



LOVE IS

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-13

GOAL

- ▶ **To teach children that, while God gives us many wonderful and powerful gifts to help us share our faith and the Word of God, the greatest gift is love.** If we use the gifts God has given us, but we don't use them with love, our actions are meaningless.
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WORDS TO KNOW

- ▶ **Agape Love:** The Greek word used in 1 Corinthians 13 that describes a different notion of love than that felt between family, friends, or romantic partners. Agape love is selfless, charitable, sacrificing, and unconditional for the benefit of the object of love. Agape love is used to describe the love God has for us as well as to describe God, who Himself is love.
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MEMORY VERSES

- ▶ **1 Corinthians 13:13:** So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Romans 13:10: Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is fulfilling the law.

OVERVIEW

- ▶ **Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13:** The people of the church in Corinth were arguing about which of the spiritual gifts God gives us is the best. The Apostle Paul heard about this bickering and wrote to them to settle the matter. In his letter, Paul explained that the greatest gift God gives us is love—a gift that is given to everyone. Each of the other spiritual gifts, while powerful in their ability to help us advance the kingdom of God on Earth, is worthless if our actions are done without love.



SUGGESTIONS



God gives us gifts that will help us through life and to help advance the kingdom of God by sharing the story of Jesus' ultimate act of love and sacrifice to save us from our sins. Spreading this good news is obeying Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations. The goal of this commandment isn't so God will have the most followers, but so that His love will be spread to every corner of the Earth and that every person will experience His love. God gives us spiritual gifts out of love so that we can share His love. Using these gifts without love makes our actions meaningless. With love we can hope to accomplish the following:

- 1. Unity:** People we've never met, people from different countries, and even people who speak different languages are our brothers and sisters because we share something that forms the foundations of our lives: Jesus and His love.
- 2. Purpose:** God created each of us each as unique individuals and granted each of us spiritual gifts with the common purpose of spreading the good news of Jesus by showing our love for everyone.
- 3. Transformation:** The more we come to know and understand God, the more we understand the power of love. Love can change who we are and those with whom we interact. Love can change the world.



PRE-LESSON ACTIVITY



Ages 5-7 Candy Hearts | Supplies: heart-shaped cutouts, markers, pens, crayons, glitter, decoration supplies.

Cut heart shapes out of construction paper. On each heart write the word LOVE. Give each student a heart to decorate. This craft can remind students that Jesus loves them and that He wants them to love others the way He loves them.

Ages 5-10 Share the Love | Supplies: Paper and pens or pencils

On a strip of paper, write each student's name. Pass out these strips of paper to the students, making sure that no one gets his or her own name. Instruct the students not to say whose name they received. Ask the students to write something nice about the student whose name appears on the strip of paper they received. These comments can be as simple as "You are nice," or "You have pretty hair." Once students have written something, have them bring the strips back to you, then give the students the comments about them. Students can keep the comments private or they can share if they want to.

Teachers may want to quickly glance at the comments to ensure that they are all in fact nice comments.

Ages 8-10 Paper Sandwiches | Supplies: construction paper and scissors

Divide the class into teams. Instruct students to use the pieces of construction paper to build a sandwich. For example, using brown, purple, and white paper, they can make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, or they can make a ham and cheese sandwich using pink and yellow paper. They can add extra ingredients, such as green paper for lettuce and red for tomatoes. Provide them with scissors so they can cut out ingredient shapes if they want. Once all the teams have constructed their sandwiches, ask the class which sandwich looks the tastiest. Ask them if they would like to try the sandwich. Paper sandwiches are not edible. No matter how closely these paper sandwiches look real, they aren't, and they will not taste as expected. There is no actual substance to a paper sandwich, much like using a spiritual gift without love.



**MEMORY
VERSE
MEANING**

▷ **1 Corinthians 13:13:** God gives us different spiritual gifts, but we are all given faith, hope, and love. These universal gifts are eternal, unlike the spiritual gifts that will be of use only while we are here on Earth. Of these common gifts, love is the greatest.

Romans 13:10: Jesus commanded us to love each other as He loves us. Love in our hearts from our faith in God helps us to fulfill the law of loving others as Jesus commanded.

**POST-LESSON
ACTIVITY**

▷ **Ages 5-7 One Love, Three Legs | Supplies:** rope or string

Pair up all students in the class, and instruct them to stand side-by-side and put their inside arms around each other. Tie the pair of students' inside legs together. Give the students a chance to get used to walking as a team, then have them stand on the starting line. On "GO!" the students should try to make it to the finish line as quickly as possible.

