

Showing God's Love by Being a Good Neighbor

(Philippians 2:3)

Objective: *The students will learn that one way of showing God's love is by being a good neighbor – that is, by thinking of others first and sharing what we have with them.*

Materials: *Bibles, four aluminum pie tins, milk, food coloring, dishwashing liquid, envelopes, four copies of handout on different colored paper.*

Before Class: *Make a puzzle out of the Memory Verse and copy it on four different sheets of colored paper. Cut the puzzles out and seal each piece in a separate envelope. Keep out the smallest piece of the puzzle for each color. Set them aside so that you can bring them out later.*

In four different areas of your room, set up stations with the following in each: a pie tin filled with milk, different colors of food coloring, and dishwashing liquid.

When students arrive in class, give each a sealed envelope containing the puzzle piece. Make sure each person has at least one. Save any extras to distribute later.

Pre-Session Warm Up

- Who can name a famous person in our country? (The president, sports stars, movie stars, wealthy people.)
- Do we treat famous people differently than those of us in this room? (Yes.)
- If a famous basketball star, such as Michael Jordan, came to our class, how would he be treated? (We'd give him the best place to sit. We'd listen to everything he said. We would want to be near him. We might even scream in delight.)

Today we're going to learn that God wants us to treat all people with respect and honor.

Opening Prayer

Lord, each person You have created is important. Teach us how to treat other people with respect so that they will see Your love more clearly. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. (Philippians 2:3)

Lesson Review

We've been learning about how to show God's love to others.

1. In our first lesson we learned that God's love is everywhere and that he wants us to love Him back with all of our heart, mind, and soul.
2. Next, we learned that God knows all about us. He always knows where we are, what we're doing, what we're thinking and feeling. And, even so, He still loves us completely. In the same way, He wants us to love others, even people who do wrong to us and don't deserve our love. Because that's the way He loves us.
3. In last week's lesson, we learned that because planet earth belongs to God, we can show others that we love Him by taking care of our environment properly. We did an activity that showed the effects of an oil spill on the ocean, birds, plants and animals. We talked about ways to care for God's possessions.

Lesson

The Bible says that we should regard others as more important than ourselves. We are often willing to treat famous people with importance, but sometimes we don't treat the people closest to us,

such as our brothers and sisters or the people here in this room, as important.

Everyone's Important

Let's do an activity that will help us understand that everyone is important—famous and not famous.

I have given each of you an envelope. It contains a puzzle piece. When I say, "Go," open the envelope and find other kids with the same colored piece as you have. Get together and try to be the first group to put your puzzle together.

[Give the signal to go and let them put the pieces together. If you have extra envelopes, open them and distribute the puzzle pieces to the appropriate groups. When every group has put the puzzle together (except for the missing piece), bring out the missing pieces that you hold.]

I am holding the missing piece to your puzzle. It is the smallest piece, and you may think it is not the most important piece. But you need it to finish. Every piece in a puzzle is important no matter its size or location. It is needed to complete the puzzle. Without just one piece, the puzzle can't be finished.

In the same way each of us is part of God's big puzzle of life. Each of us is an important piece of that puzzle.

1 Corinthians 10:24

Don't be concerned for your own good but for the good of others.

The Bible says we can show God's love by always looking to do good to our neighbors.

- Who are our *neighbors*? (Friends, our family, people who live around us, everyone in the world.)

One day a lawyer came and asked Jesus a tricky question.

Luke 10:25

One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: "Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?"

The Jews in Jesus' day believed that a person must obey the *Ten Commandments* perfectly in order to go to Heaven after they die. They thought that they could earn eternal life by doing good works like a person can earn money for doing a job.

Jesus came to earth to tell people that it is impossible to *earn* eternal life. You can't pay for it. The good things we do don't make us right in the sight of a holy God. You can't do enough good things to make up for the sin in your life. Jesus wanted people to understand that He came to be our Savior.

When the people heard Jesus teach about God's ways they were thrilled. They loved Jesus and flocked after Him. They hung on every word that came out of His mouth.

The scribes and Pharisees became jealous of Jesus' popularity with the people. So, they tried to trick Jesus into saying something contrary to the Scriptures. Their hope was to bring Him before the high priest and have Him punished.

