

The Fruit of the Spirit is Love

(Galatians 5:22-23)

Pre-Session Warm Up

Today we are going to learn more about the fruit of the Spirit called, “Love.” What do you think of when you hear the word “love”? A lot of times, we think of love as a feeling—like we *love* ice cream, or we just *love* it when our birthday comes. Although those feelings are good, it’s important to understand that love is not just a feeling. Today we’re going to learn that love is an action word. It’s something we make a choice to do.

Opening Prayer

Father, we love You so much. You put love in us, so other people can see what You’re like. Please help us be more like Jesus so that we can show others the kind of love You showed us. Help us show Your love to others—even to those who don’t show love to us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Memory Verse

*Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. (8) But anyone who does not love does not know God. For **God is love.** (1 John 4:7-8 NLT)*

Lesson

Love is not just feeling good or happy about something or somebody. Love is choosing to do the loving thing for someone else, no matter what; it’s a choice. Love is choosing to do the godly thing even when that other person doesn’t deserve my love! Love is choosing to do the godly thing even though it’s inconvenient; maybe you wanted to go out to play or watch a favorite TV program, but you choose to help Mom.

How do you show love to others? [Teacher, let the children respond.]

Let’s look at our verse today closely. Compare it to 1 John 4:16.

1 John 4:16 [Teacher, let the children examine this verse on their own.]

*...**God is love**, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. (NLT)*

What does the Bible say God is? *God is love.* Everyone, say that with me again out loud. *God is love!* Love is the very nature of God. It’s who He is. Love rules everything that He does.

So, if God IS love, then for love to grow in our hearts and rule our lives, we need to get to know God so well that we’d know without thinking what He would do or what He would say in every situation that comes up. That way we can be more like Jesus; we can copy or imitate Him.

We’re going to do a little activity I call **Mirror, Mirror**. Get a partner.

Mirror, Mirror

[This activity helps kids discover that the love we show others is a reflection of God’s love in us.]

Choose one person to be the “leader” and the other person the “follower”. I’m going to give you a situation. The leader is to act out how to show God’s love. The follower is to do exactly what the leader does—so you look like mirror image of the leader. After the first situation, then you can change roles.

Situations:

1. You are trying to leave the house to get to your soccer tournament. You put all your equipment on and are ready to go—but your little brother is making you late because he can’t yet tie his shoes. Act out how you could show love by being patient and helpful.
2. You sit at a table eating lunch with all your friends at school. Your friends start pointing to the end of the table where a new kid sits alone. Your friends start laughing. Act out how you could show love by being kind to the new kid.

3. Your dad has just returned from work and says that he's had a really bad day. He looks as if he needs to just relax, but he has to take out the trash first. Act out how you could show love to your dad.
4. You've saved your money for a long time to buy the new scooter you've always wanted. You've just bought the scooter, but your little brother really wants to try it out. You know that he's too little to play on the scooter and he might wreck it or hurt himself. Act out how you could show love to your little brother.

This activity showed us that to choose to do the loving thing, we need to be imitators of Jesus. We need to follow His example and do what He does. Before you do something, you need to ask yourself, "*What would Jesus do in this situation.*"

[Have the children discuss the following questions:

- Why is doing the loving thing sometimes hard?
- Why is it always best to do the loving thing?
- What was it like to try to mirror or follow the leader? (It was hard but if you kept your eyes on the leader it was easier.)
- How can we mirror or follow God's example of loving others?

Sometimes it's hard to love others. We need to remember that God loves us all the time—even when we don't deserve it. We need to mirror God's example and love as He does.

Love is a choice we make to show others what God's all about.

1 John 4:7-8

*Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. (8) But anyone who does not love does not know God. For **God is love.** [NLT]*

What is this verse telling us? If we choose *not* to love, we're telling the world that we don't know God. So, if you love God, then you'll show God's love to others.

That's why God gives us the fruit of the Spirit. He wants us to use it to show others what He is like. Sometimes it's hard to love others, isn't it? It's important to ask God to help you love others. Without the Spirit of God living in us to give us the power, we can't get very far.

Let me demonstrate with a balloon. We're like these balloons. [Hold up an un-inflated balloon.] We can't really do much on our own. But God fills us with the Holy Spirit that gives us power. [Blow up a balloon and then let it go.] With God's love in me, I can do all kinds of things for Him! But without that Holy Spirit power, we just go flat.

John 14:15

If you love me, obey my commandments.

John 15:17

This is my command; love each other.

This may sound like a pretty easy command when you think of people you really like—your mom, dad, grandma, grandpa, your best friend. But God wants us to love everyone—the kid that picks on you at school, the kid that nobody talks to because he's "different," everyone! That's a difficult thing to do sometimes! But Jesus didn't hang out with the "cool" kids. He hung out with people who nobody liked. Jesus showed love to *everyone*, and He helps us love everyone, too. He's given us the fruit of the Spirit as our secret weapon!