To be successful in the mission God has given us, we must work with love. We cannot accomplish the goals God has set for our lives without love. Remembering to team up with Jesus throughout our lives will make our work easier!

Ages 5-10 Do You Hear the Message or Music? | Supplies: stereo or radio and Christian children's music

Have the class sit in a circle. Choose one child to start the game by whispering the message to him or her: "Jesus loves you! Pass it on!" Tell the student to whisper the message to the person sitting to his or her right, and so on. When the message gets back to the student who started it, have him or her tell the class what the message ended up being and what it was when the game started. While all this is going on, place a portable stereo in the middle of the circle, turn on the music, and turn it up so it will be difficult for the students to hear each other's whispered messages. Continue until each child has had a chance to start the game or until the class needs to move on.

Without love in our hearts, our words are but a clanging cymbal or a really loud stereo!



Ages 8-10 **Love Languages** | **Supplies:** heart-shaped cutouts, strips of paper, and tape

Look up Bible verses about love and then find those verses in another language (choose languages the students aren't likely to know). Find enough verses so that when the class is divided into teams, each team will have a foreign-language verse. Copy these verses by writing or printing them out. Number each strip of paper with the foreign-language verses on them. Write the translation of each verse on one of the heart cutouts, and put the number of the corresponding foreign-language verse on the other side. Tape the hearts on the wall or in other semi-hidden locations around the room with the number side facing out. Divide the class into teams, and give each team a verse. On "Go!" the students should try to find the heart with their number on it. The first team to find their heart wins.

Without love, great words have no meaning or don't make sense to us.

TAKE HOME



The spiritual gifts God gives us work only when we use them with love. Without love, our actions and work are meaningless. Showing love helps us to bring unity, purpose, and transformation to our lives and those around us.

Unity: The more people know about Jesus and accept Him as their Lord and Savior, the more we have in common with people: love for Jesus.

Purpose: God created us to serve a specific purpose. He gave us specific, spiritual gifts to help us accomplish that purpose. When we use these gifts, we glorify God, help others to come to know Jesus, and fulfill the goal God has for our lives.

Transformation: The more we love, the closer we get to becoming the people God created us to be. Learning to love everyone, even those who are not nice to us, is what Jesus commanded us to do.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 1



Q1a: What were the people in the church in Corinth arguing about?

A1: The people in the church in Corinth were arguing about which spiritual gift was the best.

Q1b: You see two identical cars in a parking lot, but one is blue and the other is green. Which car is better?

TN: Outside of color preference, neither is better than the other because they are the same car. No one is better than anyone else. God gives us gifts that suit the purpose He created us for, and none of these spiritual gifts are better than the other or make the people who have them better than anyone else.

SLIDE 2



Q2a: People gifted in speaking the truth of God help to do what?

A2: They help to teach about Jesus and to open cold, hard hearts.

Q2b: If you make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich without jelly, have you made the sandwich correctly?

TN: No, we made a peanut butter sandwich. While peanut butter sandwiches are yummy, it's not a proper PB&J without the jelly. Our spiritual gifts are powerful, but they are not complete or effective when we use them without love.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 3



Q3a: What can people gifted with spiritual understanding of God do?

A3: They can face any difficult situation and never fear because they trust in God.

Q3b: You sit down to watch TV, but the power cord is missing. Can you get it to turn on without electricity?

TN: Even though we have the TV, it requires electricity. Without a power cord, the TV won't work. We may have spiritual gifts, but without love, they won't work. Love is what gives our gifts power!

SLIDE 4



Q4a: What does a person gain by giving everything away without love?

A4: A person who gives away everything without love gains nothing.

Q4b: Is it okay to tell others that you shared your sandwich with your friend who forgot his lunch?

TN: It feels good to give, and when we do it with love in our hearts, the happiness we feel is from the Holy Spirit inside of us who is overjoyed at our decision to follow and obey Jesus' command to love others! These feelings are exciting, and we want to tell others about it, and that's okay. Talking about our giving becomes a problem when we give only to seek praise from others. The reward for giving is the blessing of knowing we helped someone in need, not praise from others for being a good person.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 5



Q5a: The descriptions of what love is also describe who?

A5: The descriptions of what love is also describe Jesus.

Q5b: You aced a test at school that your friend failed. Is it wrong to be proud of yourself?

