 1 Thessalonians 1:4 (includes everyone)
 - f. Romans 5:6-8 (showed love by dying/saving everyone-who could love better than that!)
 18. God's love is also not limited.
 - a. Psalm 36:5 (reaches to the heavens)
 - b. Psalm 103:11 (high as the heavens)
 - c. Ephesians 2:4-5 (overcomes death-makes us alive)
 - d. Ephesians 3:17-19 (higher, deeper, wider, longer, than anything!)
 - e. Romans 8:35-39 (nothing can separate us from it)
 19. There is another part to God's unconditional love. Read these verses:
 - a. Romans 5:8
 - b. 1 John 4:19
 - c. 1 John 4:9-10
 20. Unconditional means that you don't put a condition on it, you don't make people do something before you love them. God gave his love to us even before we thought or knew we wanted it. He didn't wait until we were good enough, He did

it when we were sinners (Romans 5:8). He didn't wait for us to show him love, He loved us first (1 John 4:19). He didn't ask us to do anything to make it work, He had his son die to save us (1 John 4:9-10).

21. There aren't levels of love to give depending on how good we are, He loves us all equally. John 3:16 says that because God loved the world He sent His son. It doesn't say that because God loved the Israelites or the Christians or the good people. He loves us all and that includes you!
22. Optional: Discuss what does it mean to be conditional-the opposite of unconditional? Do your parents ever say if you clean your room first, then we can go to a movie? Do friends seem to want something of you before they will be your friend, or to stay your friend? How does that compare with God's love?

Small Group

- *For younger kids-Read Luke 15:11-32 or watch a dvd on the Prodigal Son (Veggie Tales DVD-"The Wonderful Wizard of Ha's")*
- This father had two sons. Did he love his sons?
- What did the younger son want? Do you think his father thought that was a good idea? Why did he give the money to the son?
- What happened to the son?
- Do you think the father still loved his son? Why do you say that? (He was always looking, hoping his son would come home)
- When the son finally decided to go back home he planned to ask his father if he could come back as a servant and work for his father. Did the father agree to this? Why or why not? (He wanted him to be his son, not his servant)
- What did the father make the son do before he would welcome him home? (nothing)
- This is what God's unconditional love is like. He is the father who loves his sons, even when they make him sad by doing wrong things. God loves you, even when you don't love Him back or when you do bad things.
- And when the son wanted to come back the father did not let him be a servant. He didn't make his son do anything to prove he was good enough to come home. When the son asked to come home, the father said yes.
- God doesn't ask you to do or be anything in order to have His love. But when you just ask to be a part of His family, He says "Yes!" and the Bible says that the angels throw a party to celebrate!

For older kids-
"The Bridge"

Once there was a man who ran the switch for a train bridge that spanned across a wide river. Normally the bridge was open so that boats could pass by on either side of the bridge; however, four times each day the bridge had to be closed so that a train could cross. One day, the man planned to show his four-year-old son where he worked. The son was excited to watch his dad as he opened and shut the giant bridge. As the day drew to an end, a whistle from the last train of the day (a passenger train) could be heard in the distance. The dad proudly flipped the switch that caused the bridge to close. As the train approached in the distance, the dad noticed that the locks that hold the bridge to the banks had not connected. Without the locks in place, the bridge would

sway back and forth, causing the train to derail and go plunging into the waters below killing many passengers.

The man heard the train approaching and quickly ran across the bridge to the other side where there was a manual lever that he could pull to hold the locks in place. He grabbed the lever and pulled with all his might knowing that the fate of the passengers would be determined by his strength, hoping he was in time to save them.

As he held the lever tightly, to his horror, he heard a small voice from the bridge, "Daddy, Daddy, where are you?" His son was searching for him on the bridge. Why was he on the bridge? He only had a moment to decide whether he would run and save his son or save the passengers on the train.

With great pain, he held on to the lever as he watched the speeding passenger train cross the bridge and send the body of the small boy mercilessly over the side into the waters below. The passengers aboard smiled and waved, unaware of the sacrifice that man had made: they had no idea how he had saved their lives at the expense of his son. The man stood holding the lever while the train passed.

The walk home seemed like an eternity while he thought how he would explain to his wife how he had sacrificed their only son that day.

