

## Lesson 1- God loves Me

### Opening:

- What kinds of things do you love?
- Let's take turns naming things we love and let's see if there are other people here who love the same things. (Have the kids show their agreement by "voting" in different ways. For example, John says he loves football. Tell the class, "if you love football too, stand up". If you like pickles, make a sour face. If you like math, do a thinking pose, put your hands on your head, cover your eyes, say "hooray", etc.... )
- *Option-give two options asking "Which do you love more?" Have kids move to one side of the room or the other, depending on what they love more. Some ideas: Hawkeyes or Cyclones, ice cream or cake, spaghetti or pizza, summer or winter, broccoli or apples.*
- We love lots of different things. But when we say we "love" ice cream or we "love" the Hawkeyes, do we really mean love or do we mean that we like these things a lot? How do we know what love is?
- The Bible is God's book of love.

### Bible Time:

- Let's look at one of those stories. *Read the story of creation from Genesis 1 or a children's story book. Involve kids in telling the story. They can join when you say "and it was good", when you talk about the things God made, ask for examples, they can "fill in the blanks" such as "God made the sun, moon, and \_\_\_\_\_", they can make animal sounds or move like plants in the wind or grow like a flower, they can close and open their eyes when you read about how God made light.*
  - Name some of the things God created.
  - What did God say after making something? (it was good)
  - What is your favorite thing that God made?
  - What do you think was God's favorite thing? How do you know? (people, after He made them, He said it was very good)
  - God made all kinds of things. Who do you think God made them for?
- The Bible tells us that God told Adam and Eve that everything He made was for them to take care of, to feed them, and to enjoy.
- Why do you think God made so many different kinds of animals instead of one kind of animal? Why are there so many colors of flowers instead of them all being yellow? Why are there tall people and short people, young people and old people, girls and boys?
- God gives us His creation for us to enjoy. God made all kinds of things for us because He loves us. God made us because He loves us.

### Craft time:

- Have the kids draw a picture of themselves. As kids draw, talk about how God made them. He made them perfectly because everything He made was "very good". And He knows everything about them. He knows what color their eyes are, how tall or short they are, who runs fast and who likes drawing. He even knows how many freckles they have on their face and how many hairs they have on their heads. He knows and He wants to know.
- "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." Psalm 139:14

- Finish the drawing by having the kids draw a heart around their picture to show God's love for them.

**Small Group Application:**

- When is it easy to remember that God loves you?
- When is it hard to remember that God loves you?
- Sometimes we get lonely. Sometimes you lose friends, or your parents might be upset with you for something you have done, or it seems like everyone is "too busy" to play with you. Maybe someone teased you about how you look. You don't feel like anyone loves you.
- You are still loved, but it is important to remember that God always loves you.
- What can you do to remember that God loves you? *Leaders should share too.*
- In the book of Ephesians, Paul tells his friends, I want you to know, to understand, how wide and long and high and deep God's love for you is. (Eph 3:18)
- That's BIG love!
- There is a song you can sing to remind us of how much God loves you. *Teach the kids to sing "Deep and Wide" with the motions. At the end repeat how God's love is so deep and wide and high and long. There is no place they can go that God's love cannot reach them.*

**Prayer:**

- Dear God, thank you so much for everything you have created. Thank you for birds and flowers, for the sun and for rain, but thank you most of all for making each of us. Thank you for your humongous love that never stops. I pray that this week when we look around at your creation, we will remember how much you love us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

**Extra activity:**

- Read You are Special by Max Lucado.

## Lesson 2- God always loves you

### Opening:

- Think about something that you really want? How will you get it? Do your parents always give you what you ask for?

### Bible Time: Luke 15:11-32

Jesus once told this story about a father and his son.

(Read expressively) There once was a father who had two sons. He had a big house and a big field with lots of workers. He knew that someday when he died, he would give everything he owned to his sons. The younger son decided that he didn't want to wait. He asked his father, "Dad, I know some day you are going to divide all that you have and give it to my brother and I. I'd like to have my share/part right now."

- How do you think his father felt? What do you think he did?
- The father did what his son asked and the son took it and went far away.
- If someone gave you a lot of money, what would you do with it?

Well, some of those things you might wish for weren't around a long time ago, but just like you the son decided he was going to spend his money to get things he liked. He bought nice clothes and good food. He spent his money on parties and having fun. And pretty soon, the money was gone.

He didn't have any more money and get got hungry, really hungry! So he decided to get a job. But things weren't very good in the place he was living. He found a job, but it wasn't a very good job. It was a hard, messy, smelly job taking care of pigs. And he didn't get paid much. He was still hungry, so hungry that he wished he could eat the food the pigs were getting. Yuck!

