



WITHIN: GOD'S STORY OF SAVING OUR SOULS

Lesson 2: What is the Power of Love?

Objective

Students will explore the biblical meaning of love by learning that God is love and that love is the greatest commandment. Through Jesus' example, they will consider how receiving God's love empowers them to love God, others, and themselves in healthy, shame-free ways. (You can choose to spell the capital words throughout the text for additional practice.)

Featured Scripture

Beloved, let us love one another, for **love is from God**, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 1 John 4:8 ESV

Lesson

Jesus carried a calm confidence, and taught and acted with a spiritual authority that flowed from a deep love BOND with the Father. This deeply unsettled the religious leaders (rabbis) of His time, 2,000 years ago. Because of this, leaders mumbled, "Who does He think He is?" and often tried to CHALLENGE or trap Him with questions. One asked Him, "*What is the greatest commandment?*"

This wasn't a simple question. By then, God's original Ten Commandments (see Exodus 19) had grown into **613 laws**, along with many human-made interpretations. Instead of

drawing people closer to God, many of these RULES had pulled them away from His heart.

Jesus responded by cutting through the complexity. He quoted the **Shema**, a daily Jewish prayer:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, (strength), and mind... and love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37–38).

In simple terms:

LOVE God. Love others. Love yourself. And love with all that you are.

This becomes a basic—but not easy—guide for how to live and love well. In the last lesson, we talked about the soul as the place where we feel, choose, and act—it’s our essence and personhood. It’s where love emanates from. But that raises an important question: *what does “love” really mean* as far as God had in mind?

In English, we use the word *love* for many things—from our favorite music to romantic relationships. We often picture love symbolically with a red heart or an emoji 🍷. But the Bible goes deeper. Scripture tells us that God doesn’t just *have* love—**God is love** (1 John 4:16). Love is CENTRAL to who He is.

SPELLER QUESTIONS:

1. What is another word for commandments? **Answer:** Laws

2. What is the universal symbol for love? **Answer:** Red heart

3. . Name one (or all) of the three places where our love is supposed to land. **Answer:** God, Others, Ourselves

4. What is meant by “God IS love?”

Answer: (Student reflection; e.g. God embodies all that love is; Love is defined by God.)

5. Why do you think rules multiply when love-centered relationships seem to break down? **Answer:** (Student reflection e.g. “When relationships break down, more rules

take their place because love and trust are no longer guiding people and power tries to force compliance.”)

To understand God’s love more fully, we need to “get to the heart of the matter” by looking at two key biblical words—one from Hebrew in the Old Testament, and one from Greek in the New Testament:

HESED (Hebrew): faithful, steadfast, merciful love. Hesed is not about feelings—it’s about promises kept within a commitment or COVENANT. It’s love that refuses to let go.

AGAPE (Greek): self-giving love expressed through action. Agape seeks the good of others, even at great personal COST.

Psalm 85:10 brings these ideas together beautifully:

“Unfailing love (hesed) and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed.”

The Bible is divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament, and the word *testament* literally means *covenant*. A covenant is like saying, “I belong to you, and you belong to me”—similar to the commitment in marriage, but God’s side comes loaded with so many potential benefits if we believe and obey Him.

God made a covenant of love with Israel. He remained FAITHFUL, but His people often broke the covenant by turning away to their own selfish desires. That is why God sent Jesus—to establish a new covenant for ALL people. His story is a desire to create His family, and to claim us as His own daughters and sons. Romans 8:15 (NLT) says it this way: “So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, “Abba, Father.”

So remember that picture of FAMILY. Through Jesus, God showed us humans how to be restored to Him. This new covenant is built on **sacrificial** love (agape) from a relational Father and an obedient Son with a mission of family love to fulfill. John 3:16 says:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son...”

Notice the word “so.” It points to the depth and magnitude of God’s love—a love given abundantly, without holding back. The new covenant, sealed by Jesus’ sacrificial love, gives humanity the opportunity to reconnect with God forever:

“...that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

This is God’s heart for everyone—everyone who will AGREE to this relationship.

The power we have to love at all comes from God because He loved us first (1 John 4:19). Jesus lived a life that showed us how to love and gave us the grace and ABILITY to learn how to do it. He said:

“This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command” (John 15:12–14).

None of us can love perfectly like Jesus. We make mistakes and poor choices all the time, and we hurt people. That’s why a big part of love is learning to FORGIVE and asking God to help us be less self-centered and more others-focused. We show we love Jesus by OBEYING His command to love.

Modern theologian Dallas Willard said, **“Love is not something that comes naturally; it must be learned.”** How do you learn what love is? You look at Jesus. He assured, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Jesus reveals the Father not just in word, but in presence, POSTURE, and love.

Read 1 John 4:16–19 for a powerful picture of the **cycle of love**—how receiving God’s love



enables us to love Him back, love others, and love ourselves in healthy, shame-free ways.

The love Jesus taught elevated the status of those considered property or inferior in Roman society—women, children, slaves, the disabled, and the poor. He showed that **every human being has inherent worth and is worthy of love**—a revolutionary idea at the time. He showed that love is a GIFT, not something that is earned but is received.

Jesus' demonstration of the Father's heartbeat of love liberated humanity from shame, fear, and social rejection. It invited people to love God first, and then to serve others by giving that love away. If you want to have a heart that is COHERENT (working together in harmony and alignment with God's order of things), learn how to receive and give love!

Do you want to join this love revolution?

SPELLER QUESTIONS:

1. What is the name of the structure that God is trying to create by offering His love.

Answer: Family

2. . What are the two Biblical words used to describe love-types in this lesson. **Answer:** Hesed and agape)

3. Why do you think God refers to people who love Him as children? **Answer:** (Student reflection, e.g. "Children are allowed access and are loved within family.")

