

1

Love Extravagantly

LUKE 6:27-36



GOAL

Children become familiar with our call to love God, neighbor, and enemy and understand the Golden Rule as an application of this idea that transcends cultures and faith traditions.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

Loving God, may the wisdom of your holy Word guide our time as we seek to live into the command to love others as we love ourselves. Amen.

THIS SESSION

This unit begins with the Golden Rule. This will establish the basis for all six sessions as we explore this love that we are practicing, and how our actions in showing love for God, neighbor, and even enemy are connected. If we first commit to the idea of loving extravagantly, the rest will follow.

THE BIBLE STORY

Jesus' Sermon on the Plain in Luke, while perhaps not as familiar or poetic as Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, provides us with an indisputable set of commandments on loving others, and doing so extravagantly and generously.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

This story will challenge children, who often have cut-and-dried experiences of fairness and justice. In fact, Jesus' words may even contradict some of what they see in action! Adults can learn from children's deep capacity for compassion and forgiveness; these are the characteristics we want to lift up as we explore how to love extravagantly. At its core, the practice of love is more about who we are and how we decide to interact with others than it is about the worthiness of those to whom we extend kindness and love.

SESSION PREPARATION

- "Words of Love" (p. 8): Create two heart-shape templates from cardboard, one about 5 inches and one about 7 inches in size. Keep the templates for use in sessions 2–6. Cut out the heart from Resource Page 1.
- "Litany of Love" (p. 8): Write the words to the litany on a sheet of newsprint. Leave a good amount of space after each of the children's responses so that you may add their subsequent responses in sessions 2–6. Keep the litany for use in sessions 2–6.
- "Love WHO?" (p. 8): Prepare three sheets of newsprint, each with one of the following questions: Who is God, and why should we love God? Who are our neighbors, and why should we love them? Who are our enemies, and why should we love them?
- "Jesus Teaches Us to Love" (p. 9): If you do not have access to different Bible versions/translations, go to www.biblegateway.com and print the Luke 6:27–42 text from several versions.

Depending on the options you choose:

- "The Golden Ruler" (p. 11): Paint a 12" ruler gold or cover it with gold paper.



GETTING STARTED

- Heart cut out from Resource Page 1
- Construction paper (see sidebar note below)
- Prepared heart-shape cardboard templates
- Scissors
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils
- Tape or pushpins



Provide a variety of colors of construction paper or choose a different color for each session's hearts.

- Prepared newsprint with litany



Save the newsprint for sessions 2–6.

WORDS OF LOVE



Over the six sessions of this unit, you are invited to create a wall mural using hearts made by the children each session. You might want to create them in a specific pattern, in groupings for each session, or in random order. Feel free to display them in a way that works for your space and for your congregation: in your meeting space, in a hallway, or in a fellowship hall or other gathering space. For each session, there will be a prompt or question for the children to answer in words or drawings on their hearts.

Greet the children as they arrive and provide construction paper, scissors, drawing supplies, and the prepared heart-shape cardboard templates. Display the heart cut out from Resource Page 1 and draw the children's attention to it. Invite them to use one of the heart-shape cardboard templates to draw and cut out or make their own heart shape from the construction paper. Have them write or draw a response to the displayed question on the heart they made. Post the heart with the question on a wall or bulletin board and invite the children to add their hearts to the space, sharing their responses to the question.

LITANY OF LOVE

Display the prepared newsprint with the litany. Practice the children's response with them. Explain that *extravagantly* means more than a lot or over the top. Point out how the last two lines become our prayer and the response changes slightly. Invite the children to respond as you lead the litany.

We love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind
when we love extravagantly.
 We love our neighbor as ourself
when we love extravagantly.
 We love our enemies
when we love extravagantly.
 Lord, in your mercy,
may we love extravagantly.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

- Three sheets of prepared newsprint with questions
- Markers

LOVE WHO?



Tell the children that they are beginning a new unit to learn about the practice *Love God, Neighbor, Enemy*. Wonder if this is going to be a hard or easy practice to take on. Allow time for conversation, accepting all answers, and acknowledging that there are parts of loving God, neighbor, and enemy that are both easy and hard.

It is important to hear from the children how they define each of these three entities they are being instructed to love. Post the three sheets of prepared newsprint with questions. Consider each question, posing it to the

children and creating working definitions and understandings about God, neighbor, and enemy. Ask for volunteers to record answers on the newsprint while the children discuss the questions. Some commentary and prompts are provided for each question as you need it.

➔ Who is God, and why should we love God?

Children might share a trinitarian understanding of God as God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, and might use different names for God, such as *Father, Creator, Lord*, and others. Encourage them to brainstorm different names for God that might show God's wideness beyond just the usual names or descriptors that are used. Affirm that we love God because God created us, loves us, and has entrusted us to care for all that God has created in the world.

