



# Love One Another

**Goal:** To practice loving one another.

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7-11, 20-21

One of the outstanding features of Jesus' teaching is the way he taught by example as much as by words. John's Gospel tells us that, while Jesus was eating his last meal with his disciples, he got up, tied a towel around his waist as if he were a servant, and washed the feet of the disciples. He told them that he was setting them an example—to be servants to one another. Then Jesus gave the disciples a new commandment: love one another. His words were clear: love one another the way I have loved you. He had served as an example of love to them, and soon he would offer up himself in the ultimate act of love: laying down his life on behalf of his friends and the whole world.

The Epistles of John follow closely the theology and tradition established by the Gospel of John. Although it is unclear which came first, the Gospel or the Epistles, their relationship with one another is deep and inextricable. So what scholars call the "Johannine community" would be familiar with these teachings around love for one another as a reflection of love for God. It's important to recognize that the wording of these texts is clear that God's love precedes our love for one another. In fact, the only way we can love one another as much as God requires is because God first loved us. Just as Jesus was an example of that love to his disciples (us), we become an example of that love for others to see.

### . . . In Your Children's Experiences

Children first learn about love from being loved, and readily return that love to caring adults. For children whose home life is troubled, whether by poverty, violence, or addiction, the lessons of love can be distorted. Whatever a child's background, they are loved unconditionally by God, and that knowledge is foundational to a child's faith. Most children, even at a very young age, can easily identify people they love and who love them. They can understand that loving God, whom they cannot see, might be easier than loving someone whom they can see, and who might do or say things that the child finds upsetting. Connecting the feeling of love to the concrete actions of love will help them grasp the ideas presented in the Scripture.

### . . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Sometimes, it is helpful to remember that, of all the things the children might learn from you and with you in Sunday school, the love you have for them is probably what they will remember most. Yes, preparation is important, but not as important as your relationship with the children in your care.

*Loving God, may I be an example of love  
and service to the children in my care. Amen.*



## Supplies

**Music & Melodies**  
(MM) 2023–2024

**Stories, Colors & More**  
(SCM) i–iv, 12, 27

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

candle

green cloth

bowl of water

towel

plate

a cup or chalice

## Responding

### Claiming

copies of **Grace Notes**  
(GN) 1

### Celebrating

**SCM 12a, 12b**; sidewalk  
chalk

### Offering

toys to wash from  
nursery or young  
children’s space, large  
plastic tub(s), dish soap,  
water, sponges, towels

### Extra

copies of **GN 2** and  
**GN 3**, brass fasteners

## GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” and “Offering God’s Grace” require more prep.

### Welcoming and Preparing

**LG** **T**

Greet the children by name and with the words “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”

Invite children to help prepare the worship space. Provide a Bible, a candle, a green cloth, a bowl of water, a towel, a plate, and a cup or chalice to arrange on the table. Have children make signs that read “Love One Another” to place on and around the table.

As children work together to prepare the worship space, ask them to describe a time when they felt especially loved. Be sure to share your own experience too.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Invite three volunteers to practice the Scripture reading for today.

### Singing

Gather around the worship table. Play, listen to, and sing “I Have Washed Your Feet”—**MM 30**; **SCM 27**—to celebrate Jesus’ act of service and love as an example for us to follow.

### Praying

**C** **B**

Turn on the candle, reminding the children that the light represents Jesus the Christ and the light he brings into the world. Invite the children to close their eyes and breathe deeply. Encourage them to imagine being with Jesus when he taught his followers how God wants us to live and love. Ask them to think about people who love them: family members, teachers, coaches, friends. Tell the children that you will pray a “popcorn prayer,” offering a couple of sentences in prayer and then pausing for them to “pop” in and name the people who have come to mind. Explain that it is all right if more than one person “pops” at a time. Pray:

God, we give you thanks for the grace of people who show us  
love. We thank you for . . .

Help us, God, to be people who show love to others. Amen.



- B** Activities involving more than one child speaking at the same time may escalate into a volume competition. Remind children to respect others and be polite.

### Preparing to Hear the Story

M MS

Call attention to the bowl and towel and the plate and cup or chalice on the worship table. Ask children to recall what they may know about those items from stories about Jesus and his disciples. Tell them that today's story will tell them something about when Jesus used these items and what they meant.

Lead the children in stretching their bodies by raising their arms high and standing on their tiptoes, bending over and letting their fingertips touch the floor, placing their hands on their hips and twisting at the hips to the left and right. Then have them be seated comfortably to listen to the story.

### Hearing the Story

LD L MS

Invite one of the children to find John 13 in the Bible. Have a volunteer read John 13:34–35. Then have another child find 1 John 4 in the Bible. Have two volunteers read 1 John 4:7–11 and 20–21. Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.” Place the open Bible on the table.

Read the story again using **SCM 12** or listen to the story audio. Tell the children to listen for the words *love* and *loved*. Invite them to stand up when they hear one of the words, then sit down when they hear one of the words again. If sitting and standing are difficult for someone in your group, suggest that the children all raise and lower hands.