- Do you think the man loved his son?
- Why do you think he let him die? How could he choose him over a bunch of strangers?
- Think about the people in the train. Why do you think the man saved them? Did he know them? Did they even know what he did? Was he expecting anything from these people? Do you think he even wanted a "thank you? (Unconditional meant he didn't expect anything from these people before he decided to save them.)
- What do you think the little boy thought when his dad didn't come to find/help him?
- As painful as it was, this man made a choice to let his son die so that others would live.
- Do you ever wonder if God really loves you? Maybe you prayed and asked Him for something and He didn't give you the answer that you wanted. Can you think of an example? (eg. Healing for someone who was sick, stopping parents from divorcing, doing well on a test)
- If God really loved you, He would give you what you wanted, right?
- Love doesn't mean God gives you everything you want so you will be happy. Look at these verses:
 - Revelation 3:19
 - Lamentations 3:32
- God loving us means that he wants what's best for everyone He loves and sometimes it can be painful. Just like your parents discipline you because they want you to learn what is good and right, sometimes God has to discipline you. Or maybe you have to go through a hard time to learn something important. Maybe it is even learning to trust God more.
- But through it all God wants you to know that He will always be there with you. God wants you to know He loves us unconditionally all the time; even during times when bad things happen and it doesn't make sense.
- John 3:16 says that God made a choice, like this man, to let his son die so that many would be saved. The difference was that God did it because He loved us

so much. And it wasn't any less painful for God to let Jesus die than it was for the man on the bridge to let his son die.

- All the books of John (John, John 1,2 3) talk a lot about God's love. Let's look at 1 John 4:9-21 and see how many things we can learn about God's love.
 - God showed His love by sending His son to earth
 - His son was sent so that you could live
 - God didn't do it because you loved Him, He did it because He loved you
 - Since God loves you, you should love others
 - No one can see God, but they can "see" Him by the love you show others
 - God is love
 - There is no fear in His perfect love
 - You love because He loves you
 - If you say you love God but you don't love others, you are a liar

Application

- Did you know that God will never love you more than He does right now and God will never love you less than He does right now? Is it ever hard for you to believe how much God loves you?
- What can help you remember God's unconditional love for you?
- How valuable is a diamond? What makes it valuable?
- Did you know that value depends on who owns it and what someone is willing to pay for it?
- How valuable are you? Think about who would want to have you and how much someone would be willing to pay for you?
- God, who could have anything in the world (and does) wanted you so much that He was willing to pay for you with his son's life.
- Because God loves you so much, you are very valuable!

Prayer

Have kids repeat this prayer with you.

"Thank you, God for loving me so much. Even when I feel like I am not loved, you are always there. No one can take your love away from me. There is no where I can go that you cannot reach me with your love. There is nothing I can do that will make you love me more or less that you do right now. Your love is wider than any ocean, higher than any heaven above, deeper than any sea. Thank you that your love endures forever!"

Role Play

- (1) Your friend's parents have not been getting along lately. You told him that you would pray for them. Each time you ask your friend how things are going he/she tells you that it is getting worse. Act out what you would say in your prayer to God tonight. Have someone play the role of the friend. What would he/she be praying?
- (2) Some friends are getting together and discussing what has been happening in their lives. All but one person is describing how God is answering prayers. They're all

throwing out comments like "God is awesome!", "I love God!", "Isn't God the coolest?" One child has been having a terrible week and it seems like their life is falling apart. He/she has been grounded, gotten extra chores, more homework, and his/her friends don't seem to be real friends. The friend asks why God isn't helping, "Doesn't God love me? Why doesn't God answer my prayers?" Have the group act out how they would respond to these questions. *This is a practical example because children at this age go through extreme feelings of being really up and really down. We want to ensure that the children understand that God's love is the same if you are having bad or good days.*

Craft

Stained Glass Hearts

- Fold two pieces of black construction paper together in half and cut out half a heart on the fold. Cut the inside of the heart out so you have a frame. See illustration for a guide.
- Make two more sets in different sizes.
- Glue different colors of tissue paper on one side of the heart.
- Glue the other matching heart on the other side.
- Trim the excess tissue paper. Repeat with other hearts.
- Overlap them and glue together.
- Punch a hole on the top most one.
- String a ribbon through the hole to make a hanger. Add a bow for a decorative touch



LESSON 3: LOVE

LOVE GOD

Lesson Objective

The things we value the most are the things we love the most. Do we love God more than things?

Materials Needed:

Calendar, piece of plain paper, and a pencil (Three Dates), three pieces of paper and a pencil (three questions)

Scripture References

Mark 10:17-22

¹⁷ As Jesus started on His way, a man ran up to Him and fell on his knees before Him.

"Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

¹⁸ "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. ¹⁹

You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.'"

²⁰ "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

²¹ Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

²² At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Genesis 22:1-14

¹ Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

² Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."

³ Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, ⁷ Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

⁸ Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

⁹ When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel

of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

¹² "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

¹³ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided."

Matthew 22:35-37

³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

¹² And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³ and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

Matthew 6:24

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money (or stuff).

1 Timothy 6:9-10

⁹ Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Matthew 10:37

³⁷ "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

1 John 5:1-3

¹ Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. ² This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. ³ In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,

James 1:12

¹² Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

1 John 2:5

⁵ But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him:

John 14:15

¹⁵ "If you love me, keep my commands.

John 14:21

"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."

Ephesians 5:1-2

¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; ² and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

John 15:4

⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

James 4:8

⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Joshua 1:8

⁸ Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Matthew 6:33

³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Proverbs 16:3

³ Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.

John 4:28-30

²⁸ Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ²⁹ "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" ³⁰ They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

Luke 2:16-18

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

Matthew 6:20-21

²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Proverbs 3:9

⁹ Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops;

Psalms 71:14-15

¹⁴ As for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more.

¹⁵ My mouth will tell of your righteous deeds, of your saving acts all day long— though I know not how to relate them all.

Opening Activity

“Mind Reading Tricks”

Magic Squares

Draw a large tic-tac-toe grid on the whiteboard or a large sheet of paper. Person A leaves the room and the rest of the group choose a section of the grid. Another person is chosen as the pointer-Person B. Person A returns and Person B points to different sections of the grid, asking “Is this the square?” Person A tries to guess which section is the correct choice.

The trick is that Person A and Person B are working together. For instance, if the chosen square is the bottom left square, Person B gives clues to Person A by pointing to the bottom left corner of any section while they ask their question. Then Person A can wait until Person B points to the bottom left square before answering affirmatively.

Three Dates

You will need a calendar, piece of plain paper, and a pencil. Ask your volunteer to pick three successive days from any month in the calendar without telling you the days or month. Give your volunteer the paper and pencil and have him/her add the three numbers and tell you the sum. After you have this number you will be able to tell your volunteer which three dates they chose.

The trick is that you take the sum you are given and divide by 3. The number you come up with is the middle date. Add 1 to get the date after and subtract 1 to get the date before. For example, your volunteer chooses the 24th, 25th, and 26th of October. The sum is 75. Divide by 3 and 25 is the middle date. 25-1 is 24 and 25+1 is 26.

Three Question Game

You will need three pieces of paper and a pencil. You are going to ask your volunteer three questions and “predict” their answers. The last question should be one you think you know the answer to but you have a 50% chance of getting right, such as “would you rather go on a vacation or to school?” The other two questions can be anything like: what is your pet’s name, what is your favorite color, what is your favorite vegetable, what did you have for dinner last night, etc... When you ask your first question tell your volunteer to think of the answer and tell them you are going to write down what they are thinking. What you will actually do is write down the answer to the third question-in this example “vacation”. After you have written this, fold up the paper, give it to someone to hold, and ask your volunteer to say their answer out loud to the rest of the group so they can prove whether you have guessed correctly. Do not let anyone look at what you have written. Remind them that you have already written your answer down so it cannot be changed.

Ask your second question and this time write down the answer they gave to the first question and fold the paper and give it to someone to hold. Again, ask the volunteer to say the answer out loud for everyone to hear. Ask the third question and write down the answer to the second question, fold the paper, give it to someone to hold, and ask the volunteer to tell everyone their answer.

Remind everyone of the three questions and the answers given. Ask those holding the answers to drop them on the table (this way they scatter so nobody knows which paper contains which answer). Open up each paper to show that you have "guessed" correctly at least 2 out of 3 answers (and probably all three!).

