



PARENT GUIDE

LESSON FIVE: LOVE

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LESSON FIVE: LOVE

OBJECTIVE: To help families learn about love and what it really means to love their neighbours as Jesus commanded us.

FOCUS ON FOLLOWING JESUS

Jesus taught us to love God and love one another. He demonstrated what love was and we should follow his example.

([1 Corinthians 16:14](#) “Be loving in everything you do.”)

GRIP ON THE GOSPEL

God loves us and Jesus laid down his life for us. We can have his love in us to love ourselves, love others and love God. The most loving thing we can do for someone is introduce them to Jesus.

([1 John 4:19](#) “We love because he loved us first.”)

WHAT DO I DO?

- Read the [For Parents](#) article. Spend a few minutes thinking and praying.
- Read over the [Discipleship Lesson](#) and decide when you will do it with your family.
- Gather your family, a Bible and any supplies listed on the lesson sheet. Use the script provided to teach a [Discipleship Lesson](#) to your family, adapting as needed.
- Use the 5 mini-lessons as [Daily Bible Time](#) prompts through the week.
- Select one or more [Discipleship Activities](#) to incorporate into your week.



FOR PARENTS

In a world that uses the word *love* to describe everything from deep covenantal commitment to another person, to grossly immoral actions, it's natural for people to be confused. When I talk about what I love, it could refer to a life-changing soul connection to a person and also to my favourite Starbucks beverage. How can a parent teach their child what love really means? How can WE really know what love means?

Do you remember a stage in your life where you wondered if you were really in love with someone? You might have felt a lot of feelings, but was it love? Is this what it is supposed to feel like? If we pay attention to mainstream movies and television, falling in love means throwing away work, purpose, even our existing marriages for a good feeling or the whims of 'fate'. It is the most longed for human experience and our culture is overflowing with different ideas about what it really means. But biblically, love has much less to do with squishy feelings and more to do with our actions and attitudes – we know this already. Have you ever been told "I love you" by someone whose life proved differently?

We Teach Our Children What Love Is

It is for all these reasons we have to actually teach our children to love – and to practice making that love genuine. We are already teaching children about love by the things we do everyday. Here are a few examples:

1. We teach our children the importance of empathy when we respond to their emotions and the emotions of others. Even when it's not convenient, we respond to and provide support for our children's emotions. We help them name those feelings; we help them work through them. We hurt when they do. Not because it benefits us, but because we love. Our children learn from our example.
2. We teach our children what love looks like and what to expect from someone who says they love them. It's likely your own parents weren't perfect in the way they loved you – and there is much hurt caused by believing someone loves us who treats us poorly or attempts to control us. We want our children to love much better than that and to expect a better love from others!
3. We teach our children to be able to recognize God's love by the way we love them. While we will never love perfectly like God does – even though we can't imagine anyone loving our children more than we do – we do teach them a glimpse of who God is by how we love them. God's love sometimes comes in the form of something we don't understand but is for our good, or discipline and correction. When these things are done in love in the home, they help children to anticipate that God's loving care for them will come in many forms too.

What is this thing called Love?

Have you worked it out in your own life, what love is? It's impossible to pass on knowledge that we don't yet have ourselves. If you know you haven't received great examples of what selfless, others-first love looks like, it might be helpful for you to look around and find good mentors or examples of this in the church family. Ask another person you respect how they love their families and their children. Find out how people experience God's love in their lives and communicate true love to their children.



We must be prepared when we seek to learn about true, biblical love that this search will hurt and break us. It isn't an adventure to begin without great consideration. The way to really love others is to do as Christ did – give up our lives or something else important. Our comforts. Our identity. Our security. Really loving other people means opening ourselves up to being hurt or disappointed. It is being willing to be dashed into pieces. Parents, we get a glimpse of this - our children teach it to us every day. Sacrifice is part of love. When we love this way, God helps us to understand the suffering of others, to love them in it and to see the suffering of Christ.

None of us love perfectly, but God delights in showing us His heart and His truth when we seek it.

Consider these Questions:

- What is one thing I do to teach my children about what real love is?
- How have I experienced God's love in my life?