➔ Who are our neighbors, and why should we love them?

Encourage the children to share beyond just "the people who live near me" to define *neighbor* to mean a wider community than their understanding of the word may indicate. Even if we might not say the phrase "I love you" to our neighbors, classmates, or acquaintances, we show love when we are kind, when we share, and when we work together for common good.

➔ Who are our enemies, and why should we love them?

Although we may find ourselves bristling at the use of the word *enemy*, the fact is that Jesus used this word, and at some point, most of us have been so at odds with another person that they have felt like an enemy. When talking with children about enemies, be sure to separate the behavior from the person; people's actions may make them an enemy for a time, but there is always room for transformation, and there is no stronger means of transforming an enemy to a friend than through love.



Keep these newsprint sheets posted as reference in each session.

FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

JESUS TEACHES US TO LOVE

C

Tell the children that they will hear the Bible story from two or three different versions of the Bible. Explain that, through the years, as scholars have learned more about biblical times and the ancient Hebrew and Greek languages that the original Scriptures were written in, different versions and translations of the Bible have been produced. Comment that we can often understand a story in new ways by hearing it in different ways.

Hand out copies of Resource Page 2 and pencils and crayons. Review the graphic organizer with the children, reading aloud the prompts on it. Tell them that you will read two or three versions or translations of the Bible story from Luke 6:27–36, and that they should write or draw pictures on the graphic organizer of what they hear or notice.

Set the scene for the Bible story. Tell the children that, as a leader and teacher, many people followed Jesus to learn about God. One time, people gathered in a big field to hear Jesus, and he talked about how we love others.

Read aloud Luke 6:27–36 from one of the Bibles you have chosen. Invite the children to share words and observations that they made note of from

- Copies of Resource Page 2
- Pencils and crayons
- Two or three different Bible versions/ translations, such as New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition; Common English Bible; Good News Translation; The Message; and the New International Reader's Version

that reading. Then read from a second—and, if you choose, a third—version, each time asking the children to share additional reflections, notes, and new things that were noticed each time the story was read using a different translation or paraphrase.



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

-
- Internet-connected device
 - Paper
 - Markers, crayons, colored pencils
 - Smartphone or tablet

THE GOLDEN RULE



Ask the children if they know what the Golden Rule is. Tell the children that Jesus spoke about what is often called the Golden Rule and that words like it are found in many other religious traditions as well. Show the YouTube video “The Golden Rule” (bit.ly/FMGoldenRuleVideo, 1:32). Pause and read the words on the screen for each variation of the Golden Rule.

Discuss the following questions or some of your own:

- ✦ What commonalities did you notice among the different expressions of the Golden Rule?
- ✦ What were unique parts of the different versions, words used, relationships described, and so forth?
- ✦ Was there one version that particularly spoke to you? Which one and why?
- ✦ Why do you think words like the Golden Rule are common in the major faiths around the world?
- ✦ How might the world be different if everyone followed the Golden Rule?
- ✦ Faiths included in the video were: Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Taoism, and Hinduism. What (if anything) do you know about these other faiths? Does knowing that they have a Golden Rule to live by make you want to learn more about them?

Invite the children to work on their own or in pairs or triads and create their own rephrasing of this idea of the Golden Rule that they think might especially speak to their own lives. Tell the children that they can perform a skit or make a picture illustrating their version.

Take a video interspersing the skits and pictures. Share the children’s Golden Rule video with the congregation in a worship service or via an electronic communication method.



Follow your church’s social media guidelines and policy for sharing videos of the children in worship or on social media.

-
- Resource Page 3

LOVE YOUR ENEMY GUIDED MEDITATION



Invite the children to find a comfortable place to sit or lie down in a body position that they will be able to stay in for three to five minutes. Encourage them to close their eyes, or, if they are not comfortable having their eyes closed, to lower their gaze so that they are looking at their lap, the floor, or someplace where they will not get distracted. Lead the children through the guided mediation found on Resource Page 3, pausing when indicated or when a question is posed to allow a time of quiet for the children to process and consider the words and suggestions of the meditation.

Following the meditation, discuss any of the following or questions of your own:

- ✦ What word or phrase describes how you felt as you participated in this activity?

- How difficult was it to come up with someone who you are not getting along with?
- How did it feel to imagine treating them the same way you treat someone who you love so much?
- On a scale of one to ten, with one being easy and ten being very hard, how difficult would it be to treat the two people you thought of in the same way? Why?