Large Group

1. Can anyone really read your mind? (Explain how you did your trick)
2. How can anyone really tell what you are thinking?
3. How about love? Is there a way to tell what someone loves?
4. Let's read a story in Mark 10:17-22.
 - a. What two things did the young man love? (God and money)
 - b. What did he love the most? (money)
 - c. How do you know? (he didn't want to give up his money)
5. Let's look at another story in Genesis 22:1-14.
 - a. What two things did Abraham love? (God and his son)
 - b. What did he love the most? (God)
 - c. How do you know? (he was willing to sacrifice his son for God)
6. None of us have special powers to read minds but we could still tell what both of these people loved the most.
7. We are talking about love this month. God tells us that we should love but did you know that God tells us what we should love? Let's read Matthew 22:35-37.
 - a. What is a commandment? (a rule that God wants us to follow)
 - b. The most famous commandments are the 10 Commandments. Can anyone name one of the commandments? (don't steal, don't lie, don't kill, etc...)
 - c. What did Jesus say was the most important commandment for us to follow? (love God with all your heart, soul, and mind)
8. What do you think it means to love with all your heart, soul, and mind? Let's look at this same command in a different verse to see if it can help us figure that out. Look up Deuteronomy 10:12-13.
9. These verses also tell us to love with all our heart and soul, but in what ways do we show God that we love him?
 - a. fear-doesn't mean to be afraid but to really respect God because He is God. How do you treat someone you respect because you know they deserve it?
 - b. walk in obedience-every day make a choice to obey God, make that automatic like the way you walk
 - c. serve Him-means to do things for God that make Him happy (instead of just doing things that make ourselves happy)
 - d. obey His commands-follow God's instructions. What are some instructions God gives us?
10. So we need to love God with our whole self-in what we do and say each day. But why is it important to choose to love God the most? What do these verses tell us?
 - a. Matthew 6:24 (What happens when you decide to choose to love two things the most? It doesn't work. You cannot have two masters. If you love two things, then either one will become more important or neither of them will be important. If video games are the most important thing in your life, can God also be the most important?)

- b. 1 Timothy 6:9-10 (What we love the most will influence how we live our lives. For example, loving money too much can lead people to rob/steal from others. Would that be something God would want you to do?)
 - c. Matthew 10:37 (we need to love God so much that we love Him more than even the people in our family)
11. What are some things that get in the way of us loving God? How do they replace God in our lives?

Small Group

- How can you tell what someone loves? Think about the things people love.
 - How can you tell someone who loves the Hawkeyes/ other sport teams? (they wear jerseys, they wear the team colors, they know a lot about the teams, team stats, buy team souvenirs)
 - How can you tell when someone loves Star Wars/ Marvel Comics/ Harry Potter? (they like to talk about it a lot, they get excited when there are new movies released, buy related items, maybe they even dress like characters, etc...)
 - How can you tell who loves their cell phones/tablet or other computer products? (they can't stand to be without it, they get upset when you take it away, they spend a lot of time using it)
- There are many ways that show what you love. You give it your time. You talk about it a lot. You imitate or surround yourself with those things (or things that remind you of it). You spend your money on it. You feel like you can't live without it.
- What if that was how you showed you loved God? Look at these verses:
 - Ephesians 5:1-2 (Want to be like Him, imitate Him and how He loves others)
 - John 15:4, James 4:8 (Spend time with God)
 - Joshua 1:8 (Read God's word over and over so that you know it-it is on your lips)
 - Matthew 6:33 (Choose the things that are important to God)
 - John 4:28-30 (Talk about God with others, the Samaritan woman was so impressed by the things Jesus told her that she told other people)
 - Luke 2:16-18 (Get excited and tell others like the shepherds did after seeing Jesus)
 - Matthew 6:20-21 (spend your money on God-what you use your money for shows what you love the most)
 - Proverbs 3:9 (Give God your best)
 - Psalm 71:14-15 (Brag about Him to others)
- The same way you show that you love something is the same way you show God that you love Him!
- How do you know when things are more important than God to you?
- Think about the things you spend your time doing. What do you do the most? When given a choice between spending time with God or spending time with the other things, which do you choose? Why? Could that thing be what you love more than God?

Application

- There are many things we spend our time on. How do you decide what to spend time on?
- God designed you to like the things you like. God doesn't want to take these things from you, but you need to make sure that you understand what should be most important.
- Can you think of something that seems you love more than God?
- What can you do to remind yourself what should be first in your life?
- There are so many verses in the Bible that tell you how much God loves you. That should be the reason you love Him. But there are many more reasons to love God. Psalm 145 is a psalm of praise to God. Read through it and see how many things the psalmist praises God about.
- Is this a God that is worth being number one in your life?

Psalm 145

¹ I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever.

² Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever.

³ Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.

⁴ One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.

⁵ They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty— and I will meditate on your wonderful works.

⁶ They tell of the power of your awesome works— and I will proclaim your great deeds.