DISCIPLESHIP LESSON

Instructions:

- Read or teach the text using your own words
- *Text in italics is a note to the adult leading*
- This icon  indicates a question you should ask
- This icon  tells you there is a Bible verse to read
- **Text inside a grey box is a tip or idea for you!**
- Text inside this box is a short activity or task

The lesson should take about **45 minutes** to complete

Supplies Needed:

- **Bible**
- A sheet of paper for each family member
- Something to write with for each family member

I Love Learning

Gather your family for the family Discipleship Lesson. Remind your family that this is something exciting to do together, to look at the Bible and Jesus and learn what it means to be a disciple!



Think of someone your family all knows well who has a birthday or other gift-giving celebration coming up. Adapt the example to be something your children know you would love, but that this person would not!

If you're not comfortable play-acting like this, you can talk about an imaginary situation instead. "Imagine if I..."

Today, before we get into our lesson, I wanted to ask your advice on something! See, I was thinking about getting _____ (*friend, cousin, grandparent*) a birthday gift, since their birthday is coming up! I think I figured out just the thing...I want to give them a brand...new...VACCUUM CLEANER! (substitute appropriate item that you would obviously want but that person would not!) See it has all these attachments, it comes in my favourite colour – and maybe I could borrow it sometimes. The Bible says we should love other people like we love ourselves, so I'm just going to give them something I would be happy to get myself!



What do you think? Will they love it?

No, I was just being silly with you for a minute. I wouldn't actually do that! The Bible does tell us to love other people like we love ourselves, but sometimes we get the word 'love' wrong. We forget what it really means. So today we're going to look at the word together.

Let's jump right into the Bible!



Jesus told his disciples about the most important thing in life. Let's see if we can find it in these verses.

**Matthew 12:29-31**

If you had to put that verse into your own words, what would you say?

**John 13:34-35**

How about that verse? Can you put it into your own words?

Jesus taught his friends that followers of Jesus would love. But we don't always know what love is. Sometimes we think of hearts and valentines, or people giving hugs. Sometimes we think of a feeling that just happens to us, like falling in love. But that's not what Jesus was talking about here, is it?

Love in the Bible isn't something we feel and have no control of, it is something we choose to do!

We're going to get to a definition of what it means to love someone, but you probably know it already. If I want to give someone a gift, I shouldn't think about what I want, right? **What should I do?** That's right, I should think about what THEY want and need, not what is easy for me!

Here is the big definition of love: **Love is wanting and doing what's best for others.**

Simple as that! It's thinking about other people and doing something not because we want to do it, or it's easy or makes us happy – but because it is best for another person and would make them happy!

Write each family member's name largely on a piece of paper. On that paper, the whole family should think of the best things they could want and do for each person. They can write words, draw pictures, or use symbols. Your family should think about what each person needs, not necessarily material things. It can be something like 'stuffed elephant for their elephant collection' or 'pink shoes because they like pink,' but it could be things like 'peace and quiet' or 'to have fun with a friend' or as big as 'a new job'.



Older children and good readers can look up and read these verses for you.



I think we're all getting great practice here at thinking about what's best for the people in our family! This is the kind of love that the Bible talks about.



1 John 3:18



What do you think this verse means?



Is telling someone we love them a way we can love people?

Just saying the words "I love you" isn't really love – we have to do things and say things that show our love. If our actions prove it, then saying "I love you" is great!



The Wrong Verse!

There are a few ways you could show your kids how active this verse is. If you are comfortable play-acting as the script does, that works well for kids who know this verse by heart.

You could also write out the real verse and the fake ones and have kids guess "which is really in the Bible." This works better if your children are less familiar with Bible verses – but it works just as well! Feel free to change what is written here!

There is a famous Bible verse that starts "**God so loved the world...**" (*kids who have heard and memorized this verse will maybe try to finish it for you!*)

Does it go like this? "**God so loved the world that he sat in heaven and felt happy thoughts about it?**" No? Oh, how about this then, "For God so loved the world that he wrote a poem and put it on a valentine card?" No? That's not it either?

So what does the Bible say then?



John 3:16

God loved us so much that he thought about and wanted what was best for us. We needed someone to save us from our sin problem, so he gave up something very special and precious to him so we could have what we needed! God sent Jesus to us because of love. God didn't just feel love about us, he did something loving!

Now you guys get this, I know, but we're going to look at one more thing the Bible says about love.



