

GOD IS LOVE

SUMMER: FOUNDATIONS

BIG TRUTH: GOD IS LOVE

Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 36:7; 1 John 4:10; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:4-5

BIBLE VERSE: 1 JOHN 4:16B

"God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God and God abides in Him."

BIG IDEAS

- God's love is not dependent upon our obedience.
- God's love is put on display through Jesus' sacrificial death in our place.
- God's love changes our hearts.

BIBLE STORY: LUKE 15:11-32

In the story of the prodigal son, the father loves his son unconditionally and sacrificially. God loves the world and shows His love for His people in a sacrificial and lavish way.

FOUNDATION: GOD IS

"God is" means that there is only one god in the universe. He alone is Lord over everything that exists, and He alone is worthy of our worship. This also means that every good thing that exists comes from God. All good things come from Him because goodness is a part of who He is as the one true God. It is a part of His nature and character to be good, and everything that comes from God is good. Thankfully God has not chosen to withhold His goodness from His creation, but instead gives it freely to us.

BIG AIMS



Every child should know that:

- There is only one true God, and He is good.
- We can know God because He has made Himself known through creation and Word.
- God alone is our source of life and joy.



Every child should feel:

- Loved by God, and thankful for His love for us.
- Broken over the depth of our sin against God.
- Joy in Jesus, the only Son of God who came to save us.



Every child should strive to:

- Memorize the Bible verse each week about who God is.
- Pray that God would open their hearts and minds to know Him more.
- Tell someone else about the God who is.



Every child should want:

- Learn more about the God who has made Himself known.
- Repent of their sin and of the lies they believe about God.
- Cling to God as the source of truth.

FAMILY DEVOTION: AN UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

God is love and He shows His love to the world. We know how to love because God first loved us and loves us perfectly. God loves us unconditionally. God's love is always good and right. He loves perfectly.

BIBLE VERSE: 1 JOHN 4:16B

"God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God and God abides in Him."

God is love.

God is love...

- Love isn't outside of God. It comes from Him.
- Love is found in God and the way He interacts with the world.
- All the decisions He makes and the way He acts in the world are an example of real love.
- God love for us comes from His very nature. He knows what is best for us and He works in our lives to bring about the best for us according to His will.
- His love is shown in different forms and ways that might not make sense to us, but He is always loving.

We know what love is because God shows us love.

"God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God..."

- Love originates with God because He is the beginning of all things. He is before anything else because He is eternal. He has no beginning and no end. He is the first to show love and He is the reason we know what love is.
- God shows His love to us in creating us, providing all that we need, and making a way for us to be forgiven for our sin. We can love others and understand what love is because God first showed us love.

God's love is perfect.

"God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God and God abides in Him."

- God is perfect in every way. His love is perfect.
- All that God does is right and perfect. His love is not conditional, nor does it change or end.
- He does not manipulate or use His love as a way to cause us to act in a certain way.
- His love for us is not dependent upon our loving Him.

BIBLE STORY: LUKE 15:11-32

The Prodigal Son

Opening Illustration:

Use pipe cleaners and beads to help the children create a beaded heart. As they create their hearts, remind them that God is love and we know how to love because He loves us first.

BIG IDEA: GOD'S LOVE IS NOT DEPENDENT UPON OUR OBEDIENCE.¹**God is perfect and holy.**

- God always does right. He never makes a mistake, nor does He do any bad thing.
- He has no sin, so He is perfectly holy. To be holy is to be set apart and righteous, or without sin.
- God is perfect because He is always good. He loves perfectly because He always has a pure heart and motive.
- He makes decisions for the good of His people and His glory.



Help the children understand what it means to love unconditionally by asking them to write their own definition of “unconditional.” When they finish, discuss with them ways that God shows unconditional love to the world. Help them think of ways, such as giving us air to breathe, food to eat, relationships with other people, beauty to enjoy, etc. Remind them that God’s love doesn’t depend upon our obedience.

God love all people.

- God loves all people. He loves the whole world.
- He shows His love for everyone by allowing all people to enjoy things we call common graces, such as air to breathe, beautiful sunsets, relationships with families and friends, etc.
- God loves all people always.
- His love for people is eternal. It doesn’t stop and He never gives up on people.

God loves unconditionally.