⁷ They celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness.

⁸ The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.

⁹ The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.

¹⁰ All your works praise you, Lord; your faithful people extol you.

¹¹ They tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might,

¹² so that all people may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations.

The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does.

¹⁴ The Lord upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down.

¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time.

¹⁶ You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

¹⁷ The Lord is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does.

¹⁸ The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

¹⁹ He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.

²⁰ The Lord watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.

²¹ My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord. Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever.

Prayer

Pair the children up and have them pray for each other that the Holy Spirit would help them keep God first in their lives.

Craft

"I love God because" poster

Take time to write down your words of praise to God and decorate your poster. Hang it up in a place you will see it every day. Read it and remind yourself of the reason God is number one in your life.

LESSON 4: LOVE

LOVE OTHERS

Lesson Objective

To teach the children that God wants us to respond with unconditional (agape) love.

Materials Needed:

Younger groups can read, act out, or watch a DVD like Veggie Tales "Who is my Neighbor" on the parable of the Good Samaritan-Luke 10:30-36 (Large Group),

Scripture References

Matthew 22:36-39

³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest (most important) commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ Jesus replied; Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself."

2 John 5-6

⁵ And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. ⁶ And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

1 John 3:23

²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

John 13:34-35

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 4:7-8

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

James 2:8

⁸ "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself', you are doing right."

1 John 4:20

²⁰ Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.

1 John 4:11

¹¹Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

1 Peter 4:8

⁸Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Proverbs 10:12

¹²Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs.

Ephesians 4:15-16

¹⁵Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

1 Corinthians 8:1

¹Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that "We all possess knowledge." But knowledge puffs up while love builds up.

John 13:1-16

¹It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

²The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

⁷Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

⁸"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

⁹"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

¹⁰Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." ¹¹For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

¹²When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

1 Corinthians 13:1-7

¹If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not

have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Romans 14:15

¹⁵ If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat (or do), you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died.

Romans 12:9-10

⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Hebrews 10:24

²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

¹⁴ For Christ's love compels us (to share the good news), because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

Leviticus 19:18

¹⁸ "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.

1 Peter 3:8

⁸ Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.

Matthew 5:43-46

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?

Romans 12:19-21

¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Luke 6:27-35

²⁷ "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ³¹ Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³² “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

Romans 13:8-10

⁸ Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Opening Activity

“I’m Going to Grandma’s House” or the song “Father Abraham”

Choose an activity where kids have to do things in order-remembering a list of items or singing a song where you move according to a certain order.

Large Group

1. If you want to find your house, what is the most important thing to know? What is the second most important thing to know?
2. What is the most important thing to consider when choosing what to wear? What is the second most important thing to know?
3. Who do you think is the most important person in the world? Second most important?
4. What is the most important thing you need to survive? Second most?
5. What is the most important rule to follow? How about the second most important rule?
6. We think about the most important things to know but do we ever think about the second most important?
7. Someone asked Jesus what was the most important law to follow. Jesus told them but he also told them the second most important law. Let’s read Matthew 22:36-39 to see what his answer was. (The first is to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. The second most important law is to love your neighbor as yourself)
8. *Younger groups can read, act out, or watch a DVD like Veggie Tales “Who is my Neighbor” on the parable of the Good Samaritan-Luke 10:30-36. Discuss what Jesus meant by loving your neighbor-loving everyone no matter who they are.*
9. We have been learning about love. We know that God loves us and that we need to love God. But it is also important for us to love others. How important is it? Look at 2 John 5-6 and 1 John 3:23.
10. God expects us to love others. He commands us to love others. Read John 13:34-35. Why should we love others? (it shows other people that we are Jesus’ disciples, that we are Christians, that we know God)
11. Are there other reasons to love others? What do these verses tell us?

