

LESSON 1

God Is Three in One

The Trinity has been described by some theologians as the Divine Riddle: “One makes three and three makes one.” This essential aspect of the nature of God as three in one is important for children to know and understand. The word *trinity* is a shortened version of *tri-unity*. Although the Trinity isn’t found in the Bible, the truth of God as three in one is scattered throughout the pages of Scripture. In this lesson, you’ll help kids discover that God really is three in one and that they can have a friendship with the one God who is God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Scripture Foundation

2 CORINTHIANS 13:14

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit work together.

DEUTERONOMY 6:4

Moses reminds the people that the Lord is our God and the Lord is one.

MATTHEW 28:19

Just before ascending into heaven, Jesus instructs his disciples to baptize all nations in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

JOHN 14:9

Jesus tells us that anyone who has seen him has seen God.

JOHN 14:16-17

Jesus promises that God will send the Helper, “the Spirit of truth.”

THIS LESSON AT A GLANCE

SEQUENCE	EXPERIENCES	SUPPLIES
SET THE FOUNDATION (about 10 minutes)	<i>Perfect Agreement</i> Kids will form trios and move through an obstacle course to experience working as three in one.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • various items for making a simple obstacle course
PRESENT THE BIBLE FOUNDATION (about 25 minutes)	<i>Different but the Same</i> Kids will peel hard-boiled eggs to connect the idea of God as three in one.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bibles • 1 hard-boiled egg per child • 1 plate per child • napkins • wet wipes • crayons or stickers
BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION (about 10 minutes)	<i>Trinity Shield</i> Kids will each personalize a Trinity shield drawing and then share their responses with a friend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a copy of “Trinity Shield” hand-out for each child (p. 15) • crayons or markers • <i>optional</i>: CD of soft worship music, CD player

Before the Lesson

SET THE FOUNDATION: *Perfect Agreement*— Establish a simple obstacle course in your meeting area or a park if possible. Use chairs, tables, and other common items. If at a park, have kids go around a tree, under a swing, over the merry-go-round twice, and so on to return to the starting place. Choose safe and easy obstacles.

Perfect Agreement

(about 10 minutes)

SAY:

A long time ago, Christians would repeat a statement each week when they gathered for worship. They said something like this: “So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. And yet there aren’t three Gods but one God.” Let’s play a game to learn more about God as three in one.

Form trios. Have kids each choose one of these roles in their trios: Eyes (this person is the only one who can have open eyes), Feet (this person leads the way by taking steps while the other two follow), Mouth (this person hears directions from the Eyes and whispers to the Feet). Have trios move through the obstacle course. Allow a few minutes for the game.

ASK:

- What was it like moving through the obstacle course with your trio?
- What did your trio have to do to get back to the starting point?

SAY:

Just as there were three of you teamed up in this game, there are three persons in God—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Read aloud 2 Corinthians 13:14. John 14:16-17 and John 16:13.

SAY:

In these passages, we get a glimpse of what God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit do.

ASK:

- What do you learn about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit’s roles in these Scriptures?
- Which roles in your trio match the roles of the different parts of the Trinity?

- Just as in our game, why is it important that each part of the Trinity does the right part?

SAY:

It's hard to understand how God can be three persons and still be one God. But that's what the Bible tells us about God. Let's look more closely at what it means for God to be three in one.

PRESENT THE BIBLE FOUNDATION

Different but the Same

(about 25 minutes)

SAY:

Before we look at what the Bible says about God as three in one, let's take a look at how something can be different but the same.

Pass out a hard-boiled egg and a plate to each child. Have crayons or stickers available to decorate eggs.

SAY:

Let's decorate these eggs with symbols or pictures of what you think represents God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit from these Scriptures.

Have kids read Deuteronomy 6:4, Matthew 28:19, John 14:9, and John 14:16-17. Have kids decorate their eggs based on what they've read in these Scriptures. When it appears that most kids have finished decorating their eggs, ask willing kids to share their decorations with the entire group.

