

God Is Love

(Selections from the Gospels)

Introduction

We've been learning about God's attributes. An *attribute* is a character trait or quality about someone.

What are some of things that we've learned about God already?

- God is **great creator**—He created the whole universe! We know that there is a God because we see what He has done. We see the wonderful things which He has created.

The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. (Psalm 19:1)

- God is **holy**—He is without sin; He is perfect in every way.

"Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders? (Exodus 15:11)

- God is **just**—He always does what is right and fair.

He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He! (Deuteronomy 32:4)

- God is **merciful**—He extends forgiveness to us even though we don't deserve it.

Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)

Today we're going to focus our attention on the fact that God is **love**.

Love is probably the most talked-about subject on the planet. It is one thing that none of us can live without. But not many people really know what *true* love is. We say we love chocolate, we love our

mothers, we love our pets, or we love ice cream. But clearly, loving ice cream isn't the same as loving your Mom, is it?

Today we're going to learn about the kind of love that God shows.

Opening Prayer

Father, the messages we get from the world through our TVs and movies are so mixed up. Please teach us what it means to love others with Your kind of love. In Jesus' name, we pray. 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. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1 John 4:7-8)

Lesson

What are some famous love stories you know? (Romeo and Juliet. Cinderella.) Today we will hear about the greatest love story ever told. But first, I want you to write down as many things as you can remember about the life of Jesus on these five sheets of paper.

[Teacher, place five large sheets of paper around the room. Label papers, "Who?", "What?", "When?", "Where?", and "Why?" Give the kids five minutes to record information; discuss their observations.]

How would you show your love to someone? What would you do? [Let the children discuss.]

Jesus and His disciples traveled for three years, talking with people about God's love, healing sick people, and doing all kinds of miracles. Many people followed Jesus. But most of them didn't really understand who Jesus was or why He was there.

Because of Jesus' popularity, the religious leaders were jealous of Jesus. They were afraid that the people who followed Jesus wouldn't listen to them anymore. So they decided to get rid of Jesus.

Matthew 26:3-4

At that same time the leading priests and elders were meeting at the residence of Caiaphas, the high priest, (4) plotting how to capture Jesus secretly and kill him.

The leaders paid one of Jesus' disciples to betray Him.

Matthew 26:14-16

Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, went to the leading priests (15) and asked, "How much will you pay me to betray Jesus to you?" And they gave him thirty pieces of silver. (16) From that time on, Judas began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus.

Judas, one of Jesus' closest friends, led soldiers through the dark to where Jesus was praying. They arrested Jesus and pressured the Roman governor to order Jesus to die on a cross!

As Jesus hung on the cross, He looked at the people around Him. There were people making fun of Him and yelling angrily at Him. But, Jesus didn't say anything to them. Instead He prayed to the Father.

Luke 23:34a [Teacher, read]

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."

Jesus is much more powerful than the ropes and nails that the soldiers used to put Him on the cross. He is all-powerful; He is almighty! He could have broken free at any moment! He could have called down legions of angels.

Matthew 26:53

Don't you realize that I could ask my Father for thousands of angels to protect us, and he would send them instantly?

Why do you think that Jesus chose to stay on the cross? (Because of His love for us.) He knew He was there to pay the penalty for sin so all

people everywhere would have the chance to be forgiven and live forever with Him.

Jesus chose to lay down His life for ours even though we were not worthy of His love.

Romans 5:8

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

That is what God's kind of love looks like. He took the punishment that we deserved. God's love is real. It is pure and complete. Because of what He did for us we will someday live in His very presence, forever.

No matter what we do, He will always love us with an everlasting love. That's because God is unchangeable; He is *always* loving. 1 John 4:8 says that *God is love*. He cannot be any other way, because He is God.

Often we feel like a balloon that has not been inflated. [Teacher, hold up an un-inflated balloon.] We feel let down and disappointed as if all the air has been let out of us. But when we turn to God, His love starts to fill us up. [Start to blow up the balloon.] Before long, we do not feel our disappointment and sadness because we are so full of the knowledge of His love for us. [Finish blowing it up.] He lavishes us with His love!

Nobody can love us as much as God. There is nothing we can do to make Him stop loving us. And, there is nothing we can do to make Him love us any more than He already does. When we think about how great His love is for us, God's love should overflow all over everyone else. [Let the balloon fly through the class room.]

