

LESSON 1

We Love Each Other as God Loves Us



God's love is infinite. Unconditional. Limitless. He's the very definition of love. He showed the depth of his love by sending his Son as a sacrifice for our sins—the very thing that separated us from him. Is it possible for us to love others in the same way? It can be challenging to show love to those who frustrate us, hurt us, or are different from us.

The truth is, it's impossible to show that kind of love to others through our own efforts. The only way to love others the way God loves us is through the power of the Holy Spirit. When we love God with all our heart, his love shines through us and touches others. As you teach kids about loving others, encourage them by continually pointing back to the One who loved us first.

Scripture Foundation

1 PETER 1:22

God wants us to love each other as brothers and sisters.

1 JOHN 4:8-12

God loves us so we can love others.

JOHN 13:34

Jesus tells us to love others as he loved us.

THIS LESSON AT A GLANCE

SEQUENCE	EXPERIENCES	SUPPLIES
<p>SET THE FOUNDATION (about 10 minutes)</p>	<p><i>On One Condition</i> Kids will discover more about God's unconditional love by earning a prize for their efforts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small toys or trinkets (such as stickers or pencil toppers), 2 per preteen
<p>PRESENT THE BIBLE FOUNDATION (about 25 minutes)</p>	<p><i>Do the Math</i> Kids will use their own words to dig into the Bible, play a tasting game, and create math equations about God's love.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • kid-friendly Bibles (preferably NLT) • paper • pens • bowl of jelly beans in assorted colors • poster board • marker
<p>BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION (about 10 minutes)</p>	<p><i>Filled With Love</i> Kids will compare a deflated and inflated balloon with what's it like to be filled with God's love.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uninflated balloons, 1 per preteen • slips of paper, 1 per preteen • pens

SET THE FOUNDATION

On One Condition

(about 10 minutes)

Welcome kids, and announce that you've brought a special treat.

Have kids form two lines. Alternating between lines, ask kids to step forward one at a time to get a treat. Randomly ask some of the kids to do something to get the treat, such as sing a song or do jumping jacks. Other times, just give the treat freely. Be sure not to do the same thing for each line; change it up so kids don't know what to expect.

After everyone has had a turn, have kids sit down.

ASK:

- **What was this experience like for you?**
- **What was it like when you had to work for your treat?**
- **What are some things people do to make their friends work for the treat of their friendship—instead of just giving friendship?**

SAY:

It might seem strange to set up conditions for friendship, but we sometimes do this to one another. I have another toy to share. This time, though, you don't have to do anything at all to get it.

Give each person a small toy.

ASK:

- **Explain why you think we sometimes put conditions on giving our love or friendship.**
- **Describe the conditions, if any, you think God puts on his love for us.**

SAY:

Today we're going to discover what the Bible says about God's unconditional love.

Do the Math

(about 25 minutes)

Have kids form pairs, and give each pair a sheet of paper, a pen, and a Bible. Then read aloud 1 Peter 1:22.



See page 8.

SAY:

We're going to do a quick Bible study. I'm going to give each pair a different word from this verse. Partners will work together to come up with synonyms—words that mean the same thing as the word I give you. You'll have two minutes to write as many words as you can come up with.

Give each pair one of these words (it's okay for multiple pairs to have the same word): *cleansed, sins, obeyed, sincere, love, deeply.*

After two minutes, call kids together. Ask each pair to tell how many words they came up with. Congratulate everyone for their work.

Once again, read aloud 1 Peter 1:22 below and pause where indicated to let kids fill in their synonyms.

“You were cleansed (pause) from your sins (pause) when you obeyed (pause) the truth, so now you must show sincere (pause) love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love (pause) each other deeply (pause) with all your heart.”

ASK:

- **What did the words you came up with teach you about what this verse means?**
- **What did our Bible study tell you about how God wants us to love one another?**
- **Tell about a time you felt this sincere kind of love from someone.**

SAY:

The Bible tells us to love each other; and sometimes that might seem like a challenge.

Set out the bowl of jelly beans. Have kids call out their favorite color of jelly bean

and form groups with kids who share a favorite color. Then give each person any jelly bean other than their favorite color, and ask them to eat it. As kids eat, have them share about a time it was hard for them to love someone (without naming names).

ASK:

- **What did you think when you got stuck with a jelly bean you didn't especially like?**
- **What have you done when you've gotten stuck spending time with a person you don't like?**

SAY:

Giving sincere love to one another can be challenging. But it's something God expects us to do. In fact, God has shown us what true love adds up to.

Read aloud 1 John 4:8, and then write this equation for God's love on a piece of poster board: Anyone - love = someone - God.

SAY:

Let's see if we can do the math again about God's love for verse 9.

Read aloud 1 John 4:9, and then write on the poster board God + love + Jesus = eternal life.

Now challenge kids to "do the math" as you read 1 John 4:10-12 one verse at a time and then write down suggested ideas on the poster board. It's okay if kids come up with different things. Dive in to help if necessary with ideas from the "It All Adds Up" box near the end of this lesson segment.

ASK:

- **What did you learn about God's love from this Bible study?**
- **What does this mean: "Anyone who does not love does not know God"?**
- **How do these verses make you want to add God's love for others to your life?**

SAY:

It can be challenging to love others unconditionally, especially when they hurt us or make us mad. But even though we sin and do wrong things, God sent his Son, Jesus, to die on the cross as a sacrifice to pay the price for our sins. We didn't deserve that kind of love from God, and

we can't earn it. It's unconditional. God did it simply because he loves us. When we love God with all our heart, he helps us show that same love to others. And Jesus says...Read aloud John 13:34.

IT ALL ADDS UP

Verse 10: Real love = God sending Jesus to - our sins

Verse 11: God + love = us + love for others

Verse 12: 0 = anyone who's seen God.

When we love each other = infinity

BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION

Filled With Love

(about 10 minutes)

Show kids a deflated balloon.



See page 8.

ASK:

- **What stopped this balloon from fulfilling its purpose?**
- **What stops you from loving others the way God wants you to?**

SAY:

A deflated balloon doesn't do much or serve its purpose very well. Our hearts are the same way. When we don't fill ourselves with God's love, we're empty and aren't able to love others the way God wants us to.

ASK:

- **What are ways we can fill our hearts with God's love?**

As kids offer answers, inflate the balloon. Explain to kids that this is like what happens to our hearts when we accept God's unconditional love and love others the same way.

Give everyone a slip of paper, a pen, and an uninflated balloon. On the slips of paper, have kids each write one way they can show God's love to someone this week. When everyone is done, have kids each roll up their slip of paper and put it inside their balloon. Have kids inflate and tie off the balloons.

PRAY:

Dear God, thank you so much for loving us. You know everything about us—when we do right and when we do wrong—and you still love us unconditionally. Help us follow your example and love others as you love us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Have kids toss their balloons in the air and let them fall to the ground. Then have kids each pick up the balloon closest to them. Encourage them to take the balloon home, pop it, and complete the action on the slip inside for someone this week.