



WIVA!

1 JOHN

WEEK THREE: **LOVE**

HOW TO USE

We wrote this curriculum for those times when life is busy and you might be looking for a little help and inspiration as you plan for time with your students. Everything you need to know for each week's curriculum is laid out below. That being said, the best results will come from spending some time with the curriculum in advance—make sure, in particular, to read the “Teacher Prep” section.

Each of these lessons can be led in different ways. Please be sensitive to your group. You might have a group that really wants to dig into an idea, or you might have a group that just needs to hear the basic truth. You get to decide that as you meet.

Finally, please feel free to discard any of this content to stay in your group's context. The best curriculum for your group is you, caring for them as they get to know God.

Have ideas about this curriculum? Be part of the revolution and give us some feedback at <http://help.theyouthcartel.com/hc/communities/public/topics/200121073-Viva>

WHO WROTE THIS

Brad Hauge is a Northwest boy through and through who can't shake his boyhood love of Pearl Jam or the Mariners. He really likes Jesus and really likes students. And he really likes helping students realize they can totally be a part of what Jesus is up to in our world. He gets to do that for a living in Spokane, WA, where he works as the Director of High School Ministries at First Presbyterian Church.

THE REST

Sarah Hauge is a youth ministry veteran who works as a writer and editor in Spokane, WA.

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www.theyouthcartel.com
Email: info@theyouthcartel.com
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OBJECTIVE

Love is a common theme when it comes to studying the life of Jesus, but John offers a fresh take on this expected word. He calls us to fill our lives up so completely with love that there is little room left for anything else. This lesson will help you and your students to recognize, as John did, that God and love are one and the same.

TEACHER PREP

- Enough Bibles for everyone (or at least close). If you have time before your meeting, encourage the students to bring their Bible with them.
- Spend some time reading, and becoming familiar with, 1 John chapters 3 and 4.
- Print out enough copies of the final page of this lesson (a list of verses) for each expected small group of 4-5 people. After printing enough pages you'll need to cut out each verse so it stands alone on a strip of paper.

OPENING ACTIVITY

"HONEY, IF YOU LOVE ME, WON'T YOU PLEASE, PLEASE SMILE?"

HERE'S WHAT YOU DO:

Have your group sit in a circle with everyone facing inward. (If your group is larger than, say, 15 people, you may want to make two separate circles.)

One member of the group is "it." The objective is simply for this person to make someone else in the circle smile. The person who's "it" will look around the circle, pick a person, kneel in front of them, and ask him/her, "Honey, if you love me, won't you please, please smile?" They can only say those words.

The person must respond with, "Honey, I love you, but I just can't smile," without smiling. If he/she smiles, that person becomes "it," replacing the first "it" person. If the person who's "it" does not convince a person to smile, he/she must approach someone else until they're able to make someone smile. The person who's "it" may do any gestures he/she wants to make the person smile (e.g. make funny faces, do a stunt), but cannot touch the person.

There is no real ending to this game, so simply read your group and wrap up the game when it seems appropriate.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Depending on the size of your group you may want to have them turn to a couple of neighbors to create small discussion groups, or just have the discussion as a large group.)

- Who was the most successful at getting others to smile? What was their secret weapon?
- Who was the most successful at never smiling, no matter what?
- When you hear the word “love,” what are your first reactions? How would you describe love? Is it a choice? Something that happens to us? Something we control, or _____?

MAIN LESSON

SAY SOMETHING LIKE:

We’ve noticed, at least somewhat, how big a role love plays in John’s description of God in this short letter. But today, we want to spend some time looking at why John focuses on portraying God this way.

Let’s start by being honest about the fact that “love” is a tricky concept. On one hand we’re pretty sure we understand it. It’s a feeling, it’s an action, it’s a posture we have toward others. But is it a choice? Is it part of what it means to be human? And what about hate?

Also, is there a difference in what it means when we say we love our mom versus when we say we love our boyfriend? What about when we say we love our friends or our pets? Is there any difference in how we use the word when we say we love God and we love Cool Ranch Doritos? And what if we don’t really use the word love at all? What if we’ve been so hurt and had our trust broken so many times that we don’t really feel like we can give love?

Or, what if we don’t feel we are worthy of love? What if we feel so lonely and crappy about who we are that the only thing that feels certain is that nobody loves us?

The more we think about it, the more clear it is that this little 4-letter word has a lot of baggage attached. This so-called simple concept that we’ve seen in movies and cartoons and in the halls of our schools can actually feel super difficult to wrap our minds and hearts around.

So, let’s spend some time looking at what John has to say about love, and how his friendship with Jesus may have helped shape his views.

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Have your students turn toward each other in groups of 4-5 and assign one of the following passages to each group. **You’ll want an even number of groups if possible.** If that is not possible, no worries—you can have an odd number of groups!

Assign 1 John 3:11-24 to half of the groups and assign 1 John 4:7-21 to the remaining groups. One person can read the entire text or you may want to have students take turns with verses and sections.

Once they have all had a chance to read and hear the text, give them a few minutes to discuss the first prompt within their groups before then presenting the second prompt and so on. During the discussion, make sure to acknowledge all responses as worthy of consideration.

1. In general, what about this section resonates with you? Is there anything you don't understand? Chat about those things for a bit and see if you can help each other out.
2. What seem to be John's main points in the section you read?
3. How does John describe love? Where does it come from, what does it look like, how should it affect us and also those around us?
4. What is harder for you: to accept God's love for yourself or to give out love to others?

SAY SOMETHING LIKE:

There isn't too much I can add to the conversation that you all didn't just say, but I do want to remind us that the words in 1 John are words that we can trust. John hung out with Jesus and experienced the origin of love. He experienced the pain, beauty, and mystery of seeing Jesus as God carry out "what love is" by laying "down his life for us."

While love feels tricky in our context today, may we realize that God is light and that God is love, and that by abiding with him we can take some of the trickiness out of it—we can even then begin to love others like God does.

RESPONSE

Invite your students to re-form their smaller groups from their Bible Exploration time (or if you have small groups that regularly meet, use those!) and **hand out the strips of paper containing verses to each group:**

- How hard is it for you to buy into the idea that God is the source and origin of love? What does your response say about your day to day life?

Have someone spread out the strips of paper on the floor/table in the middle of the small group and **give these prompts:**

- One at a time, grab the verse that most excites you about the nature of God and grab the verse that is either the most confusing or hard to live into.
- Explain why you chose each verse and then allow someone else to do the same.

- How do you see the idea of abiding in God helping guide us toward the light and love of God?
- How can you, this week, live into the verse you chose for “most excited about?”

End your time together in prayer—whether prayer requests, prayer partners, or just a general prayer thanking God for the ways in which we can know truths about him and about ourselves.

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death.

1 John 3:14

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

1 John 3:16

If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?

1 John 3:17

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

1 John 4:9-10

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us...

1 John 4:16a

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

1 John 4:18

Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.

1 John 4:20