This lawyer in our story was an expert in explaining God's laws. He, of all people, knew God's laws very well. So, when he asked Jesus, "*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*" he was just testing Jesus to see what He would say.

Luke 10:26

Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?"

Jesus answered the lawyer by asking him another question.

Luke 10:27

The man answered, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind." And, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

The lawyer answered Jesus' question by summing up the *Ten Commandments*. The first four commandments tell us to love God. (Don't have any other gods, don't have any idols, don't take God's name in vain, and keep the Sabbath holy.) The last six commandments tell us to love others. (Honor your parents, don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't lie, and don't covet.)

The whole law is summed up with, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ... and your neighbor as yourself.*"

- When it says to *love your neighbor as yourself*, what does it mean? Just as you love and care for your own needs, you are to love others.

When you're hungry, you get yourself something to eat. If a friend of yours came over you wouldn't get yourself something to eat and not give anything to your friend, would you? You wouldn't make a houseguest sleep out in the back yard while you went and slept in a nice warm comfortable cozy place. Treat other people as you would want them to treat you.

Luke 10:28

"Right!" Jesus told him. "Do this and you will live!"

Jesus knew that it is impossible to do this. No one in his own strength could ever love God or his neighbor with all of his heart, soul, strength and mind. And, the lawyer was probably feeling very uneasy at this point, knowing that he didn't love God with all his being and his neighbor as himself. So, he asks Jesus to define the term "*neighbor*."

Luke 10:29

The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

As a Jew, the lawyer probably believed that his neighbor was only his fellow Jew. Jesus told a story to show the lawyer what God's love is like. (A parable is a true-to-life story about common, everyday things that teaches a spiritual truth about God.)

Luke 10:30-31

Jesus replied with a story: "A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. (31) By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by.

Surely a priest, who served God and lead others in the worship of God, would care about his "neighbor." But he didn't. He glanced at the injured man and passed by, choosing not to dirty himself.

Luke 10:32

A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

The temple assistants helped the priests in God's work. They spent their lives teaching people about God's law. Surely this guy would have known the law. But he, too, refused to help his neighbor. He stopped and looked at the victim and then passed by.

Luke 10:33-34

Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. (34) Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him.

The Jews and the Samaritans had been enemies for years. The Jews despised Samaritans. The lawyer listening to Jesus tell this story would never have considered a Samaritan his neighbor. Yet it was a Samaritan, who usually would not help a Jew, who showed himself "neighbor" to the wounded Jew!

Luke 10:35

The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.'

The Samaritan paid all costs, left money, and promised more!

Luke 10:36-37

Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked. (37) The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy." Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."

It was probably hard for the lawyer to admit that the Samaritan was the hero in Jesus' story. Yet the Samaritan was a wonderful example of what it means to be a true neighbor. He showed kindness to a man who probably hated him.

The Bible says we should love our enemies.

Matthew 5:44

But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!

Sometimes it's even hard to show love to our friends. It may require sharing, giving in to their way, or letting them be first. It's even harder to reach out and love our enemies. It takes God's love to be kind to someone who has been mean to us. You can't do it in your

own strength, you must ask Jesus into your heart and then you can call upon the Holy Spirit to give you the power you need.

We need to ask God to help us notice people who are in need. Look for practical ways to be of help each day.

[Teacher, lead the children in a discussion using the following questions.]

- How can we help the sick or the old or the poor? (Visit the sick, send cards, be a friend, say a kind word, invite them to church, etc.)
- How can we be good neighbors to people who live on the other side of the world? (Support mission work, write letters, pray, and so on.)
- What are some ways we could show God's love to: The homeless, people overseas, shut-ins, disaster victims, community groups, people in our neighborhood, our school, our church? Some ideas would be collect food for shelters, donate clothes to a homeless shelter, or bring a meal to a shut-in.

[Choose a project to do as a class if you'd like. Plan it together. If not, encourage your students to choose an idea to do with their families or friends at home.]

- So, who is your neighbor? (Anyone you can help.)

Showing love and kindness shows that you truly love God. God loves every person, no matter what church he goes to, or if he's been mean to you, or if his skin is a different color. God wants us to do good to all.

Regardless of who they are, God will give you the power to show His kind of love to them.

Swirling Rainbows

Let's see what happens when we help people we don't know or like.

