

We Follow Jesus' Message of Love



Background Focus

Today's chapter focuses entirely on the Greatest Commandment as Jesus taught it: to love God and to love others as we love ourselves. In teaching this commandment, Jesus summarized and simplified the Law of God in terms that anyone, even a child, can understand. This demonstrates his insight and brilliance as a teacher. Of course Jesus makes clear that this love includes the Ten Commandments and other teachings of God's Law. (See Matthew 23:23–24.)

This chapter also introduces the term *Sacred Scripture* as an alternative for *the Word of God* and *the Bible*. We look to Scripture for our knowledge and understanding of God and his plan for us. If we want to follow Jesus, we will listen to his Word in Scripture and then love as he loved.

Go (10 minutes)

Opening Prayer

- Invite the children to turn to page 1 in their chapter 3 activity booklets and locate the prayer on the page.
- Begin prayer by leading the group in the Sign of the Cross, then saying, "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God." Allow about 10 seconds of silence.
- Read the prayer in the activity booklet to the group. Invite all of the children to say "Amen," and then close with another Sign of the Cross. Have the children put their activity booklets away for now.

Engage Activity

- Invite the children to think of all the people they love. Record their answers on the board. (*Possible responses might be: Mom and Dad, brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, etc.*)
- Encourage the children to expand their answers by asking: "Who else does Jesus tell us to love?" (*Possible responses might be: those who are poor, hungry, homeless, alone, friendless, etc.*)

Chapter 3




Featured Story

Love Is the Greatest Commandment
(Mark 12:28–34)

Lesson Goals

- to identify that we follow Jesus by loving God and others
- to recognize that we can learn about love in Sacred Scripture
- to explain that we can ask for forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation when we fail to love fully

Lesson at a Glance

-  **Go** (10 minutes)
Opening Prayer
Engage Activity
-  **Seek** (30 minutes)
Featured Story
Core Learning Activity
-  **Find** (20 minutes)
God's Treasure of Forgiveness
Lesson Wrap-Up
Closing Prayer

Materials Needed

- *The Catholic Children's Bible* and chapter 3 activity booklet
- two large, red precut paper hearts for each child
- white construction paper, one piece for each child; red pencils; gold or yellow crayons or markers
- materials for any of the optional activities you choose

Music Suggestions

- "Love Your Neighbor as Yourself," by Wonder Kids (Wonder Workshop)
- "Love One Another (Lullaby Mix)," by Little Praise Party and Yancy (Yancy Ministries, Inc.)

- Ask the children to read over the list and add any other people they can think of. (*Suggestions: people who are disabled in some way, people who are gravely ill, people in prison.*)
- Congratulate the children on thinking of so many people to love. Explain that in this chapter they will learn more about the greatest commandment that Jesus gave us: the commandment of love.

Seek (30 minutes)

Featured Story

- Invite the children to find Mark 12:28–34 in *The Catholic Children's Bible* (pages 1554–1555).
- Direct them to turn the page to the Featured Story on page 1556 and place an "I found it!" sticker on the page. Tell them that the words between the leaves on the page are a shortened version of the Scripture story on the previous pages.
- Ask the children to look at the artwork on pages 1556–1557. Invite them to describe what they see in the artwork.
- Read the title of the Featured Story and then the Bible story to the children. After reading, ask the children several questions to check for comprehension, such as these:
 - Who came to Jesus with a question? (*A teacher of the Law. "The Law" is God's Law that he gave to Moses on Mount Sinai.*)
 - What question did this teacher ask? (*"Which commandment is the most important of all?"*)
 - Jesus replied with two important commandments. What was the first one? (*To love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.*)
 - What is the second important commandment? (*Love your neighbor as much as you love yourself.*)
- Have the children turn to page 2 in the activity booklet and complete the activity with their Bibles open. *Answers: 1. 6, 2. 5, 3. 9, 4. 3, including infant, 5. hanging clothes on a line, 6. a baby, 7. orange, 8. a bundle of sticks*

Understand It!