Last week we learned that when you accepted Jesus to become Lord of your life, God planted seeds in your heart that began to grow—seeds of love, joy, peace, and so forth. The first of those seeds is *Love*. God wants us to show others love, so that we can show them what God is like. That seed of love in our hearts grows as we hang out with Jesus. How do we "hang out" with Jesus? Pray to Him, read His word, and do what He wants you to do. As you stay plugged into Him, He will make the fruit in your life grow.

God showed us what true love looks like when He came to earth as a man, Jesus, and died on the cross for our sins.

1 John 4:15-16

All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. (16) We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. [NLT]

How do you know that God loves you? What did He do to show His love for you? He died on the cross. Could He have done more to show His love for you?

God wants us to love others in the same way He showed His love for us. What do you think that looks like? Can you die for someone?

Well, in a sense we can. When we did our activity at the beginning of class we acted out how to show God's love in certain situations.

- In the first situation you were in a hurry to get to your soccer game, but you had to “die to yourself” that is you had to put aside your own desire to get going, so that you could help your little brother tie his shoes. In that sense, you gave up your time to show love to your little brother.
- In the second scenario, your friends at school were making fun of a new kid. But, while they were laughing at the kid, you went over and sat next to him and made friends with him. You “died to yourself” in that you risked being made fun of by the kids at school, too. You put aside your own reputation so you could show love to that new kid.

Why should we bother showing love to others? Because God showed love to us.

1 John 4:19

We love each other because he loved us first. [NLT]

We love others because before we were even believers in Jesus, He came and died a cruel, harsh death on the cross so that we could be forgiven for all the naughty things that we do. Did we deserve that kind of love? No! Absolutely not! But, He loved us *that* much because He wants us to come and spend eternity up in Heaven with Him some day. He wants to hang out with us!

When we think about what He has done for us, the least we could do is show God's love to others. And we do that by choosing to love people, even when they don't deserve it, just like He did for us.

That's why He gave us love as the first piece of the fruit of the Spirit.

The Bible says that God is love and when God is in our lives, love is in our lives. We need to show people we love them by our actions. Praying for others is a sign of God's love. So, let's end our time together with praying for others.

Closing Prayer

Father, we love You and thank You for the fruit of the Spirit you give us in love. Thank You for loving us first to show us what true love looks like. We thank You for the gift of Jesus and for helping us learn that we can always count on Your love that grows inside us. We thank You for teaching us how to love because You are love. We want to share Your love with others. We praise You and love You because You are God and You are love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Learning Activities

Snack

Strawberries and whipping cream.

Craft Corner**Fruit Stuffs**

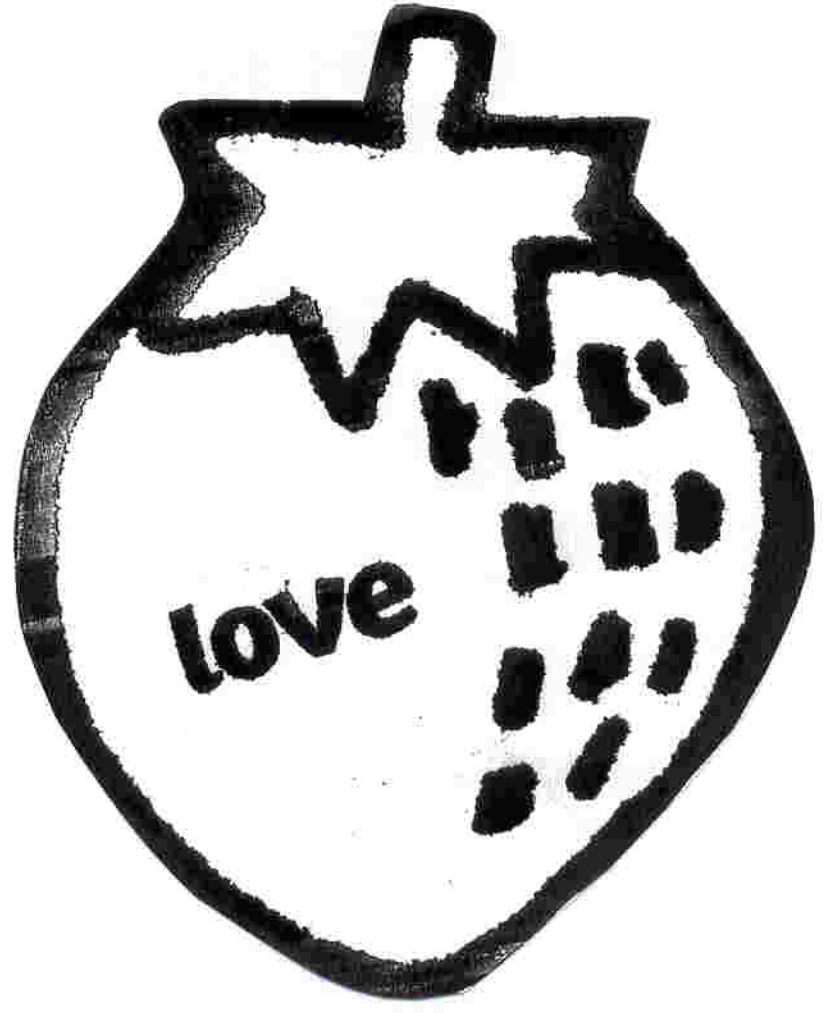
1. Enlarge a strawberry shape to represent “love” (see next page) on red construction paper, enough so that each child gets two, one for the front and one for the back.
2. Let students add decorations to them. Provide real or silk leaves or green construction paper to add to their shapes.
3. Staple around the edges of the shapes, leaving a few inches open.
4. Stuff with crumpled newspaper or shredded paper. Then staple the opening closed.
5. As students work, ask them to describe ways they could show love at home, at school, with friends, etc.
6. Hang them from ceiling with yarn or string.

