



# Love Is . . .

**Goal:** To explore the importance of love in our lives.

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In 1 Corinthians 13

The chapter on love occurs in the section of Paul's letter dealing with spiritual gifts. The chapter just before this one features Paul's discussion of the body of Christ and the importance of each member of the body and his or her unique gifts. At the end of chapter 12, Paul wrote, "But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way" (v. 31). Of all the gifts of the Spirit, the greatest gift, the one that holds the community of faith together, is love (Greek *agape*).

*Agape* compares to the Hebrew term *hesed*, a word difficult to translate. They refer to the undeserved, unconditional love that human beings experience from God through Christ. This love we have so graciously received, and we are to give this love graciously to one another as friends, enemies, and members of the body of Christ. Paul lists some characteristics of love: patient; kind; and not envious, boastful, or rude. These words could describe God's love for us. They are also words for us to aspire to in our relationships with others.

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

Children naturally give and receive love. A child's ability to love and be loved is enhanced or diminished by the responses of family and friends to her or his expressions of love. From early on, children wrestle with what it means to love. Jealousy and boasting begin to creep into the ways children relate to one another. Siblings and playmates experience jealousy. We have all heard a child boast to another that he or she is better at everything from kickball to counting. Patience is a struggle. While children may not know the words that describe the actions and emotions they express, these concepts are not foreign to them.

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

Since children learn through experience, they will learn how to love by watching others. As you demonstrate your love and concern by greeting them with a smile and asking about their weeks, they will begin to trust in your love. And as they trust you, they learn to trust in God's love reflected in you.

*God of love, thank you for your love.  
May I be a reflection of your love to the children in my care.*



## Supplies

### Music & Melodies

[bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies](http://bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies)

### Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 8, 17, 20

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)  
(see p. vii)

internet-connected  
device

candle

green cloth

photographs of your  
church family and  
events

poster board

rhythm instruments

## Responding

### Celebrating

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

### Praying

newsprint from  
“Hearing the Story”

### Offering

copies of **GN 2**

### Extra

copies of **GN 3**, copies  
of **GN 4**

## 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.

Gather photographs of your church family and church events, old and/or recent. You will use these pictures in the next session as well. Cut two sheets of poster board in half, making four panels.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” requires more prep.

### Welcoming and Preparing

Play “God Gives Us a Gift (Dios nos da un regalo)” —as the children arrive. Welcome each child with, “Grace and peace be with you, (*Name*).” Prompt children to respond “And also with you.”

Invite children to help prepare the worship space. Provide a green cloth and photographs of your church family to place on the table. Lay out four panels of poster board and markers; invite some children to prepare the panels to form the word “LOVE”—one panel with an “L,” one with “O,” and so on. Encourage them to write their letters however they wish and to decorate around the designated letter. When the posters are completed, lean the panels against the worship table so the word “LOVE” is spelled out.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Today’s Scripture reading is long. Decide if you would like to have volunteers read it aloud or read the story on **SCM 8**. Invite several volunteers to practice the reading.

As children prepare the space, engage in conversation over the most exciting thing that happened to them this week. Be sure to share too. Thank them for their efforts in preparing the worship space.

### Singing

Sing “God Gives Us a Gift (Dios nos da un regalo)” — **SCM 17**— which is sung in both English and Spanish. Use rhythm instruments to accompany the song.

### Praying

Turn on the candle, reminding us that Christ is the light of the world. Invite children to stand so that they have enough room to spread their arms without touching anyone else. Offer that you will lead them in a movement prayer—that they will use their bodies to pray and receive God’s love. Use the following directions for the prayer:

- ▼ Breathe in deeply, imagining God’s love filling you up, and then breathe out. (*repeat three times*)
- ▼ Stretch your arms up high.