It took him a bit, but finally he remembered something. His father had a big house and a big field with lots of servants. The people who worked for his father always had enough to eat. He should go back home.

- But would his father let him come home? He wasn't very nice to his dad, taking all that money from him and spending it. Do you think the father should let his son come home? Why or why not?

The son felt very bad for what he had done. He decided that he should go to his father and tell him how sorry he was and that he didn't deserve to be his son any more. But he would be thankful if his father would hire him as his servant, to work for him.

So he started walking back home.

While he was a long way off, his father saw him. The father ran to his son and gave him a big hug. He kissed him and hugged him more.

The son pulled himself away. He had something to say. He started to tell his father how sorry he was for what he had done. He told his father he was not good enough to be called his son. But his father interrupted him.

- The father called his servants. "Quick! Get the best coat in the house and put it on my son. Give him a ring for his finger and shoes for his feet. And prepare a feast! My son is home!"
  - Why wasn't the son at home? (He had taken his father's money and moved far away)
  - Why did he come back? What did the son want?

- How do you think the son looked when he came home? (pretty ragged, he had lost all his money and he worked for a pig farmer, he was hungry)
- What did the father do for his son when he came home? (gave him new clothes and shoes, gave him a ring and a party)
- If someone had hurt you or done something that made you sad, how would you treat them?
- Why did the father do all these nice things for his son?
- How do you know the father still loved his son? (he had been watching the road each day, hoping his son would come back)
- Do you think he was happy about all the things his son had done? His son was willing to work for his father, why didn't he let the son be a servant?

The father loved his son. It didn't matter what his son had done. He loved him and wanted him to come back home. And when his son came home, he didn't yell at him or remind him of all the bad things he did. Instead the father had a party because he was so happy his son had come back home.

- Jesus told this story to show what kind of love God has for us. God loves all people, remember He made us. We are His children. But sometimes we do things that make God sad. Some people say they don't want to be with Him or they hurt Him by doing things that are wrong. Sometimes you and I do things that make God sad.
- God still loves all of us.

**Game:**

- Does God still love me when ....? Yes. God loves you because He made you!
- Have the kids take turns filling in the blank and then everyone responding.

**Craft:**

- We make valentines to tell people how much we love them. This week, make a valentine that is **FROM** God **TO** you!

**Small Group Application:**

- Sometimes we think we need to be perfect or really, really good for someone to love us.
- But you need to know that there is nothing you can do that can make God love you more than He does now.
- And there is nothing you can do to make God love you less than He does right now.
- But that doesn't mean that He isn't sad when you disobey Him. Doing things that make God sad, is called sin.
- We need to tell God we are sorry for the sins we have done.
- When you do that, God promises to forgive you (1 John 1:9). Not only that, but He also tells us that He will forget your sins (Hebrews 10:17).
- Now that is love!

**Prayer:**

- Have the kids help you pray Psalm 136 this week. Have them share good and bad things that happened. After each person shares, everyone should say, "God's love endures forever".
- Finish by thanking God for loving us no matter what!

## Lesson 3- Loving God

### Opening:

- What are some rules in your home?
- What is the most important rule for your family?
- What are some other rules you know?
- Are these rules important too?
- Which rule do you think God thinks is the most important rule?

### Bible Time:

- One time someone asked Jesus, “What is the most important rule/commandment?”
- Do you know what Jesus said? You can find the answer in Matthew 22:35-37.

Matthew 22:35-37 (NIRV)

<sup>35</sup> One of them was an authority on the law. So he tested Jesus with a question. <sup>36</sup> “Teacher,” he asked, “which is the most important commandment in the Law?”

<sup>37</sup> Jesus replied, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your mind.’ (Deuteronomy 6:5)

- Jesus said, “Love God with all your heart and soul and mind”, love Him with everything you have!
- What do you think it means to love God with your heart and soul and mind (It might help to point to your heart, do a swoop of your whole body, and then point to your mind)? How do we do this?
- John 14:15 says if we love God, we will obey Him. If I love God, I should obey Him. If you love God, you should obey Him. Let’s say “I love God so I will obey Him” together.
- Let me tell you a story about someone who loved God. (From Genesis 22:1-14)

Abraham was a man who loved God. One day God told Abraham that he would be the father of many peoples. In fact, there would be so many people in his family, it would be like trying to count all the stars in the sky. That’s a lot of people.

Abraham believed God, but there was one problem. Abraham was getting older and older and he and his wife didn’t have any children! He waited and waited and finally when he was 100 years old and his wife was 90, they had a son! They were so happy! They named their son, Isaac.

Abraham loved his son very much. He gave him good things to eat, he taught him many things, he spent time with his son, and I’m sure he talked about Isaac to anyone who would listen. I bet he thought there was no one who could love a son more than he did!