TN: No, we worked hard to understand the concepts on that test! We should be proud of ourselves! Being proud is wrong in this situation when we tease our friend about how well we did in comparison. It is wrong to assume that we are smarter than our friend because of their test score. Pride becomes a problem when we start think we are better than others; that is simply not true. God created each of us, making every person on the planet a miracle and part of God's plan, and He loves us equally. To show love in this situation, we can offer to help our friend study for the next test.

SLIDE 6



Q6a: On Earth we only have part of the picture. What will we have in Heaven?

A6: In Heaven, we will have an understanding that is perfect and true.

Q6b: Have you ever figured out something you thought was too hard to understand?

TN: Let the students answer. Most of us have encountered something like this in school. For some of us, we experience this in math class, for others it's language arts. The moment we figure it out, it's like someone turned on the lights, and we can see everything clearly. It's an amazing feeling! Here on Earth, we understand the world we live in and spiritual truths about life as best as we can, but there is just so much that we cannot understand. When we get to Heaven, it will be like someone turned on a light as big as the sun! We will understand everything!



SLIDE 7

QUESTION & ANSWER



Q7a: Of all the gifts that God gives us, which is eternal?

A7: Love is eternal.

Q7b: Would you like to share a time when you recently felt loved?

TN: This can be a story about how they felt loved by God or by someone in their lives. Let the students tell their stories. That feeling of love is what God wants us to spread everywhere we go, and He has given us special gifts to help us do just that. Who doesn't want to make everyone experience such a fantastic feeling?! What a wonderful mission He has sent us on! This is an opportunity to connect the stories students tell with blessings they have received from God.



QUESTION & ANSWER

MEMORY VERSES

- ▶ **1 Corinthians 13:13:** So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

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BIG IDEA

- ▶ God has given us gifts to help spread His love.
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CLOSING PRAYER

- ▶ Dear Heavenly Father, thank You so much for blessing us with amazing spiritual gifts. Help us to use them in love as we seek to tell everyone we know about how wonderful You are. We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 1



God gives us many wonderful gifts, such as the ability to speak well, spiritual understanding, or a heart for giving to the needy. As the Apostle Paul worked to spread the Good News of Jesus, the church in a place called Corinth began to argue over which gift was the best. Paul wrote to this church to remind them that love is the most important gift of all. In fact, Paul would tell the church of Corinth that without love, every other gift God gives becomes meaningless. Love is the only way to use all other gifts as God intended.

SLIDE 2



Some people are gifted in speaking the truth of God. When people with this magnificent gift are filled with the love of God and speak about what He has done in their lives, their audiences stop and listen. Their words help to teach about Jesus and to open otherwise cold, hard hearts. But without love, these same words are empty and have no meaning. The Apostle Paul said without love, a person with this gift is “a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”

SLIDE 3



People gifted with spiritual understanding of who God is and His mighty power know what God is capable of and what that means for our lives. People with this gift who are filled with the love of God can confidently face any difficult situation and never fear because they know God is more powerful than anything they may encounter. The Apostle Paul writes that while people with this gift can have a faith that moves mountains, without love, such miracles will look like nothing more than cheap magic tricks.



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 4



God gives some people hearts that care for others. Whether they are giving money, time, or talent, these people are following Jesus' command to love others as Jesus loves us. But Paul explains that if a person gave away everything, including his own life, he gains nothing if it is done without love. Without love, the giving this person does is not meant to help others and glorify God, but is an attempt to show how great the giver is.

SLIDE 5



So, if these powerful and wonderful gifts are nothing without love, what is love? Paul explains that love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous of what other people have, and it does not brag or act proud. Love is not rude, selfish, or quick-tempered. Love doesn't keep a list of all the wrong or bad things everyone has ever done. Love does not find happiness in evil things, but is delighted by the truth. Ultimately, love is outward, giving, and selfless. It's no coincidence that these descriptions of love also describe Jesus. Jesus is love.

SLIDE 6



Paul explained how temporary these gifts are using the example of a child growing up. When children mature into adults, they can see life as bigger than themselves and their own personal needs. According to Paul, on Earth, we are like children—we can only see part of the picture—but in Heaven, we will have an understanding that is perfect and true. In Heaven, we will fully grow up in Christ!



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 7



Love is so important for us to focus on because, of all the magnificent gifts God gives us, love is eternal. Love is at the heart of everything God does and asks us to do, making it something we should focus our lives on. The love we experience on Earth is good, but in the presence of God once we're in Heaven, love will not only be felt, but also will be seen. When we see the face of God, we will truly know what love is!