

WE LOVE OTHERS BECAUSE GOD LOVES US

LESSON 5

LEADER PREP

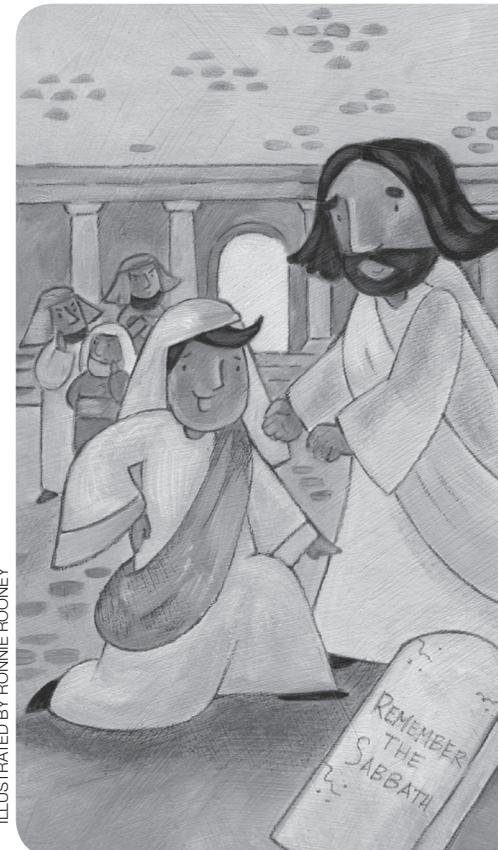
LESSON AT A GLANCE

God loves us so much that he sent Jesus to die to take away our sins. Since he loves us that much, we can show others God's love. Sometimes we don't feel like loving some people, but we need to remember God's love for us to help us love them. Use this lesson to help your children learn to love others because God loves us!

1 John 4:7-21

KINDNESS IS...
treating others as
beloved creations
of God.

WHAT KIDS DO	WHAT YOU'LL NEED
<p>God Sightings (5 minutes) Talk about ways they've seen God at work.</p>	
<p>Explore the Bible! (10 minutes) Clap when they hear the word "love" in Scripture, and discuss what that means.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bibles • whiteboard or sheet of poster board • marker
<p>Sev's Story (15 minutes) Watch a video about people experiencing God's love, and explore how to show God's love to others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Grow Together Now</i> DVD • DVD player
<p>How Do You Know? (10 minutes) Identify why they know God loves them and why others know they are loved.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • paper • pencils
<p>Would You Rather...? (10 minutes) Play a game of choices, and talk about how to choose to love.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • masking tape • colorful duct tape
<p>Live It! (15 minutes) Create love notes to share with friends.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bible • paper • envelopes • crayons or markers



ILLUSTRATED BY RONNIE ROONEY

*Photocopy the Take-Home page at the end of this lesson for each child.

DEVOTIONS FOR LEADERS:

KINDNESS

God is love. That knowledge is ingrained in most of us. In fact, we've heard it so often that perhaps we take the weight of those three little words for granted. God proved his love by sending Jesus to live among us and in us, and he asks that we not only love Jesus but that we spread that love throughout the world. Sharing Jesus' love with others is one way to live our faith inside out.

Are there opportunities for you to minister to others in your life? Ask for God's guidance as you help your children discover his love and learn how to share it with others.

BIBLE BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

1 John 4:7-21: John Teaches About God's Love

GOD'S LOVE THROUGH JESUS

Our passage in 1 John is full of truths we can live by and use to test the beliefs we face around us. The first truth to emphasize is that of the centrality of Jesus. Simply put, Jesus came to die on the cross so that humans could have a relationship with God. John uses the word *Savior* only twice in all his biblical writings, and both times it is connected with "of the world." John wants to be clear that salvation isn't just for a limited few but for all who believe in Jesus.

LIVING OUT GOD'S LOVE

The second truth we find in 1 John is that of love. When John suggests that living in love is proof that God is living in us, he's not talking about a warm, fuzzy feeling of affection. It's love that focuses obedient attention on God, love that accepts love from God above, and love that works itself out in love toward others. The source of all that love is God, but the proof that he is living in us is that his love pours out from us in all our relationships. And the continued growth in love as described in 1 John 4:17-18 proves that God is living in the Christian, making him or her more and more like Christ, the perfect example of love.

DISCERNING THE TRUE SOURCE

The negative side of this proof is described in 1 John 4:20. If someone doesn't show love to others, particularly Christian



ILLUSTRATED BY PAMELA JOHNSON

brothers or sisters, then that person's relationship with God is suspect. He or she may not really be in a committed relationship with God through Christ. These proofs give us a great start in testing other beliefs. For example, if other beliefs don't pass the "Jesus test" and the "love test," there can't be much truth in them.