- The father in Luke 15:11-32 loved his son unconditionally. This means his love for his son wasn’t dependent upon anything.
- His younger son left his father and chose to live a life separate from him, yet the father still loved him.
- The younger son wasted his inheritance and made really bad decisions, yet his father never stopped loving him.
- God loves us unconditionally. We don’t have to do anything to earn His love or to keep His love.

How does God love the world? (He loves the world unconditionally and eternally.)

1. Psalm 52:8: God loves eternally and steadfastly. His love does not depend upon anything we do.

BIG IDEA: GOD'S LOVE IS PUT ON DISPLAY THROUGH JESUS' SACRIFICIAL DEATH IN OUR PLACE.²**No one deserves God's love.**

- We are all born with a sin nature that leads us to disobey God.
- We reject Him, just like the younger son rejected his father's guidance and provision.
- We choose to live our own lives according to our own desires. We sin against God by disobeying His Word and rejecting Him.
- We are not worthy of God's perfect love.



Divide the children into pairs. Ask each pair to come up with a list of ways that we can show our love sacrificially. Allow the pairs to share their lists and then discuss with them how God loves us sacrificially by giving His only Son to die in our place.

God's perfect love is sacrificial.

- God loves perfectly and sacrificially.
- This means He willingly loves in a way that costs Him greatly.
- Perfect love means denying self and giving up things we love for someone else.
- God set the perfect example of sacrificial love by giving up His most valuable thing, His Son Jesus.

Jesus' death shows us God's great love.

- When Jesus went to the cross, He showed the world how much God loved it.
- Jesus is God's only Son, yet God willingly sacrificed Him for the world.
- The father in Luke 15:11-32 willingly welcomed his son home and sacrificed greatly in order to celebrate him.
- God sent Jesus to pay our sin debt and this great sacrifice shows us God's perfect and holy love for us.

How did God show His great love for the world? (He sent Jesus to die for us.)

2. John 15:13: God showed His love for all people by sending Jesus to die in our place.

BIG IDEA: GOD'S LOVE CHANGES OUR HEARTS.³**Our hearts are sinful and dark.**

- We are all born sinful. We are born with hearts that desire the sinful things of the world and not the things of God
- Because our hearts are sinful, we cannot help ourselves or make ourselves better.
- We cannot make ourselves good enough. We are all broken and far from God.
- The younger son demonstrated this by leaving the provision of his loving father for the things of the world.
- We do the same thing as we follow our hearts, choosing our own desires over the commands of God.



Bring in a broken mirror and an unbroken mirror. Ask the children to look at themselves in the broken mirror first. Next, pass the unbroken mirror. Talk with them about how the unbroken mirror changed their reflection and made it better. Remind them that God's love changes our hearts and makes us better.

God chooses to love us because He wants to love us.

- God doesn't have to love us. He doesn't need to love us because He lacks nothing.
- He chooses to love us simply because He wants to love us.
- He doesn't love us because we've done anything or even because we need Him to love us. He just loves us by His own will.
- God's choice to love us changes us.

Through God's love we become new creations.

- When we repent and believe in Jesus, we become new creations.
- We are set free from our sin nature and can follow God.
- We desire to know God and obey Him rather than following our sinful hearts are the ways of the world.
- God makes us new and we become a part of His family forever.

How does God's love change us? (His love makes us new creations. We are set free to love Him and obey Him.)

3. 1 Corinthians 6:11: When we know Christ, we become new creations.

HOOKS



KNOW

An Unconditional Love

On a large piece of paper or the board write down several actions that require conditions. For example, snow depends upon certain conditions, such as the temperature being a certain degree, etc. Talk through several of these situations and how they are based on certain conditions. Next, talk with them about how God loves unconditionally. This means His love does not depend upon any condition except that He chooses to love us. We do nothing to gain His love or earn His love.



DO

A Sacrificial Love

Play a game of musical beanbag with the children. The child holding the beanbag when the music stops should name something that they would give up for someone else. Help them think of things they would sacrifice by giving examples of things you'd give up. Remind them that God's sacrificial love is displayed through Jesus' death on the cross.



FEEL



WANT

Forever Thankful

Lead the children to write their own prayers of thanksgiving for God's love by showing them an example prayer. Give them paper and colored pencils to help them. Model writing a prayer of thanksgiving on your own paper or the board.