SAY:

Great job decorating your eggs. Now I want to show you something.

Take your own egg, with the shell still on, and cut it into halves with a serrated knife. Hold up the halves so kids can see them.



See page 8

ASK:

- How are the three parts different or the same?
- Why is each part dependent on the other three?

SAY:

Like the egg, God is three parts: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The shell can represent Jesus, whose body was fragile and broken. The yolk can represent God, who is set apart as holy from humans and is also the center. Finally, the egg white connects the shell with the yolk, which can represent the Holy Spirit.

Invite kids to have the egg as a snack, gently cracking the shell and enjoying the contents of the egg. Pass out napkins and wet wipes.

SAY:

Now that we've seen how the Trinity, like the egg, has three parts that form one whole, let's build on that.

BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION

Trinity Shield

(about 10 minutes)

Pass out a copy of the "Trinity Shield" handout to each child, along with markers or crayons. Play soft worship music in the background while kids draw, if you wish.

SAY:

Let's respond to God as three in one by coloring this Trinity shield.

SAY:

Take a few minutes to draw a picture or write words that describe what you think about God's unique role in your life as Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. For God as Father you might draw a picture or write something

about how he created the world or your body. For the Son or Jesus you might draw a picture of Jesus on the cross or rising from the empty tomb. For the Holy Spirit you might draw a dove or write something about how God comforts you when you're sad.

After giving kids 10 minutes to personalize their shields, ask them to pair up with a friend. Ask each of them to spend a few minutes sharing their pictures or words and talking about how they feel about God in each of the unique parts of the Trinity. After each child has had a turn to talk, ask kids to sit and hold their pictures while they pray silently and thank God for creating, saving, and comforting them.

For your closing prayer, have kids each think of one word of thanks about each of the three-in-one aspects of God.

PRAY:

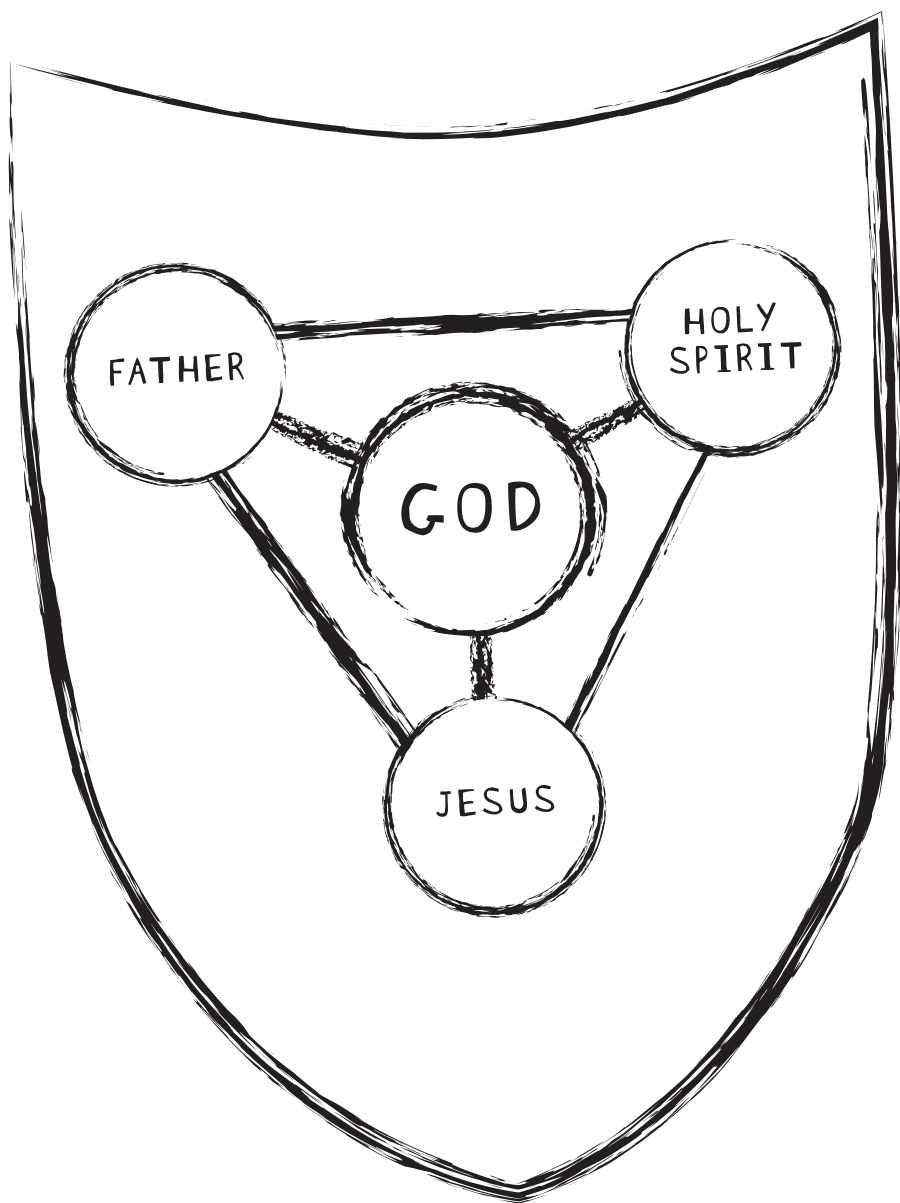
God the Father, thanks for creating me. When I think about how you created me and the beautiful world we live in, the one word I want to tell you is...[let kids say a word].