THE LESSON

GOD SIGHTINGS

Use the text below or substitute your own examples for this weekly lesson-starter activity.

Say: **James 1:17 in the Bible reminds us that "Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father." That means the gift of a beautiful sunset is evidence of God. When your friend shares with you, that's God's kindness at work. When you smile at others or hold open a door, you're showing God's joy.**

It's important that we recognize and thank God for the ways we see him all around us and the ways he is at work in our lives. We call these God Sightings.

Ask: **How have you seen God at work this week? What evidence have you seen of God's creativity, joy, forgiveness, and goodness?**

Think about God's creation, ways people have encouraged you, and even ways God helped you make a difference for someone else.

As a group, share God Sightings. Then celebrate God's gifts in your lives with a prayer of thanksgiving.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE!

Say: ***We love others because God loves us! But you don't have to just take my word for it—let's hear what the Bible says about that. I'm going to read 1 John 4:7-21. While I'm reading, why don't you "count the love"?***

Instruct kids to applaud every time they hear you say the word "love" as you read, and ask a volunteer to mark it down on the

YOU'LL NEED:

- ✓ **Bibles**
- ✓ **whiteboard or sheet of poster board**
- ✓ **marker**

whiteboard (or poster board) every time as well. Then read aloud 1 John 4:7-21, pausing for applause as needed. When you're done, invite everyone to give a standing ovation, just for fun.

Say: **Look at how many times "love" was mentioned in this Bible passage! Wow!**

Ask:

- **After hearing 1 John 4:7-21, what do you think God thinks about love? Tell me your ideas.**
- **First John 4:9 says, "God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world." How does that make you feel? Explain.**
- **First John 4:11 says, "Since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other." How do we do that?**

Say: **Love is God's greatest gift to us, and we love others because God loves us.**

SEV'S STORY

YOU'LL NEED:

✓ **Grow Together
Now DVD**

✓ **DVD player**

Say: **God shows his love to us in many ways—even when bad things happen. Let's watch a story about a boy named Sev who found God's love through—of all things!—a horse.**

Show "Sev's Story" (track 4) from the *Grow Together Now* DVD.

Afterward ask:

- **How did God show his love for Sev and his family? Give examples.**
- **How can we show God's love to others?**

Say: **Sev and his family felt God's love through the people at Hearts and Horses. Because they felt loved, they want to share Sev's story with as many people as they can. When God shows us his love, we can do the same thing—share his love with others. We love others because God loves us!**

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

Give each child a half-sheet of paper and a pencil.

Say: **Pop quiz!** Allow an awkward pause... **No, just kidding, but I do want you to number from 1 to 3 on both sides of your paper. Older kids, please help younger ones with this if needed.**

Instruct children to take a few moments to think of three ways that they know God loves them—for instance, because the Bible says so or because they've seen God answer a prayer. Have them write or draw their ideas on one side of their papers. Next, have kids think of three ways that their *families and friends* know they are loved by the kids themselves. Kids can write or draw those responses on the other side of the paper.

When everyone is ready, say: **Okay, for the next 30 seconds, tell as many people as you can how you know Jesus loves you. Go!** Pause for 30 seconds; then get everyone's attention and say: **Now spend 30 seconds telling as many people as you can how your *family and friends* know they're loved by you. Ready? Go!**

Gather everyone in a circle and ask:

- **What surprised you about this little activity? Why?**
- **What would happen if no one knew you loved them? or if no one knew God loved them?**
- **What are some of the best ideas you heard today about showing love to others?**

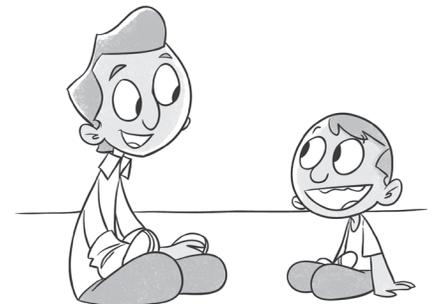
Say: ***We love others because God loves us. This week, let's make sure everyone we love knows about that.***

WOULD YOU RATHER...?

Have kids help you use colorful duct tape (red works great!) to mark out the letters "A" and "B" somewhere on your classroom floor. Give plenty of space between the two letters. Next use masking tape to mark out large squares around each of the duct tape letters.