One day, God asked Abraham to do a very hard thing.

“Abraham.”

“What God?”

“Abraham, I want you to take Isaac, who you love very much, and give him to me. Go to the place I will show you and there you will sacrifice Isaac to me.”

- How much do you think Abraham loved Isaac?
- How much do you think Abraham loved God?
- Who did Abraham obey?

Abraham took Isaac and two of his servants and left his home. He wasn't running away from God. He was going where God told him to go. They brought supplies with them and walked for three days. They found themselves at a mountain. Abraham asked his servants to wait and he and Isaac climbed the mountain. Isaac could tell by the things they brought that they were going to make a sacrifice to God. He asked his father, "Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" In Bible times, people would sacrifice lambs or other animals to God.

Abraham told Isaac, "God will provide."

When they go to the top, they built an altar and put wood on it. Abraham put Isaac on the altar and was about to make the sacrifice when an angel appeared.

"Abraham. Stop! God does not want you to sacrifice Isaac, your only son. You have shown that you love God more than anything or anyone."

When Abraham looked up, he saw a ram caught in the bushes. God had provided the sacrifice!

- What promise did God give Abraham? (That he would have a big family)
- What was the problem with the promise? (Abraham didn't have any children at the time of the promise and he was very old)
- How old was Abraham when his son was born? (100 years old!)
- What did God tell Abraham to do with his son, Isaac? (Sacrifice/give him to God)
- Did God really want Abraham to give up his son? How do you know? (God sent an angel to stop Abraham and he provided a ram for the sacrifice)
- Did Abraham not love Isaac? How do you know he loved Isaac? (He had been waiting a long time for a son, the Bible says he loved his son, it was his only son)
- Why did Abraham do what he did? (Because he loved God totally, more than anything)

**Craft:**

Cut out pictures from magazines and newspapers of things you like. Glue them on a piece of paper into a collage. Cut a heart out of colored paper and write "God" on it. Glue it on top of your collage to show you love God more than anything.

**Small Group Application:**

- We said, we love God by obeying Him. What are ways you obey God?
- When is it difficult to obey God? How you think God feels when we disobey Him?
- Are there other ways to show God you love Him? (Think about how we show love to other people or things- what we spend our time on, what do we talk about, what we wear, what we spend our money on, what makes us sad to be separated from, what do we know a lot about)
- Are there times when other things get in the way of your time with God? How do those things become more important than God? How do you feel when you don't spend time with God? When you spend more time on those things and not God, what do you think that says about what you love the most? *Leaders can share examples in their own lives.*

**Prayer:**

Have the kids do a "popcorn prayer"

- Have you ever told God you love Him?
- What do you love about God?

- *The leader will start and end the prayer and give prompts. Let the kids fill in with the ways they love God. You can also use Psalm 145 or 103 to guide the prayer time-you might want to simplify the Psalm or read it in a modern version.*

**Extra Story:** Share the story of Eric Liddle.

Do you like to run? Do you like to run fast? There was a boy who lived in China. His parents were missionaries. His name was Eric. Eric's parents taught him to love God very much.

When it was time for Eric to go to school, he had to leave China. His parents sent him to a school in Scotland. There Eric learned more about God and he learned that he liked to run.

Eric could run very fast. He began to compete in races. Eric always did the best in the 100-meter race. He would win every time. Because he was so good in the 100-meter race, he was invited to go to the 1924 Olympics in France. There he would run against the best runners in the world!

Eric was excited to go. The people of Scotland were also excited. They hoped Eric would win a gold medal for their country.

Eric traveled to France but once he got there, he found that there was a problem. The 100-meter race was going to be held on Sunday. He wanted to obey God and keep Sunday a day to worship and praise God so he decided he could not run in the race. Many people were surprised, they knew how hard he had trained. Many people from Scotland were angry. They felt like Eric didn't care. But Eric did care. Eric loved to run. Eric loved his country of Scotland, but Eric loved God more.

No one could make Eric change his mind. Eric didn't run in the 100-meter race.

Eric did run in the 200 and 400-meter races and to everyone's surprise, Eric won the 400-meter race. He won a gold medal (first place) and set a world record! He also came in third for the 200-meter race and won a bronze medal. Everyone was so happy!

Later, in his life, Eric went back to China to be a missionary just like his parents had been. He wanted to continue telling people about God.

- What did Eric love? (running, God, the Chinese people, Scotland, his parents)
- How do you know?
- How do you know what Eric loved the most?
- Do you think it was easy for Eric to put God first? (no-people were angry with him, this was something he had been training for, it was something he loved to do)
- What do you think helped him to be able to love God totally?