God the Son, Jesus, thanks for coming to earth. When I think about how you lived your life, died on the cross, and then rose from the grave, the one word I want to say to you is...[let kids say a word].

God the Holy Spirit, thanks for living inside me. When I think about how you help me be more like you, I want to tell you...[let kids say a word].

Close your time together with the benediction from 2 Corinthians 13:14. Point out to kids that if they listen, they'll hear in this one verse each specific name of our three-in-one God: **"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."**

Trinity Shield





LESSON 2

Jesus' Followers Accept God's Gifts Through Faith

Accepting God's gift of grace and love is the foundation of our relationship with Jesus and the starting point of our friendship with God. Until we recognize that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and accept this incredible gift, we won't fully know what it means to be followers of God. The same goes for your kids. Accepting Jesus' gift is based on abstract faith, and for literal-minded and practical kids, this can be tough to grasp.

This lesson will give kids hands-on experiences in trusting and accepting unwarranted gifts so they can better grasp what God's done for them. By taking away confusing language and examining God's gift to us through a simple object lesson, you'll show kids how easy it is to become Jesus' followers. You can help kids embark on their relationship with Jesus and look to build on that foundation for the rest of their lives.

Scripture Foundation

JOHN 17:7-8

Jesus prays for his disciples.

EPHESIANS 2:4-9

Paul explains that we're saved by grace because of God's love.

THIS LESSON AT A GLANCE

SEQUENCE	EXPERIENCES	SUPPLIES
SET THE FOUNDATION (about 10 minutes)	<i>Grateful Gifts</i> Kids choose to accept or reject a gift based on its outward appearance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 mini or fun-size candy bar per child • fancy wrapping paper • small bow • transparent tape • scissors • pieces of scrap paper, each large enough to wrap a small candy bar • basket large enough to hold all the wrapped candy bars
PRESENT THE BIBLE FOUNDATION (about 25 minutes)	<i>Gift Wrap</i> Kids explore what Jesus says about God's gifts to them as they respond to writing prompts and then gift wrap the message.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • several kid-friendly Bibles (preferably NLT) • 1 copy per child of the "Gift Box" handout (at the end of this lesson) • pens • 1 pair of scissors per child • transparent tape
BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION (about 10 minutes)	<i>Tie It With a Bow</i> Kids write on ribbon and then use the ribbon to decorate their gift boxes as they thank God for the gifts he gives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fine-tipped markers • curling ribbon, 3/8-inch size • 1 pair of scissors per child • transparent tape • reflective music and music player (optional)

Before the Lesson

SET THE FOUNDATION: GRATEFUL GIFTS— Wrap a mini or fun-size candy bar for each child. Neatly wrap one candy bar in fancy wrapping paper and add a bow. Wrap the rest of the candy bars individually inside scrunched-up pieces of scrap paper.