Game Center

Use the following questions in a game of your choice:

1. What is love? (God is love.)
2. Is love a feeling? (No! It's a choice that we make to show others what God's all about.)
3. Who loved the world so much that He sent His only Son to die for us? (God)
4. What are some reasons to love God? (God loves us. God made us. He came to earth as a man, Jesus, and died on the cross for our sins.)
5. Why is doing the loving thing sometimes hard?

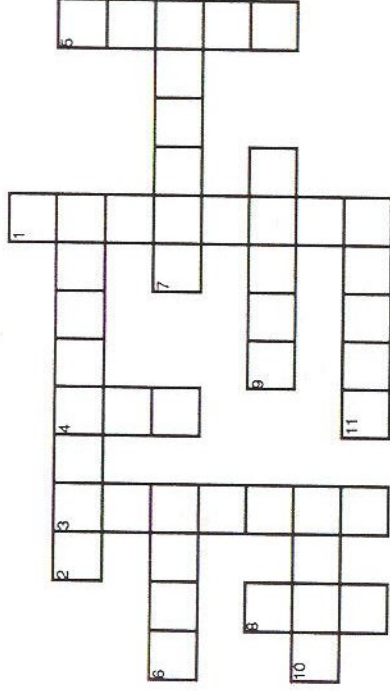
6. How can we know what the loving thing to do is? (Ask yourself, “*What would Jesus do?*”)
7. When have you seen someone showing God's love to others?
8. How can you show love to someone this week?
9. Why is it always best to do the loving thing?
10. What do we need to be filled with in order to love people with God's love? (The power of the Holy Spirit.)
11. Why does God want us to show love to others? (So that we can show them what God is like.)
12. How can you die for someone, like Jesus died for you? (By putting aside our own desires, your own reputation, to show love to someone else.)
13. Why should we bother showing love to others? (Because God showed His love for us, by dying on the cross.)



LOVE

The answers to the crossword puzzle are all taken from verses about love.

1. Faith, hope and love. But the _____ of these is love.
1 Cor. 13:13
2. Love thy _____. Mark 12:31
3. Love your _____, do good to them which hate you.
Luke 6:27
4. Love is of _____. 1 John 4:7
5. Love not the _____. 1 John 2:15
6. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his
_____ for his friends. John 15:13
7. His _____ over me was love. Song 2:4
8. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten
_____, that whosoever believeth in him should not
perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16
9. The love of _____ is the root of all evil. 1 Tim. 6:10
10. We _____ him because he first loved us. 1 John 4:19
11. Love the Lord thy God with all thy _____. Mark 12:30



Love Can Be Difficult

It's easy to love people who are nice to you and love you, but what about people who are unkind to you? Follow the clues to discover what Matthew 5:44 teaches us.

1 2 3 4 5 6

7 8 , 9 10

11 12 13 , 14 15 16

17 18 19 20 21

22 23 24 25 spite 26 y

27 28 29 perse 30 31

- 1) The first three letters of *butter*
- 2) 9th letter of the alphabet
- 3) Rhymes with *way*
- 4) Sounds like *two*
- 5) Opposite of *me*
- 6) Opposite of *hate*
- 7) Rhymes with *four*
- 8) Opposite of *friends*
- 9) Rhymes with *guess*
- 10) Rhymes with *hose*
- 11) Rhymes with *new*
- 12) Rhymes with *purse*
- 13) Same as #5
- 14) Sounds like *dew*
- 15) Opposite of *bad*
- 16) Same as #4
- 17) Same as #10
- 18) Same as #11
- 19) Opposite of *love*
- 20) Same as #5
- 21) Rhymes with *sand*
- 22) Rhymes with *gray*
- 23) Sounds like *four*
- 24) Same as #10
- 25) Same as #11
- 26) Opposite of *empty*
- 27) Rhymes with *fuse*
- 28) Same as #5
- 29) Same as #21
- 30) Rhymes with *boot*
- 31) Same as #13