- ▼ Cross your arms over your chest, imagining a loving hug.
- ▼ Stretch your arms wide, offering your love to others.
- ▼ Breathe in deeply, giving thanks to God, and then breathe out.  
(repeat three times)

**T** For children struggling with transitions, set clear expectations and let them know how long activities should take.

### Preparing to Hear the Story

Tell the children that today's story follows last session's story and is the next part of Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Paul uses a lot of figurative language, or word pictures, like he did when he compared us to parts of the body.

Review what synonyms, antonyms, and similes are. Remind children that a *synonym* is a word or phrase that means exactly or nearly the same as another word or phrase. Invite them to offer synonyms of these words (or add your own): sad, sleepy, funny, big, hungry.

Offer that an *antonym* is a word opposite of another word. Invite the children to offer antonyms of the same words and any you may have added.

Tell the children that a simile is a comparison using the word *like* or *as*. Paul said that the members of the church are "like" parts of the body. Ask the children to give examples of similes.

### Hearing the Story

Invite a child to find 1 Corinthians 13 in the Bible. Have volunteers read the chapter or **SCM 8**. 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 worship table.

Invite children to listen carefully for Paul's word pictures as similes and descriptions of love in synonyms and antonyms as you read the story again using **SCM 8**. After you have read the story, ask the children to name the similes, synonyms ("love is . . ."), and antonyms ("love is not . . .") they heard. Write them on a sheet of newsprint. Hand out paper and crayons, and invite the children to draw a picture of one of the words Paul used to describe love.



### Reflecting on God's Grace

Invite the children to share their pictures with the group. After each child shows their picture, ask if it depicts what love is (a synonym) or what love is not (an antonym). Have them make a title saying, "Love is . . ." or "Love is not . . ."

Engage the children in conversation about what Paul has to say about love, using the following questions:

- ▼ Why do you think Paul wrote about love to the church in Corinth?
- ▼ What does this story teach us about God?



- ▾ What does it tell us about our relationships with others?
- ▾ What is hard about love? Why?

### Singing

Sing “Jesus Taught Us How to Love”—**SCM 20**.  
Turn off the candle.

## RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

### Claiming God’s Grace



Invite the children to create their own love posters. Provide each child with a piece of card stock and painter’s tape. Show them how to use the tape to spell the word “LOVE” on their papers. Have them use crayons to color their sheets, particularly coloring over and around the tape so that the letters will show when the tape is removed. Encourage their creativity. Reflect on the story together. Have a conversation about the attributes of love that they heard and ways they know that God and people they know demonstrate any of these characteristics.

When the children have finished coloring, have them remove the painter’s tape to show the word “LOVE.” Invite the children to choose four of the characteristics of love that they like most, find most challenging, want to remember, or experience from God and others. Using a marker, have them write one of each of their chosen words or phrases in each letter of “LOVE.” Help with writing as needed. Encourage the children to share their posters with their families.

**MS** *As you select and plan activities, think about the space children will need to maneuver a wheelchair, walker, crutches, or casts.*



### Celebrating God’s Grace



Tell the children they are going to play a game to put into practice what love is and what love isn’t. If you have more than six children, form groups of three or four children. Give each group fifteen sheets of scrap paper, a die, and a copy of **GN 1**. Have them number the sheets with large numbers 1–15 and lay them out in a path on the floor. Use the following directions to play the game:

- ▾ Begin with the child whose birthday is next in the calendar, and take turns accordingly.
- ▾ Roll the die and move ahead that number of spaces.
- ▾ Using **GN 1**, read and follow the directions for that numbered space. For example, if you land on space 6, read 6: “Love hopes all things. Tell about something you imagine God hopes for the world.”



- If you move ahead or back during a turn, your turn is over. You do not read another direction on that turn.
- To finish the game, you must land on space 15 exactly. Each turn you may advance toward 15; otherwise, you will stay in place until your next turn. You do not need to follow the directions again if you are staying in place.
- Play for a designated period of time or until everyone has made it through the game board.