PRESENT THE BIBLE FOUNDATION: GIFT WRAP— Copy the "Gift Box" handout, enlarging it to 122 percent. Use card stock, if desired, or you can use regular paper.

BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION: TIE IT WITH A BOW— Cut the curling ribbon into 12-inch lengths. You'll need five lengths per child.

Grateful Gifts

(about 10 minutes)

Welcome children, and have them sit in a circle.

ASK:

- Tell about the best gift you've ever received.



See page 8.

SAY:

Today I have a gift for each of you. It may not be the best gift you've ever received, but I chose these gifts with you in mind. You can decide whether to take the gift or not; it's up to you.

Show kids the gift wrapped in fancy paper and then all the other gifts wrapped in scrap paper, and then place all the gifts in a basket.

ASK:

- Explain which gift you'd prefer—and why.

Offer a gift from the basket to each child one at a time, including the nicely wrapped gift. As you do, remind kids that you chose the gifts for them and you think the gifts are special. Allow each child the option to choose to accept or reject the gift, and then move on to the next child. After offering a gift to everyone, let the kids who chose to accept a gift unwrap theirs.

ASK:

- Explain what it was like to accept your gift based on its outward appearance.
- Now that you know what the gift is, explain whether you wish you'd chosen differently.

Let kids who didn't accept a gift take one, and then have everyone enjoy their treats together.

SAY:

When you couldn't tell what the gift was based on its wrapping, you had to trust me when I told you you'd like it. God has gifts for you, too.

And just as you had to trust me that my gifts were good, the Bible tells us to trust God and accept his gifts through faith. Let's learn more about what the Bible says about God's gifts for us.

PRESENT THE BIBLE FOUNDATION

Gift Wrap

(about 25 minutes)

SAY:

One place the Bible talks about the gifts God has for us is in a prayer from Jesus. Let's check it out.

Read aloud John 17:7-8.

While praying, Jesus told God that his disciples knew that everything Jesus had was a gift from God.

ASK:

- Explain what gifts you think Jesus is talking about in this passage.
- Why do you think it's important that Jesus told his disciples about his gifts from God?

Then read Ephesians 2:4-9 aloud to the kids.

ASK:

- Describe some gifts God has given you.
- According to this passage, why do you think Jesus gave these gifts to you?

SAY:

Let's think some more about what these verses mean.

Encourage kids to spread out around the room. Give each child scissors, a pen, and a copy of the "Gift Box" handout. Instruct kids to carefully cut out the gift box on the solid lines.

Ask kids to spend time thinking about each phrase on the handout and then write down a short phrase based on what they've learned from the verses and what they know about God through their relationship with him. Be ready with examples for each phrase. Encourage kids to look back at Scriptures discussed in their Bibles if they need more direction.

After a few minutes, gather kids back together and demonstrate how to create the finished gift box. Make a crease along each dashed line, and then show kids how to tape each small folded lip to the back of the unattached square next to it so the words face inward. Continue taping each section until you've created a cube minus the bottom of the box. (The bottom remains open so kids can look inside and remember what they wrote in response to these verses.)

ASK:

- What kinds of things did you write about on your gift box?
- Explain why you have or haven't accepted these gifts God has for you.

SAY:

God's greatest gift to us is his Son, Jesus. God sent Jesus as a gift to us—to die for us—so we can be free of sin and death forever. When we believe that Jesus died on the cross for us and accept God's incredible gift, we become followers of God. We can accept God's gifts through faith. Let's thank God for his amazing gifts to us.

BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION

Tie It With a Bow

(about 10 minutes)

Give each child a fine-tipped marker and five strips of curling ribbon.

SAY:

Jesus is God's greatest gift to us. To follow Jesus, we have to accept this amazing gift through faith.