- Read Understand It! on page 1557 to the children, or invite a volunteer or volunteers to read.
- Invite the children to summarize what they just heard, asking them key questions about the reading to check for comprehension.
- Review these key points with them:
 - At the end of our lives, Jesus will not care how much money we made or how smart we are. He will ask us, "How much did you love?"
 - The greatest thing we can do in life is to love God with all our heart, and to love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves.
 - When we love, we are like God. Loving God and others is so important that God made it a law.
- Follow the suggestion in the last paragraph of Understand It! Lead the group in a spontaneous prayer in these or similar words:
 - "God, fill our hearts with your love more and more. Help us to grow in love for you. Help us to grow in love for our families, our friends, our neighbors, and all people everywhere. Amen."

Live It!

- Invite a volunteer to read Live It! on page 1557, or read it aloud to the group.
- Distribute two red paper hearts to each child, and ask the children to follow the directions in Live It!
- Encourage volunteers to share their responses, and allow the children to take the paper hearts home.

Tell It!

- Ask the children to look at the images in Tell It! on page 1557.
- Choose two volunteers to act out the Tell It! frames by speaking the short dialogue pictured.
- Ask volunteers to retell the Bible story for the group, using the images in the Tell It! frames.
- Have the children use some of the smaller stickers to mark parts of the Featured Story pages that capture their interest. Remind them to save enough stickers to use on the remaining chapters.

Core Learning Activity

The Greatest Commandment Booklet

- Explain that because we follow Jesus we want to follow the Law of Love he gave us, the **Greatest Commandment**. We can make a reminder of this law to take home. We can make it look like a page from the Bible.
- Distribute 8½-by-11-inch white construction paper and red pencils. Ask the children to fold the paper in half lengthwise. On the left half of the folded paper, have them write "LOVE GOD" in capital letters on the first line. Have them continue with the words "with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." On the right half, have them write "LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR" in capital letters on the first line and continue with "as you love yourself."
- Ask them to fold the page to create a cover. On the cover, have them print in gold or yellow crayon or marker, "THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT." They may draw an outline in red around these words.

Process the Activity

- Ask the children to share why loving God and our neighbor is so important. (*Responses might include: Because Jesus gave us this commandment; because when we love we are like God; because when we love we follow God's Law.*)
- Invite the children to consider how this Bible-page reminder might help their families at home. (*Responses might include: They will know what Jesus teaches about love; when we see it we will remember not to start fights with our brothers and sisters; we will remember to share.*)
- Conclude by reminding the children that if we want to follow Jesus, we will love God, ourselves, and others as he taught us. Remind the children that love is a decision and an action. It is not something we do for one day, but something we do for the rest of our lives. Jesus will help us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation so that we can love God, ourselves, and others more fully.

Additional Activity Options

If the core activity would not work for your group for any reason, you may choose to use any of the Additional Activities on pages 33–34 in its place.

✕ Find (20 minutes)

God's Treasure of Forgiveness

- Remind the children that we learn about God in the Bible. Explain that another name for the Bible is **Sacred Scripture**. Tell them that when we read Sacred Scripture, we are reading God's Word. Give them the example of today's reading from the Bible, in which we learned that Jesus gave us the greatest commandment of all, the commandment to love.
- Explain to the children that they will likely hear God's Word in the Sacrament of Reconciliation as well. Tell them that after the priest greets us, we make the Sign of the Cross with the priest and he says a few words to encourage us to trust in God's mercy. Next we may hear God's Word from the Bible. Explain that the priest may read a short passage from Sacred Scripture, or he may ask us to read.
- Tell the children that reading from the Bible—both in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and in our daily lives—allows us to hear about God's love and forgiveness and helps us to love God and one another more fully.
- Recall for the children that Sacred Scripture can help us see when we may not have loved as fully as we are called to do, or we may have sinned. Remind them that the Good News is that we can trust in God's loving-kindness, and we can ask for forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Remind them that in this sacrament, we receive God's grace, God's new life, to help us love God, ourselves, and others.
- Invite the children to turn to page 3 in the activity booklet and complete the activity. *Answers: 1. Bible, Sacred Scripture, 2. God, 3. neighbor, 4. God's Word, 5. Reconciliation*

Teacher Note: This content is presented in a child-friendly way in the *God's Treasure of Forgiveness Student Booklet*. You may wish to have the children read all or parts of chapter 3 to supplement your presentation. Or use the concluding points under "Things to Remember" to wrap up the lesson before prayer.

