

Love that takes the first step

John 13:1-17, 34-35; Galatians 5:22-23

The Holy Spirit helps us love others as Jesus loves us.

Your goal

Explain how Jesus served his friends and plan one loving action without expecting a reward.

Read & gather

Read aloud: John 13:3-5, 12-15, 34-35. Memory passage: John 13:34.

Basic kit: Bible, paper, pencils or crayons, child-safe scissors, glue or tape. A clean towel and three scraps of paper per pair.

Read the full passage in context before class. Practice unfamiliar names and select age adaptations.

Words to explain

Love: seeking another person's good. Serve: use what you have to help.

Your 60-minute flow

0-5 minutes | Welcome & wonder

Use the opening question or visual below. Welcome beginners and offer a quiet way to join.

5-10 minutes | Worship & prayer

Offer thanks to God. Sing a familiar, church-approved song or speak a line of praise. Listening quietly is welcome.

10-15 minutes | Bible & memory

Find the reading together. Read the memory passage from your Bible. Repeat short phrases with simple gestures.

15-27 minutes | Discover the story

Read the selected Bible verses and tell the three-part story. Pause for prediction, pointing, and retelling.

27-35 minutes | Talk it through

Use the three discussion questions. Give thinking time, then pair discussion before sharing with the whole group.

35-50 minutes | Create & practice

Demonstrate the activity, work together, and use the student page. Finish drawing at home if time is short.

50-55 minutes | Respond & pray

Connect the big idea with a choice this week. Offer voluntary prayer or quiet reflection.

55-60 minutes | Remember & take home

Use the exit prompt, revisit the big idea, tidy supplies, and give caregivers the family page.

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Welcome & wonder

Hold up a clean towel. Ask: What jobs could this do? Would a very important person use it to help someone else? Introduce Jesus, the Lord who serves.

Tell the story

Read the passage first. The following is an original teaching retelling, not a quotation from the NIV.

1. Jesus knew that his time with the disciples before the cross was nearly over. At their meal he did something surprising. He got up, wrapped a towel around his waist, and began washing his disciples' feet. Feet became dusty on the roads, and this was usually a humble job. Their teacher chose to serve them.
2. Peter struggled to accept what Jesus was doing. Jesus explained that his friends needed what he would do for them. Afterward, Jesus asked them to think about his example: if their Lord and teacher served them, they should serve one another. Jesus did not stop being Lord when he took the towel. His love showed what his leadership was like.
3. Jesus also gave his disciples a command to love one another as he had loved them. This love would help others recognize his followers. We do not earn Jesus' love by doing kind jobs. We receive his love and ask the Holy Spirit to help it grow into loving actions, including toward people who cannot repay us.

The Jesus connection

The cross shows the depth of Jesus' love. His Spirit grows that love in us.

Talk it through

Why was washing feet surprising?

Jesus chose a humble task even though he was their Lord and teacher.

Do we serve to make Jesus love us?

No. He loves us first; serving is a response to his love.

How can love include a boundary?

We can speak kindly and still say no to unsafe behavior or ask a trusted adult for help.

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Love in action cards

1. Give pairs three paper cards. Label them Notice, Choose, and Do.
2. Read three situations: a new child sits alone; someone drops their pencils; a friend wants you to hide bullying.
3. For each situation, describe what love notices and one safe helpful action. In the third, love seeks adult help rather than keeping harm secret.
4. Each child draws or writes one act of service for this week. Partners rehearse doing it without asking for praise.

Grades 1-2

Draw a helpful action and dictate a sentence. Use one situation at a time.

Grades 3-5

Explain the difference between helping someone and doing everything they demand.

Offer movement breaks, a quiet space, picture choices, or an adult scribe. Adapt to the child, not only the grade.

Teach with care

Use a clean towel as a visual only. Do not require touching or foot washing. Love never requires children to accept abuse or keep unsafe secrets.

Prayer invitation

Jesus, thank you for loving us first. Holy Spirit, help us notice and serve others.

Exit prompt

Name one loving action and explain who it helps.

Student page answer guide

1. Jesus chose a humble task even though he was their Lord and teacher. 2. No. He loves us first; serving is a response to his love. 3. We can speak kindly and still say no to unsafe behavior or ask a trusted adult for help.

Drawings and personal responses vary. Look for understanding rather than polished artwork.

After class

What did children understand? Whose voice did you hear less? What question will you revisit?

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Name: _____ Date: _____

The Holy Spirit helps us love others as Jesus loves us.

Explore the story

1. Why was washing feet surprising?

2. Do we serve to make Jesus love us?

3. How can love include a boundary?

Draw & discover

Draw one way you can serve someone this week.

A little deeper

Why is love more than liking someone?

You can write, draw, point, or tell someone your answer.

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A LITTLE FAITH, EVERY DAY

The Holy Spirit helps us love others as Jesus loves us.

Open the Bible together

Read John 13:3-5, 12-15, 34-35. Let your child retell one part. Write down a question to ask a trusted church leader; you do not need to have all the answers.

Start a conversation

How did Jesus show love with a towel?

Try this during the week

Let each person choose one small household task that helps another person. Notice the action rather than rewarding a competition.

A prayer to share

Jesus, thank you for loving us first. Holy Spirit, help us notice and serve others.

Remember together

Look up John 13:34 in your family Bible. Read a short phrase, repeat it together, and ask what it means.

Keep it simple and welcoming

A few unhurried minutes are enough. Children may respond with words, drawings, or gestures. Prayer is an invitation; quiet participation belongs too.

This curriculum is written for mixed groups in grades 1-5 in an evangelical setting. Retellings and prayers are original. Bible references are intended for use with your own NIV Bible; no extended Bible translation text is reproduced.