- a. John 4:7-8 (love comes from God, it is how we get to know God and how we show that we know God)
 - b. James 2:8 (shows we are following God's laws)
 - c. 1 John 4:20 (if we say we love God but don't love others, we are lying)
 - d. 1 John 4:11 (because God loves us)
 - e. 1 Peter 4:8 (loving others will help us to forgive sins against us)
 - f. Proverbs 10:12 (helps keep peace)
 - g. Ephesians 4:15-16 (helps us grow in maturity and do our "job" as part of the body of Christ)
 - h. 1 Corinthians 8:1 (keeps us from being prideful, helps us to build up/encourage other people)
12. Let's look at a story of someone showing love to others in John 13:1-15.
13. Jesus was eating with his disciples. He knew that he was going to die soon. He taught his disciples many things but that night he had one more thing to teach them.
- a. What did Jesus do for his disciples? (he washed their feet)
 - b. What did he tell them to do? (wash the feet of others)
 - c. Why did people need their feet washed? (In Bible times, people walked on dirt roads. They wore sandals and their feet got dusty and dirty and sometimes muddy if it was wet outside.)
 - d. Who do you think would do the washing? (Sometimes you would do it yourself, but you might also have a slave or servant wash your feet.)
 - e. What does that tell you about the job of washing feet? (it was a dirty job; you didn't ask important people to do it)
 - f. So why did Jesus wash everyone's feet? Isn't the most important law to love God/Jesus? Shouldn't someone else have washed Jesus' feet? What do you think he was trying to teach his disciples?
14. We should love God because He deserves it. He is the creator and ruler of all things. But Jesus also said that he came to the world as a servant. He came to serve others. Why did he want to serve us?
15. He was willing to humble himself and wash the feet of the disciples to show them how much he loved them. He wanted to show us that we should be willing to do anything (no matter how menial) to show others how much we love them.
16. Let's get into our small groups and see other ways we can show love to others.

Small Group

- 1 Corinthians 13 is called the Love Chapter. Let's read verses 1-3.
- Speaking in tongues, having the gift of prophecy, faith that can move mountains, giving everything you own to the poor, if you could do all that you would be an amazing Christian, right?
- The Bible says that even if you could do miracles, if you didn't do it with love it wouldn't have any meaning...you would be doing it for no reason...it would just be loud and noisy.
- God doesn't need you to be a Christian superstar-getting attention for what you can do.
- What do you do because you are a Christian?
- What happens if you don't do these things because you love others?
- God wants a big family of loving brothers and sisters. So how do we love each other?

- In your group write down the different ways you can show love to others that are listed in verses 4-7. What are some examples in your life? What are ways to do these things? Who in your life needs to see this kind of love? (some examples are listed below)
 - Be patient-waiting your turn without grumbling-you can do this in the lunch line at school
 - Be kind-lots of examples how you can be kind: sharing a pencil with someone who doesn't have one, picking up trash when you see it can be kind to your custodian, playing with a sibling, doing your chores so your parents don't have to nag you, smiling at someone,
 - Don't envy others-be truly happy when they get something, are honored, win, do better than you. Instead give a compliment.
 - Don't boast-don't brag or show off
 - Don't be proud-don't put people down or think you are better than anyone-is there someone who needs you to be their friend
 - Don't dishonor others-don't do or say anything to hurt others
 - Don't just do things for your own glory (self-seeking) or for yourself
 - Keep your temper/don't get angry quickly
 - Forgive and forget (no record of wrongs)-once you have forgiven someone, don't keep reminding them of what they did wrong.
 - Seek truth, not evil-don't gossip or spread lies about others
 - Protect others-stand up for those who are weaker than you-tell an adult if someone is being bullied or if you see someone getting hurt
 - Trust others-doesn't mean that you always believe what someone says but that you believe that they are worth loving. It also means to give people the benefit of the doubt-believe in "good intentions". Maybe someone said something that could be interpreted in a good way or a bad way. Choose to believe the good way (unless it is proved the opposite). When we choose to think good of others we are not easily turned away by rumors and lies-especially in this time of Facebook/Twitter/Snapchat, etc...
 - Be hopeful-could mean having a positive attitude, it could mean that our hope in Christ keeps us loving others and wanting the best for them.
 - Persevere-sometimes people will not be thankful when you show them love. Maybe they are not used to someone being kind to them. That doesn't mean that you stop loving them.
- Here are some more verses to look up:
 - Romans 14:15 (don't do things that bother or upset other people. Even though God gives us freedom to eat or do anything, sometimes those things bother other people. Don't flaunt your freedom in Christ. Maybe your parents let you watch some movies that your friend can't. Show love by watching the movie that they are allowed to watch.)
 - Romans 12:9-10 (show real love, not fake love. Care for others. Honor others)
 - Hebrews 10:24 (encourage others-cheer for the other team, be happy when your friend gets something even though you might have wanted it too)
 - 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (love others enough that you want to share Christ with them so they can go to heaven too!)
 - Leviticus 19:18 (don't keep remembering how someone hurt you or try to get back/get even. Forgive because God forgives you)
 - 1 Peter 3:8 (be compassionate/caring-think about the Good Samaritan)