1 Corinthians 13:4-8



These are a lot of verses, but they say very important stuff! It is a really cool explanation of what it looks like when someone wants and does what is best for others!

As a family, turn over the pieces of paper you wrote on before. On those papers, come up with 4-5 examples of ways you could act like this in your home, all together (you can use all the papers, or just one). Ideas can be written down or you can draw a picture. For instance – being patient means waiting until it is time to eat, and not saying, “I’m hungry, when’s dinner!”, or waiting for a sibling to finish using a toy or electronic without bugging them to have a turn. Find 5 ways, think of things everyone in the family could do.

If your children are wiggly and don’t like to draw/write very much, you might choose to have children act out things all of you could do in the home to love each other.



The Bible teaches us so much about love! Why do you think that is?

It could be because God has always been a loving God and he made us so that he would have someone to share that love with. Normally, when someone loves us it makes sense to just love them back. But God tells us that with him, things are a little different. God loves us, so God says we should love him and love other people.

Love is how we take care of each other. It makes God happy when we love each other because it shows people what God is like. Some people don’t know that God loves them and what love really is!

Our job as a family that follows Jesus is to help other people to know about our God who loves us, and to know what love is.

All of those things make love a really, really important thing! So we’re going to talk more about love this week and practice loving each other.

Close by praying together that God would help your family to be disciples by loving God and loving people.



4	<p><u>John 13:34-35</u></p>	<p>What are some clues that someone might really love basketball? What might they wear? What might they talk about? (Insert sport or hobby of choice!)</p> <p>What are some clues that someone really loves animals?</p> <p>We can learn a lot about people by their actions and observing them.</p> <p>How would we know if someone was a follower of Jesus?</p> <p>The Bible actually tells us exactly how to tell if someone is a Christian! (read verse)</p> <p>We get to help God with his big mission on earth by loving other people and showing other people what God is like by how we love!</p> <p>Who are some people we know who don't follow Jesus and who might not know how much God loves them, and that God loves them so much he wants to forgive their sins and make them a part of his big forever family? Pray for them together. Think of some ways you can SHOW and TELL them about God's love this week.</p>
5	<p><u>Romans 5:8</u> <u>1 John 2:2</u></p>	<p>When we break God's rules what is that called?</p> <p>People have trouble loving God. It's easier for them to love themselves, or love stuff that they can buy. We disobey God's rules which is called sin. Sins trap us like we're in a jail. We choose to do things our way instead of God's way and we get tangled up. There are consequences for this – but instead of making us take the punishment for this, God said, "I love you and I'll take the punishment for you!" That's how much God loves us. God made a trade – Jesus would take all our sins and give up living on earth, and we would get to be the good ones. Jesus gave up a lot! He got hurt. He had to stop living here and seeing his friends and family.</p> <p>What did Jesus get in return for giving up his life? (He got to be our rescuer, to set us free from sin, to let all of us who trust Jesus join his family forever)</p> <p>Share with your kids when you became a follower of Jesus and why. Invite them to follow Jesus too if they have not, or pray to thank Jesus for his sacrifice.</p>



DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

Use any of the following activities to extend the learning and disciple your child in everyday life.

- **Pray Together:** Pray that God would help your family love one another and others better.
- **Memorize:** John 3:16 and John 13:34-35 together as a family. Talk about this verse in daily life.
- **Missions:** Pray for people around the world who do not know the love of God, or who believe that they have to earn God's love or that God is mad at them. Pray for missionaries who sacrifice living close to their friends and family to share the good news with people around the world. Consider writing to thank a missionary for their sacrifice.
- **Daily Life:**
 - Make "Blessing Boxes" for people in your community, newcomers to your country and those connected to a church sponsored ministry, like crisis centers, women's shelters, addiction programs, poverty support agencies, community food pantries, etc. Find out what would be most useful from a coordinator and compile these items.
 - Make cookies or find a recipe for simple chocolate truffles. Deliver the homemade treats to service workers in your community, a family you want to bring cheer to, pastoral staff, etc.
 - Choose a way to practice 'sacrificing' together as a family. It will work better if everyone participates in selecting what to give up, and who the recipient is. If your family regularly orders pizza delivery or goes to restaurants, choose two weeks to eat a simple meal at home instead and give the extra money to a cause you have chosen.