

GOD'S BIG PLAN

Love One Another 1 John 2: 1-17, 3:1-5:4

Supporting Scriptures: John 3:16; John 13-15; Romans 5:1-9; Romans 8:28, 35-39; Romans 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 13; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:15; 1 Timothy 1:5, 4:12; Hebrews 10:23-25; 1 Peter 1:22

Lesson Goals: To see that God is love.
To see that God's Big Plan includes us.
To see that we have a responsibility to love one another.

Scripture Memory If you love one another, everyone will know you are my disciples. John 13:35 (NIV)

NOTE: Familiarize yourself with this story. Don't read it. Tell it as a STORY. To reinforce that these ideas are not your own, hold your Bible as you tell the story.

The Lesson: Let's review what we have learned so far. (Review the previous stories, focusing on the ones that specifically point to Christ's birth. Encourage more and more students to share.)

So, as you have reviewed what you have learned so far, what were Jesus' instructions for His disciples before he returned to heaven? (To go and tell.) Where were they to go and tell? (They were to start in their hometowns, then go to the next town, then the next area until they had gone all over the world.) Did they do what Jesus asked them to do? (Yes!) It's amazing what can happen when even a few people are obedient. Jesus' followers started churches in many new places where the people had never heard of Jesus. People began to be called "Christians" because they were acting like Jesus. What would happen to all of these new believers, though? Paul and Peter and the other believers couldn't be everywhere at once, or could they?

READ: Philippians 1:1-10 (Hold your Bible open throughout the story.)

Jesus sent His followers out. They went where He told them to go. They told many people about God's love and the gift of His Son. The church grew and grew. Some of the believers lived far away and couldn't be visited easily. So God gave His followers an idea. They would write letters to the new believers. In those letters, they told the new believers how thankful they were for them. John, Peter, Paul and others wrote explaining what it meant to live like Jesus, to follow Him. They explained how to make the right kinds of decisions.

Paul and the others wrote things like, "I pray that your love will grow more and more." While Jesus was still alive, He had explained that the rest of the world, those who didn't believe in Jesus, would know a true follower of Jesus by the way he loved others. Jesus didn't say that if they studied and prayed for hours everyday, then people would know they were His followers. Study and prayer are important, but for true followers of Christ there should be something more, something driving everything that is done. That something is love. And it is that love that makes others want to know who Jesus is.

In one of his letters, John explained what it meant to love and follow Jesus. "What if someone claims to follow Jesus but hates his brother? He's in the dark. He doesn't really know Jesus. Jesus commanded us to love each other. We know how to love only because God loved us first. Love comes from God. Anyone who loves has been born again from God and knows God. Anyone who doesn't love doesn't know God, be-

cause God is love. He showed that love for us by sending His only Son into the world. He did this so that we could have life through Him. What is love really? It's not that we love God. Love is this: God loved us and sent His Son to die on the cross and pay for our sins. And if God loved us that much, we should love each other. Love like Jesus did. Think of others before yourself. We can love only because God loved us first. If someone says he loves God but really hates his brother or sister, he's a liar. If he doesn't love the brother or sister he can see, he can't love the God he cannot see. This is a command from God; anybody who loves God must also love his brothers and sisters. Now, that doesn't just mean the people in your family. It also means the new brothers and sisters you have in God - other believers."

What is love? Well, God is love, but Paul, in a letter to the church in Corinth explained love's characteristics. "Love is patient. Love is also kind. Love isn't jealous, and it doesn't brag or boast. It isn't arrogant or proud. Love isn't rude. Love isn't selfish, either. Love doesn't get angry easily and it doesn't keep a list of all the wrong things done. It isn't happy with bad, evil things. Love is happy with the truth. Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes for the best, and it puts up with a lot. Love never gives up."

John continued his explanation of love. "Here is what it really means to love God. It means we obey Him. This obedience isn't hard. When you become a child of God by following His Son, you have already won the battle over this world. And you ask how you have won the battle? Through your faith, trust, and confidence in God!"

And Paul, in our opening letter, said, "I pray that your love will grow more and more. Base it on knowledge and understanding. Then you'll know the best thing to do. You will be pure, doing the right thing, right up until Jesus comes back!"