Today's story can be found in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), [www.pcusastore.com](http://www.pcusastore.com).

### Reflecting on God's Grace

L MS C B

Invite children to identify two examples Mahir and Leyla heard of Jesus showing love to his disciples.

Re-read this excerpt:

That night, Jesus washed the feet of his friends and then gathered his friends for a meal, giving them bread to eat and a cup to drink. Mahir, Leyla, and the others were reminded that Jesus told his followers, “I have a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Form two groups and let them use the items from the worship table to create “Still Shots”—one for Jesus washing the disciples' feet



and one for him sharing communion. Tell them to imagine they are a living photo, and provide several minutes for them to create and share their scenes.

Wonder together:

- ▼ Imagine that, after hearing Jesus tell them to love one another, one of the disciples asked, “But why?!” What might Jesus have said?
- ▼ Is it ever hard to love others?
- ▼ What does it mean to “love one another”? How do we do that?

### Singing

Sing “I Have Washed Your Feet”—**MM 30; SCM 27**. Add rhythm instruments.

Turn off the candle.

## RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and the time available.

### Claiming God’s Grace



Consider concrete actions of love. Recall Leyla and Mahir’s experience. They heard the teaching of the importance of loving others, and then they acted to show love to one another. Ask children to describe what love feels like. Hand out copies of **GN 1** and invite the children to respond to the prompts with words or pictures.

When the children have completed their poems, ask children to share what they have written or drawn, as they feel comfortable doing so. Display their poems in the room.



### Celebrating God’s Grace



Hunt for hearts. Tell the children that love can be shown and found anywhere! Some people practice “hunting for hearts” and even believe that finding a “heart” can be a reminder of God’s love. Show **SCM 12a** and **SCM 12b**. Heart shapes could be found in trees, clouds, rocks, potatoes . . . anywhere! If your space allows it, take the children outdoors for a “heart hunt” to see if they can find hearts in surprising places. Celebrate when one is found! Encourage them to keep up this practice, looking everywhere for reminders of God’s love and our call to share it.

Provide sidewalk chalk for the children to decorate a sidewalk with hearts and the words “Love One Another” so that others will see the reminder as they enter or exit the building. If a sidewalk is not available, use the chalk and white or black paper. Post drawings at entrances to the church.



**TD** *Some children struggle with textures. Chalk is a common trigger and can cause feelings of nausea or anxiety. Give advance warning and provide options such as paint markers or sponge-tip squeeze bottles. Allow the child to wash their hands if needed.*

### Praying God's Grace

**A T M**

Provide heavy paper, paint, and paintbrushes. Ask:

- ▼ What do you imagine the world would be like if everyone took Jesus' instruction to "Love one another as I have loved you" seriously?
- ▼ How would you feel if the world were like what you are imagining?

Invite the children to create an image with the paints that is a symbol of the way Jesus loves us.

Encourage them to work silently. Once children are done, offer a prayer asking God to help us to love others as Jesus loves us.



### Offering God's Grace

**B M MS T TD**

*Before the session, gather nursery toys that the children can wash.*

Remind the children that Jesus washed the disciples' feet as a demonstration of love and service. Explain that he set an example for us to follow to show others the same love. Suggest that, instead of washing people's feet, the children can show love for the young children in your church by washing their toys.

Invite the children to help you set up washing and drying stations. For a washing station, have a child squirt dish soap into a large plastic tub (or two, if needed). Have other children fill the tub(s) about half-full with warm water. Provide sponges. Have the children set up a drying station with towels.

Have the children decide who will be at each station or if they will rotate stations. Play music while the children wash and dry the toys.

Invite the children to create a cheer to tell the young children that they love them. Have the children offer the cheer as they return the clean toys to the young children's space.

### Extra Activity

**C**

Distribute copies of **GN 2** and **GN 3**. Read the words on **GN 2**. Invite the children to make a "Love Is . . ." wheel to share with their family, using the following steps:

- ▼ Using their creativity, decorate **GN 2**.
- ▼ Cut the shape along the dotted lines.
- ▼ Push a brass fastener through the center circle and set aside.
- ▼ Write or draw six things that love is to them in the spaces around the circle on **GN 3**.



- ▼ Cut the circle along the dotted lines.
- ▼ Punch the brass fastener through the center hole and open it.

Invite the children to hold the upper circle and turn the lower circle to reveal each of the sections. Have the children form pairs and experience their “Love Is . . .” circle with their partner. Encourage the children to take the circles home and share them with their family.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit [www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads). Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Invite children to gather, and lead them in cleaning up the worship space.

Thank them for their creativity and the ways they shared today with one another. Wonder together how the children can show love to others this week.

Have the children form a circle. Turn to the person on your left and offer the following blessing as you place a heart sticker on their hand:

*(Name)*, you have been called by God to love one another.  
Jesus has shown us how. Go in love.

Invite the children to take turns doing the same.

# What Love Is Like













