



**Goal:
Love God!**

Scripture Verses:

1 John 5:1-5

Matthew 10:37

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

1 Peter 1:8

So much babble about love on television, in music, at home, and in the church. "I love the way you did your hair..." "I'm in love with..." "You'll really love this new car..." "We should love Jesus with all our heart..." How is anyone supposed to know what love is really all about?

With this lesson you'll help kids learn what it means to love Jesus and discover what Jesus means when He commands us to love.

Choose Your Opening

Option 1: Love Operation

(For this activity, choose kids/adults to play the parts of Dr. Brain, Dr. Heart, and Dr. Stomach. They will each be trying to convince everyone that love is centered in the part of the body they're representing.)

Ask for a volunteer to participate in a brief improvised skit. Have that person lie down on a table or couch. **Say:** We have a bit of a problem checkup, but I'm not sure where to look to find it. So I've invited three specialists to see if they can find the patient's love and remove it.

Invite the three doctors (Dr. Brain, Dr. Heart, and Dr. Stomach) to each describe the procedure they'd use to remove the person's love. Have each doctor tell where the love is located and why he or she thinks it's in that area of the body.

For example, Dr. Brain might explain that love is located in the brain because it's something intellectual. Or Dr. Heart might say it's located in the heart because it's an emotional thing. Dr. Stomach might explain that love is usually found in the stomach—the place where pizza ends up.

Encourage the doctors to outdo each other in their explanations. Then allow group members to ask questions of the doctors.

After the skit, **say:** We hear the word "love" used for everything from our favorite food to an expression of the relationship between two people about to be married. But what is true love? And what does it mean to truly love Jesus? Today we'll explore the importance of loving Jesus.

Option 2: Extreme Love

Form a circle. Ask for a volunteer to go first in creating an extreme expression of love. To do this, the person will face someone in the circle and complete the following sentence: "My love for you is..."

Have the volunteer complete the sentence with a comparison such as "...as deep as the ocean" or "...as mushy as day-old oatmeal." Then the person he or she is speaking to must counter with his or her own outrageous expression of love within seven seconds. If this person can't respond with a new expression of love within the time limit, he or she must take the place of the first volunteer and face someone else in the circle. Encourage kids to outdo one another with outrageous comparisons (humorous or just plain hard to believe).

After the game, **say**: We've had a little fun playing with the idea of love. But what does love really look like? And how can we express love in our relationships with Jesus? Today we'll explore why it's important to love Jesus—and how to show our love to him.



Solid as a Rock

(For this activity, you'll need one Bible for each child. Write the following Scripture references on a sheet of paper: Matthew 10:37; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3; 1 Peter 1:8; and 1 John 5:1-5. Fold the paper, and place it under a large rock in the center of the room so that it can't be seen.)

If possible, form a circle around the rock. Then **Say**: Soon I'm going to assign each of you a Scripture passage that sheds some light on what love is and how we're supposed to love Jesus. But first take a couple of minutes to brainstorm what you think might be under this rock.

After everyone brainstorms about what they think is under the rock, have each share what they think it is.

Ask: *What's it like to guess what might be under this rock?

*How is the way you guessed about what is under the rock like the way some people approach a relationship with Jesus?

*What's the best way to find out what's under this rock?

Have someone move the rock. Then pick up the a paper, and assign a Scripture passage from the list to each child. Distribute the Bibles. Have the kids look up and read the passages and then determine what it says about love (loving Christ, loving others, or love in general).

Now discuss the following questions:

*What "rocks" in our lives do we have to remove to love Jesus?

*What keeps us from loving Jesus more?

*According to the Bible, why is it important to love God?

*What are practical ways to help our love for God to grow?

Say: Love is a difficult concept to understand. But the Bible gives us a good picture of love. And it tells us that loving God should be one of our utmost goals. Let's use the next activity to examine ways to demonstrate our love for Jesus.



REFLECTION

Rocky Love

(For this activity, you'll need a Bible, a rock, newspaper, and a marker.)

Before your lesson, write the important phrases from 1 Corinthians 13 on newspaper.

Read 1 Corinthians 13 aloud to the kids. Then **Say**: Let's practice demonstrating our love by using this rock as the object of our love.

Give the kids four minutes to express their love for the rock through their words or actions. Remind kids to use the 1 Corinthians 13 definition of love, rather than the world's definition of love.

After 4 minutes, **Ask**:

- *What was it like to demonstrate love toward a rock?
- *How is this like the way God might feel when he demonstrates his love for us?
- *How did God demonstrate his love for us?
- *How can we respond to God's love?

Allow the kids to brainstorm ways to express love to Jesus as well as to each other. Encourage kids to come up with practical ideas, such as a random act of kindness for a person needing a helping hand.

Choose Your Closing

Option 1: Love Calls

(For this activity, have a cell phone available)

Place the phone in the center of the room, and have kids stand around it.

Say: Let's imagine that Jesus is going to call us on this phone in just a couple of minutes. He's going to ask us about our love for him and for those around us. Spend the next few minutes in silence, imagining what you might say to Jesus.

Allow a couple of moments for reflection, then have someone close the meeting by praying that everyone in the room would learn to love Jesus fully and to love others with a Christlike love.

Option 2: Love in Any Language

(For this activity, tape a sheet of newsprint to the wall, and have markers and paper available.)

Say: We can express our love to Jesus in many ways through our words and actions. To remind us of the importance of loving Jesus, we're going to create a unique picture that symbolizes our love.

Let kids brainstorm symbols that could represent each of the letters in the phrase "I love Jesus." For example, someone might suggest a picture of an eye for the letter "I" or a heart shape for the letter "o". Then have kids draw the shapes on the newsprint to create a picture of their love for Jesus.

Have kids each copy the symbols onto a piece of paper to keep with them in their bedroom. Encourage kids to use the symbols often as a reminder of the importance of loving Jesus and one another.

Close by having kids express their love for Jesus with one-word prayers acknowledging the characteristics of Jesus they most appreciate, such as "comfort", "peace", "hope".