- Remember the story of the Good Samaritan? He showed love and kindness to a Jewish man who was hurt even though the Samaritans and Jews were enemies. Jesus wanted people to know that there are no enemies. We need to love everyone.
- But what do you do about people who are mean to you? Are you supposed to love someone that has treated you badly? What do you think the answer is?
- How should you show love to these people?
 - Matthew 5:43-46 (pray for your enemies. Anyone can love people who love them but when we love our enemies, others will see how Christians are different)
 - Romans 12:19-21 (don't get your revenge. God will take care of that. Use good to overcome evil)
 - Luke 6:27-35 (love your enemies, bless them, pray for them and God will reward you for following His command)
- People like to say that love is a feeling. But the kind of love that God wants you to share is not something you wait until you feel like being nice or loving others. Love should be a choice of obeying God and letting Him work in you to show love. God doesn't command you to love others because you have "touchy feely good feelings about them" but He does command you to act in loving, kind ways toward others. It is love because of what you do, not how you feel. Think about Jesus. Do you think it felt good for him to die for you?

Application

- Is there someone in your life that is hard to love unconditionally?
- What makes it hard?
- Is there a verse you read today that might be a good reminder to you to help you love the way God wants you to love?
- Read Romans 13:8-10.
- Does it seem like God has a lot of laws/commands for you to follow? Did you know that you can follow all the commands if you just remember the two most important ones? If you just Love God and Love Others, you will be following all of God's commands.
- Think of someone you need to show love to as we close in prayer.

Prayer

Let's read 1 Thessalonians 3:12 and then pray it:

"May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. Father we know that you want us to love you and to love others and if we do that we will be following your commandments. Sometimes we have people in our lives that are hard to love. Please help us not only to love them but with your help make our love increase and overflow for these people. In Jesus name. Amen"

Role Play

1. Your teacher questions you about what you would do if someone accidentally dropped their books in front of you and their papers flew everywhere. You respond by saying that you would help pick them up. Your teacher commends you for your answer, saying that your answer demonstrates God's love. As you leave the classroom, the meanest kid in the school walks past you and someone knocks his books on the floor and papers fly everywhere. Act out how you would respond. What would be the response of most people? Why?
2. A group of children have been working on a science project for eight weeks. The day before it is due, some other kids intentionally break it and it can't be repaired in time to turn in. Since it wasn't complete, the children got an "incomplete" on their grade. Act out how most kids would respond.
3. Same scene as #2-Act out how God would want you to respond.
4. Your older brother/sister constantly picks on you and makes fun of you in front of others. You and a friend are at your home and you notice that they didn't listen when your mom told them to take the dog out. The dog now has his eye on a roast that your mom left on the counter for supper. Wow, what an opportunity to see God punish this nasty brother/sister of yours! Act out the way you might respond. When finished, discuss what would have been the right response.

Craft

Heart mobile-Various colors of fun foam, construction paper, index cards, tape, and yarn.

1. Fold a piece of fun foam in half. While holding it down, draw out a half a heart then cut it out (this can also be done on construction paper).
2. Using that heart shape, cut another heart and another, cutting successively smaller and smaller hearts out of the hearts.
3. Write Deuteronomy 6:5 on an index card. Use the yarn to attach the smaller hearts to the bottom of the index card like a mobile. Add another piece of yarn to the top of the card to hang the mobile. Hearts can be "nesting" like the picture, or hang separately.
4. Variation, you can write the first part of the verse on the card, and "heart, soul, and mind" can be written on the heart shapes. OR you can write "Love your neighbor as yourself" on the card and on the hearts, write names of people who we should love, as a reminder to ask God to help us love these "neighbors".



Heart Mosaic- 2 pieces of construction paper per student, one lighter than the other, and scrap pieces of colored construction paper.

1. Cut a heart out of one piece of construction paper. Glue the outer portion of the heart, discarding the heart itself, onto another piece of construction paper (not the same color).
2. Write the words of 1 John 4:7-8 on the outer rim of the heart "hole".
3. Tear pieces of scrap construction paper into small pieces big enough to write on.
4. Write down a few ways you show love to others and glue them mosaic style in the heart. Take some pieces home and every time you do something to show love to someone else, write it down and glue it to your heart mosaic.
5. See how long it takes to fill up the heart with loving actions.