Lesson Wrap-Up

- Ask the children to think back over all of the different things they did in this lesson, and invite volunteers to share some of the key things they learned.
- Take some time to get input from the group, and write their answers on the board.
- Ensure that the following points are made, write them on the board, and circle them:
 - We follow Jesus by loving God and others.
 - We learn about love in Sacred Scripture.
 - We can ask for forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation when we fail to love fully.
- Ask the children to place the chapter 3 sticker in the correct circle on their treasure maps.



Closing Prayer

- Begin the prayer by leading the children in the Sign of the Cross, then saying, "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God," followed by a few seconds of silence.
- Invite the children to turn to page 1995 in *The Catholic Children's Bible* and read together "A Prayer to Jesus."
- You may want to play a piece of music, if you have time, on the theme of loving one another.
- Close with a final Sign of the Cross.



Additional Activities

Jesus Teaches about Love (15 minutes)

- Explain to the children that the Bible includes many teachings of Jesus about love. Tell them that you will now give a Bible passage to each child. If there are more children than Bible passages, duplicates are okay. Or, arrange the group into partners or small groups so that the children can help one another. Each child or group should find the Bible verse and be prepared to read it to the large group.
- Use the following suggested Bible verses:
 - John 13:34–35
 - John 14:15
 - John 14:21
 - John 14:23
 - John 15:10
 - John 15:12
 - John 15:13
 - John 15:17
 - Romans 12:9
 - Romans 12:10
 - Romans 13:8
 - Romans 13:9
 - Romans 13:10
 - 1 Corinthians 13:1
 - 1 Corinthians 13:2
 - 1 Corinthians 13:3
 - 1 Corinthians 13:4
 - 1 Corinthians 13:5
 - 1 Corinthians 13:6
 - 1 Corinthians 13:7
 - 1 Corinthians 13:8
 - 1 Corinthians 13:13
 - 1 Corinthians 16:14
- Invite the children to read their Bible verses. Explain the Bible verses briefly if needed.
- Continue by asking the children what they have learned from reading God's Word in the Bible. (*Responses might include: We learned that God wants us to love others; we learned that love is the most important commandment.*)
- Conclude by reminding the children that if we want to follow Jesus, we must love God, ourselves, and others as he taught us.

A Circle of Forgiveness (15 minutes)

- Explain that the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps us to grow in love. Tell the children that we ask forgiveness for the times we have failed to love God, ourselves, or others. But we can ask forgiveness of others, and receive the forgiveness of others, at other times as well. Explain that we can do this at home or with our friends, and that this is what we will do now.
- Arrange the group in two circles, one inside the other, with the children facing each other. Each child should be standing across from and facing a partner. An even number is preferred. If there is an odd number, ask the extra child to stand in the outer circle.

Materials Needed

- slips of paper with a Bible verse on them, one for each child

Materials Needed

- none

Materials Needed

- a computer with Internet access
- a computer projector

- Explain that we all do things we regret, and sometimes we hurt others without knowing it or intending it. Tell the children that they are going to form forgiveness circles, and they will practice asking for forgiveness and giving forgiveness.
- Direct the children in the inner circle to speak first: "Please forgive me." Direct the children in the outer circle to respond, "I forgive you." Then have the children in the outer circle say, "Please forgive me," to which the inner circle children respond, "I forgive you."
- Ask the inner circle to move to the right after both circles have asked for and given forgiveness. Then, with a different partner, the inner circle children ask forgiveness, and the responses continue as before. When both partners have finished, the inner circle moves to the right again. If there is an odd number of children, the inner circle should move one more time so that the extra child can be included.
- Conclude with this prayer: "Lord Jesus, we are preparing to meet you in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Help us to ask forgiveness and to receive your forgiveness. Amen."

Song Activity (15 minutes)

- Show the video "Help Each Other & Love Each Other. Never Stop Sharing," available on YouTube (5:43).
- Ask the children what characters or actions they remember from the video. Point out that each time someone in the video did a small act of love, the person who was helped did something to help someone else.
- Explain that because God loves us, we can share his love with others, even in little ways. When we share God's love, and love one another as Jesus asks us to do, we become part of a chain of love.