ASK:

- **Describe other gifts God has given us.** (Along with practical necessities, encourage kids to think about the spiritual gifts God's given them, such as love, joy, and peace.)

Ask kids to write one gift God has given them on each strip of the curling ribbon. Allow time.

Then show kids how to carefully run a ribbon along the sharpened edge of open scissors. Explain to kids that they'll curl each one of their ribbons. As they curl each ribbon, encourage kids to silently say, "God, thank you for the gift of [name what's written on the ribbon]." You may want to quietly play reflective music in the background while kids talk to God.

Give kids tape. Ask kids to continue to talk privately to God as they tape each ribbon to the top of their gift boxes from the previously activity. As they tape each ribbon, encourage kids to silently say, "God I accept your gift of...[name what's written on the ribbon]."

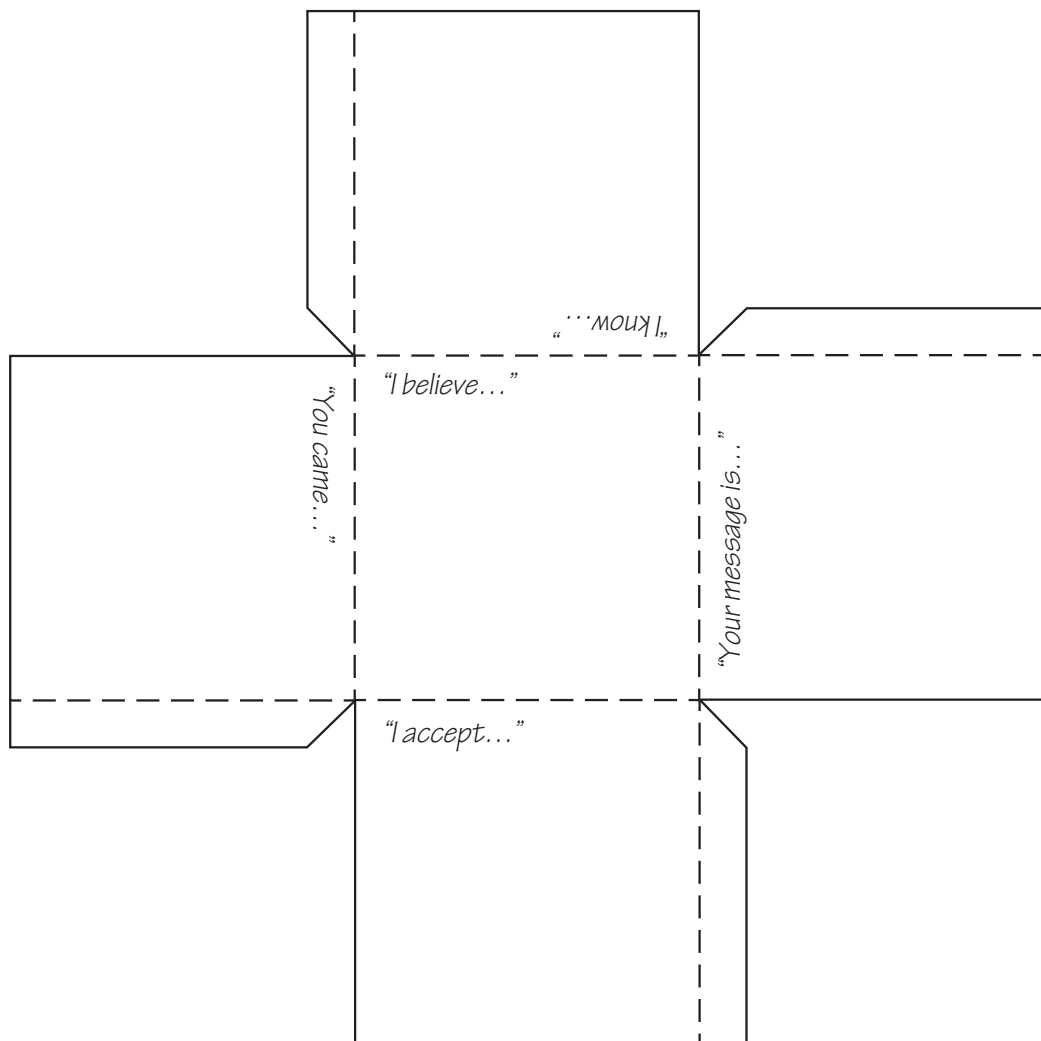
PRAY:

Dear God, you've given us more than we can ever understand or deserve. Help us to accept through faith the gift of Jesus' sacrifice and every other good and perfect gift you give us. Thank you for loving us! In Jesus' name, amen.

LEADER TIP


Kids may want to accept God's gift of Jesus' sacrifice as a result of this lesson. If you have a child who shows interest or has questions, talk with the child and follow your ministry's guidelines for walking a child through this life-changing commitment.

GIFT BOX



LESSON 1

We Love Each Other as God Loves Us



God's love is infinite. Unconditional. Limitless. He's the very definition of love. He showed the depth of his love by sending his Son as a sacrifice for our sins—the very thing that separated us from him. Is it possible for us to love others in the same way? It can be challenging to show love to those who frustrate us, hurt us, or are different from us.

The truth is, it's impossible to show that kind of love to others through our own efforts. The only way to love others the way God loves us is through the power of the Holy Spirit. When we love God with all our heart, his love shines through us and touches others. As you teach kids about loving others, encourage them by continually pointing back to the One who loved us first.

Scripture Foundation

1 PETER 1:22

God wants us to love each other as brothers and sisters.

1 JOHN 4:8-12

God loves us so we can love others.

JOHN 13:34

Jesus tells us to love others as he loved us.

THIS LESSON AT A GLANCE

SEQUENCE	EXPERIENCES	SUPPLIES
SET THE FOUNDATION (about 10 minutes)	<i>On One Condition</i> Kids will discover more about God’s unconditional love by earning a prize for their efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• small toys or trinkets (such as stickers or pencil toppers), 2 per preteen
PRESENT THE BIBLE FOUNDATION (about 25 minutes)	<i>Do the Math</i> Kids will use their own words to dig into the Bible, play a tasting game, and create math equations about God’s love.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• kid-friendly Bibles (preferably NLT)• paper• pens• bowl of jelly beans in assorted colors• poster board• marker
BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION (about 10 minutes)	<i>Filled With Love</i> Kids will compare a deflated and inflated balloon with what’s it like to be filled with God’s love.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• uninflated balloons, 1 per preteen• slips of paper, 1 per preteen• pens

SET THE FOUNDATION

On One Condition

(about 10 minutes)

Welcome kids, and announce that you've brought a special treat.

Have kids form two lines. Alternating between lines, ask kids to step forward one at a time to get a treat. Randomly ask some of the kids to do something to get the treat, such as sing a song or do jumping jacks. Other times, just give the treat freely. Be sure not to do the same thing for each line; change it up so kids don't know what to expect.

After everyone has had a turn, have kids sit down.

ASK:

- What was this experience like for you?
- What was it like when you had to work for your treat?
- What are some things people do to make their friends work for the treat of their friendship—instead of just giving friendship?

SAY:

It might seem strange to set up conditions for friendship, but we sometimes do this to one another. I have another toy to share. This time, though, you don't have to do anything at all to get it.

Give each person a small toy.

ASK:

- Explain why you think we sometimes put conditions on giving our love or friendship.
- Describe the conditions, if any, you think God puts on his love for us.

SAY:

Today we're going to discover what the Bible says about God's unconditional love.

Do the Math

(about 25 minutes)

Have kids form pairs, and give each pair a sheet of paper, a pen, and a Bible. Then read aloud 1 Peter 1:22.



See page 8.

SAY:

We're going to do a quick Bible study. I'm going to give each pair a different word from this verse. Partners will work together to come up with synonyms—words that mean the same thing as the word I give you. You'll have two minutes to write as many words as you can come up with.