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

THE GOLDEN RULER

D

Tell the children that you will play a drama game in which the children will form groups of three or four children, or work together as one group, to act out a situation in a way that might reflect a lack of love for God, neighbor, or enemy. Explain that one child in the group is “the golden ruler,” holding the golden ruler, and donning the crown if you choose to use one. As the children act out the scene in an unkind way, the “golden ruler” can wave the ruler like a wand and say the Golden Rule, in whatever way they choose, to apply the Golden Rule to the situation. The actors of that group will adjust their behavior to finish the scene in a way that applies the Golden Rule.

Use the scenarios cut from Resource Page 4 and/or invite the children to create situations of their own to present.

-
- Prepared ruler painted gold or covered in gold paper
 - Scenarios cut apart from Resource Page 4
 - A paper or costume crown (optional)

LOVE CHAIN

A C

As a group, brainstorm different ways to show love. Encourage a variety of examples: words, actions or service, physical affection, thoughtful gifts, and so forth. Write down suggestions on a sheet of newsprint. Once ten to fifteen different ideas have been generated, tell the children that they will be making paper chains of eight ways they can love extravagantly this week, one for each day of the week and a bonus to be extravagant!

Give each child two copies of Resource Page 5. Invite them to choose eight ideas of ways that they can show love and write one idea on each of the eight strips. Assist with writing as needed. Tell them to write within the two large areas, leaving a bit of space at each end and in the middle of the strip. Suggest that they can use both areas to write or write in one and draw a picture in the other area. Then have the children cut out their eight strips.

Demonstrate how to create a chain by making a heart with one strip by folding it along the dashed line with the writing on the inside. Tape or staple to hold the crease in place. Bring the two ends together so that the writing is now on the outside and tape or staple the two ends together, forming a heart. Continue with each strip of paper in the same way, but looping it through the previous heart and then securing the ends.

Encourage the children to take their love chains home, tear off one chain each morning, and challenge themselves to share the day’s act of love, not just with their family but with others: neighbors, classmates, and even those who they might not get along with!

-
- Newsprint, marker
 - Two copies of Resource Page 5 for each child
 - Scissors
 - Markers
 - Tape or staplers



FOLLOWING JESUS

FOLLOWING THE GOLDEN RULE



Gather the group into a circle and close with this prayer based on the Golden Rule. Choose the name of a person in the circle and say,

“Loving God, may we do to *(Name)* as we would have *(Name)* do to us.”


The person who was named then chooses another person, repeating the prayer. Have the group continue this prayer until each person has been named. Close the prayer by saying “Amen” together.



JESUS TEACHES ABOUT LOVING

(Luke 6:27-42)

Who I should love . . .



Something wise I want to remember from this reading . . .

Things I should do to show love to others . . .

Something I find confusing from this reading . . .

Things I should not do . . .

Love Extravagantly Guided Meditation

Find a comfortable spot to sit or lie down.

Close your eyes and take a deep breath, in . . . and out . . .

And again, in . . . and out . . .

And one more time, in . . . and out . . .

Now bring your attention to the name of a person you love, someone you love so much that it makes your heart overflow . . .

- Picture that person in your mind.
 - Imagine their face . . .
 - the sound of their voice . . .
 - how they make you feel . . .
- Imagine that person in a space where you have spent time together . . .
- Imagine what you are doing together and how that makes you feel . . .
- Think of a word, an image, or a color that sums up how it feels to be with that person . . .

Now, think of someone who you aren't getting along with very well right now . . .

- Picture that person in your mind.
 - Imagine their face . . .
 - the sound of their voice . . .
 - how they make you feel . . .
- Imagine that person actively involved with whatever has kept you from getting along well with that person. Are they excluding you or someone else? Are they being unkind? Are they breaking a rule or behaving badly?
- Think of a word that sums up how you are feeling about that person . . .

Now imagine how you feel about the person you love, and think about how it would feel to treat the person that you are not getting along with the same way that the person you love treats you . . .

- Does it feel hard or easy?
- Does it feel good or bad?
- Does it feel fair or unfair?

Take a moment to bring to mind a prayer for each of the people you have been thinking about, and for yourself . . .

As you feel ready, begin to move your body, wiggle your fingers, open your eyes, and bring your attention back to the room.



Act out a scene where a person is feeling very angry because their pet died, and is praying to God about this situation.

Act out a scene where two people are decorating fancy cakes, and one person accidentally knocks the other's cake over.

Act out a scene where a parent is punishing a child for breaking a family rule.

Act out a scene where one friend witnesses another friend receiving bad news from someone.

Act out a scene where one neighbor asks to borrow some garden tools from another neighbor.

Act out a scene where a group of very athletic children are starting a game of soccer, and a child who is not very sporty asks to join in.