It is easy to think of our friends as important enough to do good things for them, like sharing. But sometimes we find it hard to do good things for people we don't know or don't like.

[Have the students move to the four areas you've set up. Assign groups according to their puzzle colors. Have their attention focused on you, and then give the following directions. Be sure they have finished the first step before you move on to the next step.]

1. Drop in a drop or two of **red** food coloring close to the edge of the pan of milk. Let's have this represent someone who has just come to our country to live.
2. Now drop in a drop or two of **blue** food coloring by the opposite edge. Let this represent a new boy or girl at school.
3. Drop in a drop or two of **green** food coloring by the edge between the red and blue drops. This will be somebody at school who is always making trouble.
4. Drop in a drop or two of **yellow** food coloring by the empty edge. Let this represent the lady down the street who yells at you when your ball lands on her lawn.
5. Drop a few drops of **dishwashing liquid** right in the middle of the pan of milk. Let's say the dishwashing liquid represents a good thing you do for all of them. It could be inviting them to a party at your house.

[Give the children a few minutes to watch and see what happens.]

- What happened to all of the drops? (They swirled together and made a beautiful rainbow.)

Often the good things we do for others help them feel good about themselves and others. Sharing brings people together and often

brings beautiful things into our lives and their lives just like this rainbow.

Ways to Share

Have the children find and discuss the following verses:

1 John 3:17

If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person?

Proverb 28:27

Whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing, but those who close their eyes to poverty will be cursed.

James 2:15-16

Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, (16) and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well" – but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for loving us so much. Help us to always be loving and kind to everyone, no matter which church they go to or what color their skin is. We want to be Good Samaritans, helping people in need, no matter what the cost is to us personally. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Special Note to the Teacher

Confronting the needs of others brings out various attitudes in us. Jesus used the story of the good, but despised, Samaritan to make see what attitude was acceptable to Him. If we are honest, we often will find ourselves in the place of the expert in the law, needing to learn again who our neighbor is. Note these different attitudes toward the wounded man:

To the...	The wounded man was...
...expert in the law	...a subject to discuss
...robbers	...someone to use and exploit
...religious men	...a problem to be avoided
...innkeeper	...a customer to serve for a fee
...Samaritan	...a human being worth being cared for and loved

To Jesus, all of them and all of us were worth dying for.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Silhouettes to Share

Materials: Buttons, yarn (various colors) cardboard circles, glue, ribbon, markers, scissors.

Procedure: Give each child one set of items (such as all the buttons). Then ask everyone to make a self-portrait using only the materials they have. After a few minutes, allow each person to share their items with others. They'll find it much easier to be creative.

Read Philippians 2:3 together. Discuss: Just as all the materials we used for our project were important, everyone in our world is important, too. Talk about how God wants us to show love to others by making them feel special and sharing what we have.

Good Samaritan Booklet

Using the storybook pattern, have the children make a Good Samaritan booklet.

Game Center

Use the following questions in a game of your choice:

Review questions:

1. How did the Jews in Jesus' day believe that a person got eternal life? (By obeying the *Ten Commandments* perfectly and doing good works)
2. What did Jesus teach the people that made the scribes and Pharisees so angry? (That you couldn't keep the *Ten Commandments* perfectly; that's why you need a Savior.)
3. If a lawyer is an expert in explaining God's laws, why did he ask Jesus what to do to inherit eternal life? (He was trying to trick Jesus into saying something contrary to the Word of God.)
4. Why did the religious leaders of Jesus day try to trick Him into saying something contrary to the Scriptures? (They wanted to bring Him before the high priest and have Him punished.)
5. Tell the parable of the Good Samaritan in your own words.
6. Which of the three was the "neighbor" to the guy who was attacked by bandits? (The Samaritan)
7. When Jesus said to *love your neighbor as yourself*, what was he saying? (Just as you love and care for your own needs, you are to love others.)

8. How can we help the sick or the old or the poor? (Visit the sick, send cards, be a friend, say a kind word, invite them to church, etc.)
9. How can we be good neighbors to people who live on the other side of the world? (Support mission work, write letters, pray, etc.)
10. It's impossible to love God with your whole being and your neighbor as yourself. So, what must you do? (Ask Jesus into your heart and call upon the Holy Spirit to give you the power you need to show God's kind of love to others.)