YOU'LL NEED:

- ✓ **paper**
- ✓ **pencils**



YOU'LL NEED:

- ✓ **masking tape**
- ✓ **colorful duct tape**

Say: **We're going to play the "Would You Rather...?" game now. I'll read off a couple of choices, and you decide which choice you'd prefer. Once you decide, crowd into the square on the floor that represents your preferred choice. Ready? Here we go.**

Read from this list for the "Would You Rather...?" game, or make up new ideas of your own. Ask a few kids to explain their choices after each round.

Would You Rather...

- **(a) eat a banana dipped in mud or (b) eat a grasshopper dipped in chocolate?**
- **(a) lose your vision for a day or (b) lose your hearing for a day?**
- **(a) pray by yourself for 15 minutes or (b) listen to a crowd of other people pray for half an hour?**
- **(a) run or (b) walk?**
- **(a) go to Disney World for one weekend or (b) go to the movies every weekend for a year?**
- **(a) smear ice cream on your face or (b) squish ice cream between your toes?**
- **(a) get a new puppy or (b) get a new snake?**
- **(a) sleep on the floor or (b) sleep outside?**
- **(a) go without food for a day or (b) go without video games and TV for a day?**
- **(a) get punched in the face or (b) get a hug from someone you love?**

Afterward say: **These were silly decisions to make, but life is filled with really important decisions.** Ask:

- **What are some tough decisions kids have to make in real life?**
- **Why is it important to make wise choices?**

Say: **Our choices matter! That's why 1 John 4:7 tells us, "Dear friends, let us *continue to love one another.*" That means we can *choose* to love one another, each day, in every circumstance. *We love others because God loves us.***

LIVE IT!

Say: **Jesus' friend John taught that we love others because God loves us. In fact, the letter he wrote about that is almost like a love letter to friends. Listen:**

Read aloud 1 John 4:11-21.

Next, give each child a sheet of paper, an envelope, and markers or crayons. Say: **Let's try following John's directions and example right now. Let's write a few of our own notes of love and encouragement to friends.**

Have each child write or draw an encouraging message such as "You're special" or "God loves you, and so do I," place it in an envelope, and seal the envelope. If there's time, let kids write more than one note, just for fun. When they've all sealed their envelopes, have kids trade their notes and open them.

Then lead this discussion:

- **What did you like about creating your love note for friends in this room?**
- **What went through your mind as everyone was opening notes from each other?**
- **How would you finish this sentence? "Jesus' love makes me feel like..."**

Say: **We love others because God loves us. Think of someone you love, and write that person a little love note to show God's love this week.**

Finish your class session with prayer, thanking God for his love and asking him to help you share that love with others during the week.

TAKE-HOME PAGE

Give each child a Take-Home page. Encourage kids to select one of the six challenges for the week ahead.

YOU'LL NEED:

- ✓ **Bible**
- ✓ **paper**
- ✓ **envelopes**
- ✓ **crayons or markers**



PRACTICE KINDNESS

Keep growing in your faith and character. Choose one of the following challenges to do this week.



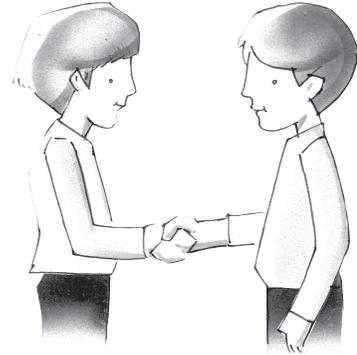
CHALLENGE 1

Think of someone you know who might be lonely. Show God's love by inviting this person to join you for lunch or to play with you.



CHALLENGE 2

Show God's love in a quiet way by praying for a friend.



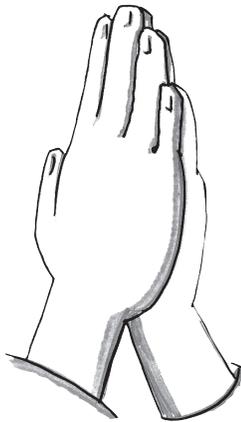
CHALLENGE 3

Do you have an enemy — someone you really don't like? God's love can help both of you. Think of one good thing about this person, and let him or her know. Who knows? It may be the start of a new friendship.



CHALLENGE 4

Send a loving note to a friend who needs encouragement, including a verse or two from the Bible.



CHALLENGE 5

Pray for someone you don't really like. (I know—that's hard! But you can do it.) Ask God to give you an opportunity to show his love to that person.



CHALLENGE 6

Every day for a week, pray, "God, thank you for loving me! Help me love others because I am loved by you." Write down any experiences you have that you think might be God answering your prayer!