### Praying God's Grace



Invite the children to pray about different qualities of love. Provide the children with large craft sticks and markers. Suggest that the children choose one quality of love from the list made in “Hearing the Story” and write it on the stick. Assist children with writing as needed. Have the children place their sticks into a cup. Pass the cup around, and invite each child to pull a stick out of the cup. Assist children with reading as needed. Lead the children in prayer, using the following directions:

- Read the word on the stick you are holding.
- Say the word silently, in your mind, several times.
- Consider how God might ask you to do this action with others.
- Ask God to help you pay attention to this during the week.
- Ask God to fill you with love that never ends.

Close with the following prayer:

Loving God, we thank you for loving us in all these ways and more. May we reflect your love to all we know and meet. Amen.

### Offering God's Grace

Remind the children that Paul wrote a letter to the church in Corinth to encourage them. Tell the children that they are going to write letters to your church family. Draw attention to the pictures of your church family that are on the worship table. Wonder together about ways your church is loving to one another and to the community you live in. Pose the question if there might be other ways your church could show love.

Hand out **GN 2** and invite children to use it to guide them in writing a letter to the leaders of your church. Read aloud the letter. Tell the children that they may write or draw a picture in the blank spaces provided. At the end of the letter, where there are two lines, have them choose one of the attributes that love is and one that love isn't and write those on the lines provided. Assist with writing as needed.

When the children have completed their letters, be sure to pass them on to your pastor or clerk of session to be shared.



A M L

### Extra Activity

*Before the session, cut copies of GN 3 apart so that each child will have a heart.*

Tell the children they will make a “Love Is” plate to remind them of ways they can be loving each day. Provide two paper plates, a copy of GN 4, and a heart for each child. Have scissors, markers, and craft supplies for the children to share.

- ▼ Show the children how to trace around the heart on the back side of a paper plate, then collect the plates.
- ▼ Invite the children to decorate the hearts on GN 4, cut them out, and place them faceup on the other paper plate.
- ▼ While they are working, cut the heart shape from the paper plates for the children.
- ▼ Show the children how to fold the ziplock top of a clear plastic sandwich bag down and tape the bag over the back side of the cutout heart, making a heart-shape window in the plate. (Folding the ziplock part of the bag will allow the bag to fit on the plate without corners sticking out.)
- ▼ Encourage the children to decorate the front of the plate.
- ▼ Have the children place the window plate on top of the other plate with the decorated hearts holding the edges together while you staple around the edges. Consider adding painter’s or masking tape to cover the staples.



Encourage the children to shake the “Love Is” plate each morning and read the heart in the center. Challenge them to practice that form of love for the day.

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Lead children in cleaning up the space.

Gather around the “LOVE” panels at the worship table. Invite children to talk about some of the ways they can show God’s love this week.

If children created a love poster during “Claiming God’s Grace,” encourage them to take it and use it to tell someone in their house about their story. If they drew a stick during “Praying God’s Grace,” invite them to take it and use that word as a reminder this week of how to be loving.

Send each child with a blessing, saying, “(Name), God loves you and God’s love never ends.”



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to [www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads), where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

<b>1</b>	Love is . . . Name one thing that “love is” that you heard in our story.
<b>2</b>	Love is not . . . Name one thing from our story that “love is not.”
<b>3</b>	Love is patient . . . You waited patiently for your turn while playing with a friend. <i>Move forward 2 spaces.</i>
<b>4</b>	Love is not rude . . . You were rude to your brother when he asked you to share your snack. <i>Go back 2 spaces.</i>
<b>5</b>	Love means being kind. Tell about a kind thing someone has done for you recently.
<b>6</b>	Love hopes all things. Tell about something you imagine God hopes for the world.
<b>7</b>	Love does not brag. You bragged about your new device. <i>Move back 3 spaces.</i>
<b>8</b>	Love does not get jealous. You were genuinely happy when your friend got a higher test score than you because you know she worked really hard. <i>Move forward 3 spaces.</i>
<b>9</b>	Love doesn’t insist on getting its own way. Tell about a time you were able to compromise with someone else.
<b>10</b>	Love is . . . Name one thing that “love is” that you heard in our story.
<b>11</b>	Love is not . . . Name one thing from our story that “love is not.”
<b>12</b>	Love endures all things. God’s love will never end! <i>Celebrate by moving forward 2 spaces.</i>
<b>13</b>	Love is not happy when other people suffer. A child you don’t like got in trouble and you were glad. <i>Move back 2 spaces.</i>
<b>14</b>	Name the three gifts our story told us that God gives us to help us.
<b>15</b>	Which gift that God gives us is the greatest?