4. What does it feel like to you when you are feeling secure in love? **Answer:** (Student reflection, e.g. "I feel calmer. I feel like I can be myself and not be judged.")

5. How does everyone taking on the personal responsibility of loving as Jesus instructs create stronger relationships among real families and friendships? **Answer:** (Student reflection, e.g. "Governing your own heart and motives would bring mutual respect and trust that creates strong bonds.")

Context Clues

Jesus looks at our hearts. John 2:25 says, “No one needed to tell him about human nature, for he knew what was in each person’s heart.” Neuroscientist Caroline Leaf has done extensive study on the power of renewing and training our thoughts and intentions, and she has concluded that we are physically and spiritually “wired for love.”

She points out that **our brains grow, heal, and function optimally when we experience love**—things like kindness, empathy, forgiveness, and meaningful connection actually strengthen neural pathways and promote mental and physical health. In contrast, chronic fear, rejection, shame, and isolation activate stress responses in the brain and body that can damage both emotional regulation and physical well-being. In other words, the brain literally breaks down under unloving conditions and builds up under loving ones.

Leaf often connects this to Genesis and the character of God, explaining that because humans are made in the image of a relational, loving God, **our nervous systems are designed for relationship**. Love creates coherence—alignment between the mind, brain, and body—while fear and toxicity create chaos. She emphasizes that renewing the mind through truth, love, and intentional thought patterns can physically rewire the brain, reinforcing the idea that love restores what stress and trauma disrupt.

Then & Now

Then — Psalm 136 was a popular hymn

[Psalm 136](#) is a great passage to read (especially in The Message translation) in order to picture God’s HESED-type of love that is unending. Tradition has it that this Psalm was sung in Solomon’s temple and was a popular ancient hymn—kind of like how you might sing familiar worship songs in church. After each line, almost like a pulse, or a heartbeat, the words are “His love never quits.” That line is repeated 26 times! Now, numbers really matter symbolically to the Hebrew mind and in the study of the rabbis. Each letter of the Hebrew alphabet also has a

number attached to it that means something deeper. You add up the numbers attributed to the letters in a word, and it reveals hidden connections (called “gematria”). It is no accident that this line was repeated 26 times. 26 is the sum of the numerical value of the Hebrew name for God, spelled YHWH (Yahweh). Yod (10)+Hey (5)+Vav (6)+Hey (5)=26. He is a faithful, loving God at his very core.

Now – Modern Science:

This will blow your mind! The magazine *Popular Mechanics* came out with an article in 2025 with this title: “Earth Pulsates Every 26 Seconds. No One Knows Why.” Did you catch that? The Earth has a mysterious, rhythmic seismic pulse, often called its “heartbeat,” that repeats every 26 seconds, detected by seismometers worldwide since the 1960s, originating from the Gulf of Guinea and linked to ocean waves or volcanic activity, though its exact cause remains an unsolved geological puzzle. Could this be a way of God showing his loving “heartbeat” for human kind? Romans 1:20 does say, “For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.” I’ll let you ponder that!

Memorize: Write this on your heart

We love each other because he loved us first. 1 John 4:19

Go Deeper (Optional)

- Watch Bible Project’s “God Loves You, But What Does that Mean?” (5:11)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfbyFLgs_NM
- Watch “The Earth’s Mysterious Heartbeat” (3:27)
<https://youtu.be/dVvZwSSpsz0?si=orOip036-SUBFyIZ>
- Watch “When NASA saw Pluto’s Heart”
<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/YST6GZyA3cg> (00:56)
- Watch Dr. Caroline Leaf’s video “We are Wired for Love.” (2:37)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ds-S3fzJba4>

- Watch Heartmath’s “Science of the Heart” (1:36)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pp-r_f8-qz8
- Listen to the hymn, “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know” by Anna Warner. (2:12)
<https://youtu.be/LONkzLLNPmA>
- [ps://youtu.be/48fzSjZ9VYw?si=HJmaEaLJsGHkl4Xk](https://youtu.be/48fzSjZ9VYw?si=HJmaEaLJsGHkl4Xk)Read the story behind the song “Jesus Loves Me” and the song’s author:
<https://iblp.org/hymn-history-jesus-loves-me-this-i-know/>

Options for Expression (Assignment for Open Spellers)

Choose **one** (or more) of the following ways to demonstrate your understanding of the love of God:

1. **Write a letter to God/Jesus or to a family member, friend, or someone who works with you. In the letter, specifically point out the ways that they love you well, and why you are thankful for that love.**
 - Think about the qualities of God’s kind of love, and how these are embodied and given by others to you, and how that makes you feel.
 - Put your letter in a card and send it in the mail or hand deliver it to a person.
2. **Poem / Acrostic / Song Lyrics**
 - Write a poem or song about God’s vision for love.
3. **Listen to the song “Jesus Loves Me” while beating a drum to the rhythm. Read about the story behind this well-loved hymn and write about why you think it has become one of the most well-known songs of our time all around the world.**
 - Listen to your favorite rendition of this hymn several times this week, and move your body to it.
 - Listen to it in a different language too.
 - Think critically as to why it has endured.

Spelling Words to Practice This Week

1. LOVE
2. GOD
3. HEART
4. FAMILY
5. BOND
6. RULES
7. COVENANT
8. FAITHFUL
9. COMMANDMENT
10. HESED
11. AGAPE
12. SACRIFICE
13. OBEY
14. FORGIVE
15. GRACE
16. TRUST
17. RELATIONSHIP
18. PRESENCE
19. CONNECTION
20. ABILITY

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