Give each pair one of these words (it's okay for multiple pairs to have the same word): *cleansed, sins, obeyed, sincere, love, deeply.*

After two minutes, call kids together. Ask each pair to tell how many words they came up with. Congratulate everyone for their work.

Once again, read aloud 1 Peter 1:22 below and pause where indicated to let kids fill in their synonyms.

"You were cleansed (pause) from your sins (pause) when you obeyed (pause) the truth, so now you must show sincere (pause) love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love (pause) each other deeply (pause) with all your heart."

ASK:

- **What did the words you came up with teach you about what this verse means?**
- **What did our Bible study tell you about how God wants us to love one another?**
- **Tell about a time you felt this sincere kind of love from someone.**

SAY:

The Bible tells us to love each other; and sometimes that might seem like a challenge.

Set out the bowl of jelly beans. Have kids call out their favorite color of jelly bean

and form groups with kids who share a favorite color. Then give each person any jelly bean other than their favorite color, and ask them to eat it. As kids eat, have them share about a time it was hard for them to love someone (without naming names).

ASK:

- What did you think when you got stuck with a jelly bean you didn't especially like?
- What have you done when you've gotten stuck spending time with a person you don't like?

SAY:

Giving sincere love to one another can be challenging. But it's something God expects us to do. In fact, God has shown us what true love adds up to.

Read aloud 1 John 4:8, and then write this equation for God's love on a piece of poster board: $\text{Anyone} - \text{love} = \text{someone} - \text{God}$.

SAY:

Let's see if we can do the math again about God's love for verse 9.

Read aloud 1 John 4:9, and then write on the poster board $\text{God} + \text{love} + \text{Jesus} = \text{eternal life}$.

Now challenge kids to "do the math" as you read 1 John 4:10-12 one verse at a time and then write down suggested ideas on the poster board. It's okay if kids come up with different things. Dive in to help if necessary with ideas from the "It All Adds Up" box near the end of this lesson segment.

ASK:

- What did you learn about God's love from this Bible study?
- What does this mean: "Anyone who does not love does not know God"?
- How do these verses make you want to add God's love for others to your life?

SAY:

It can be challenging to love others unconditionally, especially when they hurt us or make us mad. But even though we sin and do wrong things, God sent his Son, Jesus, to die on the cross as a sacrifice to pay the price for our sins. We didn't deserve that kind of love from God, and

we can't earn it. It's unconditional. God did it simply because he loves us. When we love God with all our heart, he helps us show that same love to others. And Jesus says...Read aloud John 13:34.

IT ALL ADDS UP

Verse 10: Real love = God sending Jesus to - our sins

Verse 11: God + love = us + love for others

Verse 12: 0 = anyone who's seen God.

When we love each other = infinity

BUILD ON THE FOUNDATION

Filled With Love

(about 10 minutes)

Show kids a deflated balloon.



See page 8.

ASK:

- **What stopped this balloon from fulfilling its purpose?**
- **What stops you from loving others the way God wants you to?**

SAY:

A deflated balloon doesn't do much or serve its purpose very well. Our hearts are the same way. When we don't fill ourselves with God's love, we're empty and aren't able to love others the way God wants us to.

ASK:

- **What are ways we can fill our hearts with God's love?**

As kids offer answers, inflate the balloon. Explain to kids that this is like what happens to our hearts when we accept God's unconditional love and love others the same way.

Give everyone a slip of paper, a pen, and an uninflated balloon. On the slips of paper, have kids each write one way they can show God's love to someone this week. When everyone is done, have kids each roll up their slip of paper and put it inside their balloon. Have kids inflate and tie off the balloons.

PRAY:

Dear God, thank you so much for loving us. You know everything about us—when we do right and when we do wrong—and you still love us unconditionally. Help us follow your example and love others as you love us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Have kids toss their balloons in the air and let them fall to the ground. Then have kids each pick up the balloon closest to them. Encourage them to take the balloon home, pop it, and complete the action on the slip inside for someone this week.



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