Dear Church Family,

Today we have learned about Paul's letter to his friends at the church in Corinth. Paul wrote to them about what love looks like.

Thank you for the ways our church shows love to one another, ways like \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

And thank you for the ways we show love to the community by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

I wonder if we could also show love by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

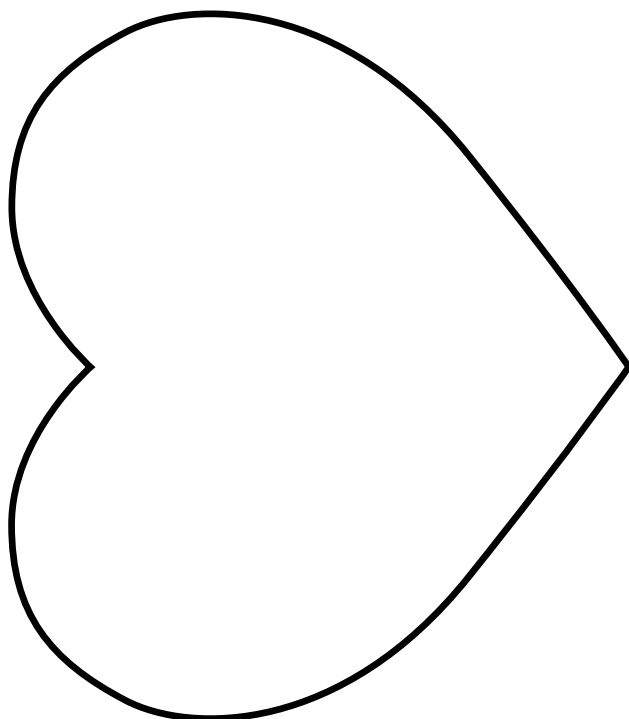
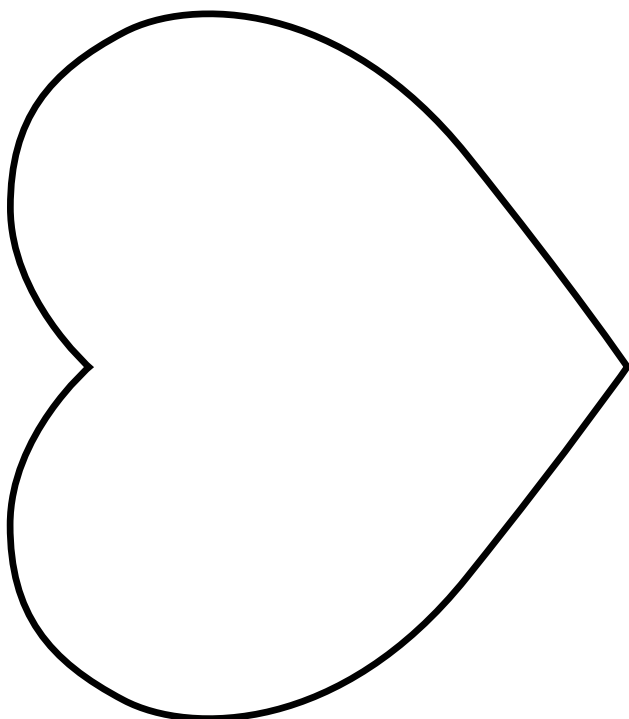
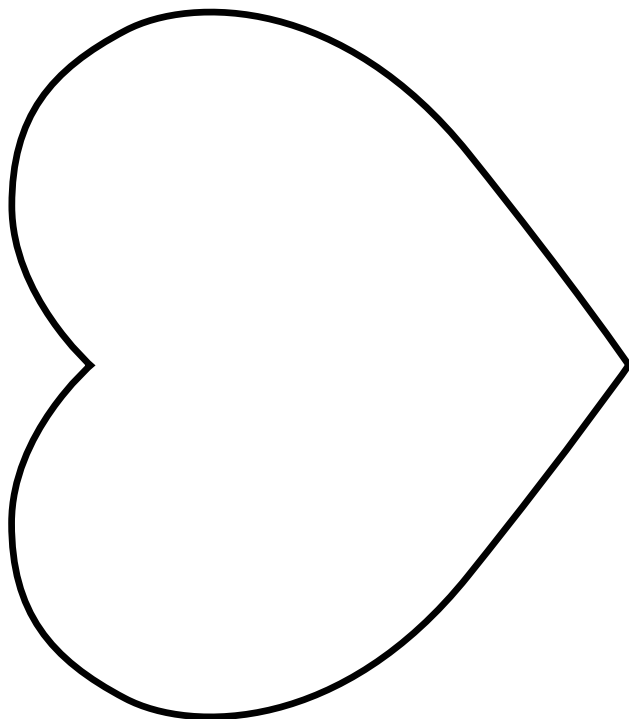
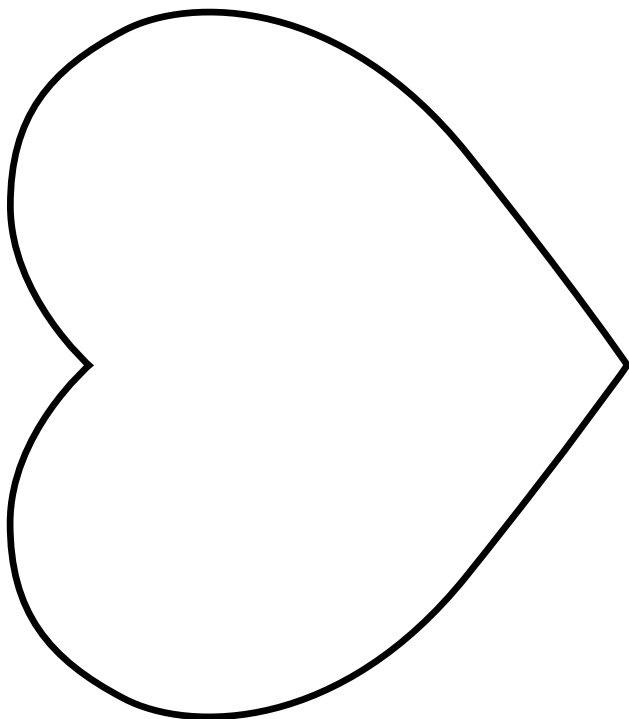
I have learned that love is \_\_\_\_\_  
and that love is not \_\_\_\_\_.

I am grateful for the grace of a loving church.

Love,

\_\_\_\_\_







**Love is  
patient.**

**Love is kind.**

**Love is not  
jealous.**

**Love is  
not rude.**

**Love doesn't  
brag.**

**Love doesn't  
get irritable.**

**Love doesn't  
insist on its  
own way.**

**Love doesn't  
keep score.**

**Love isn't  
happy with  
injustice.**

**Love is happy  
with what's  
right.**

**Love bears  
all things.**

**Love believes  
all things.**

**Love hopes  
all things.**

**Love endures  
all things.**

**Love is never  
ending.**