## Lesson 4- Loving Others

### Opening:

- How many things come in “twos”?
- Have the kids come up with some answers, but don’t say them aloud. Choose someone who has an answer to go to the whiteboard and draw a picture of what they have in mind. See if the others can guess what they have drawn.
- Some ideas: twins, popsicles, wheels on a bike, gloves, “buy one, get one hamburgers”, parents/bride and groom, animals going into the ark, skates, bread on a sandwich.

### Bible Time:

- Someone asked Jesus what the most important rule was. Do you remember the answer? (Love God with all your heart, soul, and mind-with your whole self)
- Jesus didn’t just give one rule (commandment), he gave two. What do you think the second rule was?
- Let’s see if you can figure it out from this story that Jesus told.
- *Read the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:30-37. Have the kids act out the story while you read it.*
  - What happened to the man who was traveling on the road? (robbers beat him up and took his stuff)
  - Did anyone help this man? Do you remember who he was? (A Samaritan)
  - Was he the only person around? Who else saw the hurt man? Why do you think they didn’t help the man who was hurt?
  - What kind of things did the Samaritan do to help the man who was hurt?
    - Stopped to help
    - Used what he knew to help-bandaged him up
    - Used what he had to help-put him on his donkey to take him some place safe
    - Took time to help him-stayed with him overnight to watch and care of him
    - Shared what he had- paid the innkeeper money to take care of him
    - Took responsibility for him-promised to come back and pay any bills
- If the most important rule is to love God. What do you think the second rule is? (To love other people )
- In this story who showed love for other people? Is helping someone showing love?
- What are some ways you can show love to others?

### Small Group Application:

- God tells us how to show love to others. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 is one of the best places to read about how to love others. Let’s look at some of the ways we show love.
- *Take time to go through what you can in your group. Discuss examples. For instance, love is patient. What does it mean to be patient? (Waiting your turn, waiting without bothering the other person, waiting without whining or grumbling). Who is someone they need to be patient with? How can they show patience to that person? (You might have to be patient and wait your turn when playing a game with a friend, you can show patience to your parents when you want to tell them something and they are on the phone, you show patience with others in your classroom when you want to say something but the other person is talking)*
  - Patience
  - Kindness-sharing with others, picking up trash even if you didn’t make the mess, playing with a younger sibling so your mom can make dinner



- *Not envious-being truly happy for someone who has received something, even if you wanted or deserved it, giving someone a compliment*
- *Not boastful, bragging, showing off*
- *Not prideful-don't put others down or act like you are better than others*
- *Doesn't dishonor the other person-no put downs*
- *Not self-seeking (trying to get all the attention)-don't do things just to make yourself look good*
- *Not easily angered*
- *Doesn't keep track of wrongs against them-once you forgive someone, don't keep bringing it up*
- *Rejoices in truth-don't spread gossip or lies about others*
- *Protects the other person-stand up for those who are weaker than you, tell an adult if you see someone being bullied, don't bully others*
- *Trusts-doesn't mean believe everything they say, but rather believe that they are worth loving, try to give someone the benefit of the doubt, don't listen to negative things others may say about someone*
- *Love perseveres -doesn't give up, even when others don't love back. Are we only supposed to love those who love us? Does God want us to love our enemies? The Samaritan was actually an "enemy" of the man who was hurt*
- *If you run out of things to discuss, go back to the story and the way the Samaritan showed love*

**Craft:**

- Make a mini first aid kit.

**Prayer:**

Think about someone you love. What is something you can do for them this week to show your love? Think about someone who is hard to love. What do you think God would want you to do for that person?

Dear Jesus, sometimes it feels like there are a lot of rules to obey. But you just gave us two-to love God, and to love others. Loving others is one of the ways we love you! Help open our eyes this week to see ways that we can show love to others. If there is someone that is hard to love, we pray that you will help us show them love. In this way we can grow to become more like you. Thank you, in Jesus' name, Amen.

**Additional Activity:**

- Sit in pairs facing each other.
- Place your hands near the other person's hands. Don't touch the other person.
- Choose one person to lead. That person will slowly move their hands while the other person tries to follow.
- Switch roles.
- How hard was it to mirror the other person's movements?
- Read Matthew 7:12.
- Jesus said we should treat other people the way we want to be treated. When your wanted your partner's hand to go up, you moved your hand up. When you wanted your partner to make a circle with their hand, you made a circle with your hand. Your partner copied what you did.

- When you want other people to be kind to you, you need to be kind to them. If you want them to share, you need to share. If you want others to not interrupt you when you talk, you need to be patient and not interrupt them when they talk.
- Sometimes other other person will not “get it” but that doesn’t mean God wants us to give up treating others in a loving way. Remember, we love others because God tells us to do so.