Let's review what you have learned. Who would like to retell the story? (Ask your group if anything was left out or told inaccurately.) Would anyone else like to retell the story?

Review:

Did you know that when all the books of the Bible were finally collected into one book, the letters that Peter, Paul, John and the others wrote were included. So, why do you think we need to know what Paul wrote to a church in Corinth so long ago? Or why does it matter if we read a letter that John wrote thousands of years ago? Well, have you ever seen Jesus? Has he personally talked to you and given you instructions on how to live? I haven't, either. And just like these letters were written to believers so long ago to tell them how to live, they are for you and me, as well. The Bible tells us how to live, and these letters are practical information for the decisions we make every day. They help us know how to live pure and godly lives until Jesus comes back for us.

These letters were written for those who believe in Jesus. Do you believe? If you do not, now is the time. Trust in God. He wants what is best for you and he wants you to get along with the people around you. God is love. He knows how to care for you better than anyone else.

And if you do believe, is it real? Do you love your brothers and sisters? Can the people around you tell that you are a believer by the way you love others? If not, pray right now asking God to help you love others the way He loves you. And if you do love others and help them, are you like the Philippian church? Have you joined in spreading the good news? Do you love others enough to let them know that Jesus died for them? How can you do that this week?

Planning for Next Week
Lesson 47 • Jesus is Coming Back!
1 Thessalonians 4 - Revelation 22

PRESCHOOL LESSON

SING: “Jesus Loves Me”

SHARE: Jesus, before He died, sent His followers out. They went where He told them to go. They told many people about God’s love and the gift of His Son. The church grew and grew. Some of the believers lived far away and couldn’t be visited easily. So God gave His followers an idea. They would write letters to the new believers. In those letters, they told the new believers how thankful they were for them. John, Peter, Paul and others wrote to explain what it meant to live like Jesus, to follow Him. They explained how to make the right kinds of decisions.

While Jesus was still alive, He had explained that you would know a true follower of Jesus by the way he loved others. In one of those letters, John explained what it meant to love and follow Jesus. “What if someone says they follow Jesus but hates his brother? He’s in the dark. He doesn’t really know Jesus. Jesus commanded us to love each other. We know how to love only because God loved us first. Love comes from God. Anyone who loves has been born again from God and knows God. Anyone who doesn’t love doesn’t know God, because God is love. He showed that love for us by sending Jesus into the world. So, what is love really? It’s not really about us loving God. This is love: God loved us and sent Jesus, His Son, to die on the cross and pay for our sins. And if God loved us that much, we should love each other. Love like Jesus did. Think of others before yourself. We can love only because God loved us first. If someone says he loves God but really hates his brother or sister, he’s a liar. If he doesn’t love the brother or sister he can see, he can’t love the God he cannot see. This is a command from God; anybody who loves God must also love his brothers and sisters. Now, that doesn’t just mean the people in your family. It also means the new brothers and sisters you have in God - other believers.”

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How about you? Do you love your brothers and sisters? What about your friends at church? That’s what God wants us to do - love each other.

PRAY: Thank you, God, for showing us what love is.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Memory Verse Activity - Provide candy-colored paper hearts. Write a word from the verse on each one. Practice putting the verse in order, saying it out loud as you go.
- Make bookmarks. Use verses from the story like 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, John 3:16, or 1 John 4:7-8.
- Make a 1 Corinthians 13 word search. Include the characteristics of love.
- Make “Valentines” to give to those who didn’t come today.
- Encourage students to love like God did. Review 1 Corinthians 13 by putting God’s name in the place of love. Explain to your students that if God is love, and He is, then God is patient, God is kind, etc. If we want to be like God, we should also be patient, kind, etc.
- Talk about ways that love can be shown to others this week.
- Show your students how much of the Bible, and New Testament, is actually made up of the letters we’ve talked about. Encourage them to begin reading them at home.
- Sing “The Gospel in a Word is Love,” “This is My Commandment,” “1st John 4:7-8,” “John 3:16,” and “Love is . . .” from 1 Corinthians 13.