God wants us to love one another in the same way that He loves us.

What does God's kind of love look like?

God's Love is not just a feeling, it's an action word. And, if you are truly a child of God, then you will choose to love people with God's kind of love, even when they don't deserve it.

1. One way to love people with God's kind of love is to do all you can to live in peace with everyone; you are to be a peacemaker.
2. Secondly, you will be willing to forgive others when they do things that bug you just because you know that God has forgiven you so much.
3. Third, you will be completely unselfish; it is a love that gives and keeps on giving; it's having compassion on others and being willing to do something for them with no thought of getting anything in return

God's love considers what is best for the other person. God's love always puts the other person's needs first. Jesus laid down His life for the sakes of His friends. He was willing to endure a painful death on the cross for our sakes.

4. Fourth, you will be actively looking for opportunities to do what God says is the right thing to do, even when it's inconvenient for you.
5. Fifth, you will be faithful; true to your word. Always doing what you say you're going to do.

God wants us to show others what His love looks like through our own gentle actions so that they will come to know Him as their own personal Lord and Savior.

Closing Prayer

Lord, thank You for your amazing love that You demonstrated to us by coming and dying on the cross for our sakes. Thank You that You were not selfish, but that You laid down your very life for us. Thank

You for forgiving us of our sins. Help us to show other people that same kind of Godly love – Your kind of love. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities**Activity Corner**

As I read to you a situation, tell me how you could show God's kind of love:

- A new girl is in your class. She is very quiet and always eats lunch by herself. You've seen her looking at you and your friends at recess. How could you show love to her?
- Your Sunday school class is having a workday at your church. You've been asked to help pull weeds from the large flower beds in front of the church. You very much dislike pulling weeds. How can you show God's kind of love as you help out?
- Your grandma is very ill and you don't know what will happen to her. What can you do to show her God's kind of love?
- Your three-year-old cousin is visiting. You're trying to put together a new puzzle that you've just received as a birthday present. Your cousin really wants to help. How can you show God's kind of love as he tries to help?
- Suppose you are at a friends' birthday party and one guest is being excluded from most of the activities. How can you show God's kind of love to this person?
- You've just earned ten dollars by helping your neighbors clean out their garage. You're trying to decide what to do with your money. How can you show God's kind of love with your money?

- An elderly next-door neighbor has asked you to help her by walking her dog every day for the next four weeks while her sprained ankle heals. It was fun in the beginning, but now it's been raining and you don't feel like you have much time. How can you show God's kind of love in this situation?
- Your friend's little brother has been bugging you and your friend all day. He sticks his tongue out at you and is just plain obnoxious. Your friend wants to hit him. If you want to show God's kind of love, what should be your reaction?
- You are at the mall with your mom. A new video game you've been wanting for is on sale. You ask your mom whether she will get it for you, and she says, "No". If you wanted to show God's kind of love, what would you NOT do?

Game Center

Go Attribute (like Go Fish)

Make a set of Attribute cards for each child in your class. (Make at least 4 of each Attribute.) Shuffle them all together and let them draw five cards for their hand.

Rules:

Go Attribute is best for 3-6 players, but it is possible for 2 to play. The dealer deals 5 cards to each player (7 each for 2 players). The remaining cards are placed face down to form a draw pile.

The player to dealer's left starts. A turn consists of asking a specific player for a specific Attribute. For example, I might say: '*Mary, please give me your Faithfulness cards.*' The player who asks must already hold at least one of the requested cards. If the player who was asked (Mary) has any of named Attribute, she must give all her cards of this Attribute to the player who asked for them. That player then gets another turn and may again ask any player for any Attribute.

If the person asked does not have any cards of the named Attribute, they say '*Go Attribute!*' The asker must then draw the top card of the draw pile. If the drawn card is the Attribute asked for, the asker shows it and gets another turn. If the drawn card is not the Attribute asked for, the asker keeps it, but the turn now passes to the player who said '*Go Attribute!*'

As soon as a player collects a book of 4 cards of the same Attribute, this must be shown and discarded face down. The game continues until either someone has no cards left in their hand or the draw pile runs out. The winner is the player who then has the most books.

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