



WEEK
ONE
AUGUST 2022

LARGE GROUP
PRETEEN

TODAY'S SUGGESTED SCHEDULE

TODAY'S BIBLE STORY

L-O-V-E

Greatest Commandment
Matthew 22:34-40

TODAY'S KEY QUESTION

What do you love?

TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE

Love God by loving others.

MONTHLY MEMORY VERSE

"Here is what love is. It is not that we loved God. It is that he loved us and sent his Son to give his life to pay for our sins."

1 John 4:10, NIV

HOST SUPPLIES

- 40 books of all shapes and sizes
- Tape
- Two cones or chairs

STORY SUPPLIES

- Boxes, all shapes and sizes
- Several permanent markers

PRELUDE: Setting the tone for the experience

See the **Getting Ready** pages at the end of this document for a detailed description of what you'll need for today. In the **Prelude** folder of your curriculum, you'll find a variety of other resources to help you prepare.

SMALL GROUP

15
MIN

SOCIAL: Providing time for fun interaction

Just for Fun
Opening Activity

LARGE GROUP

35
MIN

STORY: Communicating God's truth in engaging ways WORSHIP: Inviting people to respond to God

Welcome/Opener
Worship ("Love Like You" from *Make a Move*, "How Amazing" from *Everything to Me*, and "Make a Move" from *Make a Move*)
Bible Story (Communicator Script)
Key Question
Prayer

SMALL GROUP

25
MIN

GROUPS: Creating a safe place to connect

Application Activity: Take a Snapshot
Bible Story Review: Bible Story Review and Discussion Questions
Memory Verse Activity: Verses to Take with You
Prayer Activity: Make it Personal with Prayer

HOME: Prompting action beyond the experience

Parent Cue Card (print or email)
Devotional for Kids
Parent Cue App



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PRELUDE **SOCIAL** **STORY** **WORSHIP** **GROUPS** **HOME**

25 MINUTES

10 MINUTES

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MONTHLY VIRTUE

Love—Showing others how much they matter to you

BASIC TRUTH

I should treat others the way I want to be treated.

LARGE GROUP

ENGAGE KIDS' HEARTS THROUGH A DYNAMIC AND INTERACTIVE BIBLE STORY, WORSHIP, AND PRAYER EXPERIENCE IN A LARGE GROUP SETTING.

AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS STUDENTS ENTER.

SLIDE: THEME

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP

WORSHIP

Worship Leaders enter.

WORSHIP LEADER:

AUDIO:

AUDIO:

Host enters carrying a stack of books.

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): COUNTDOWN (30- OR 60-SECOND VERSION)

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME

WELCOME

Host has lots of energy as they welcome everyone to [Name of Environment]. Host is relatable and inviting. Host can talk about something that is happening culturally or currently, the latest video game or movie launches, and so on. Host tells them how excited they are that they're there and briefly runs through what they can expect. This is especially helpful for first-time guests to make them feel like they know what's happening.

OPENER

HOST: "Hey, everyone! I am so pumped for another month here at [Name of Environment]. This month is going to EPIC, and I can't wait to dive in! Before we start, though, I've got a question. With everything nowadays being digital, I wonder if there are any kids here who like reading actual books. Made out of paper. With ink . . . and words and sometimes pictures. Like these. *(Hold up a book.)* Any readers out there? *(Pause for responses.)* What are you all reading right now?"



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25 MINUTES 10 MINUTES

Pause and take a few responses. If they don't mention some popular, large-scale fantasy or adventure books, mention them in place of the suggested ones below.

"Nice! What about Percy Jackson, Harry Potter, Narnia, Lord of the Rings? Epic stories, for sure, right? If you're like me, you can get totally caught up in a good book. When I was your age, I would be so into reading some nights that I'd lose track of time. My "needing sleep for school the next day" verses my "wanting to finish this chapter" was totally off balance. When you're caught up in an epic story, it's easy to lose track of everything else!

"In the spirit of reading, we're going to take some epic stories and try to find some balance this morning. And it all starts with a relay race of epic proportions that I call "The Epic Book Stack Shuffle."

SLIDE: "THE EPIC BOOK STACK SHUFFLE" TITLE

"Bookworms, are you ready?"

Choose eight volunteers out of those who raised their hands earlier, talking about what books they were reading. Put them into two teams of four and stand them next to the stack of 20 books each.

"Here's the plot. Next to you is an epic stack of books. Your job is to take those books, walk down around the cone, and bring them back . . . with one person going at a time, relay-style. However, since this is [Name of Environment], you know we're going to add a bit of a twist.

"It's up to you to decide how many books to take at a time. One person could try and take ten, one could take six, all of you could split them evenly and take five but after four people have gone, all of the books must be taken around the cone and back.

"And, oh, since all of you picked for this relay have reading on the brain, you have to balance them on your heads.

"If you should drop any books, stop where you are, pick them up and put them back on your head, and start from there. The first team to get the whole stack down and back wins. Got it? Figure out how many books you're taking and let's go!"

Play the game, keeping the energy up by having the large group cheer for who they think will win. Time permitting, you can choose another set of eight volunteers to play. Once finished, declare a winner and applaud all of the volunteers.

"Awesome job, everyone! I'm not sure if this relay will qualify as 'summer reading,' but if you need me to write a letter to your teachers, let me know. I'm down.



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25 MINUTES

COMMUNICATOR SCRIPT (STORY)

SLIDE: THEME BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

COMMUNICATOR: “Hey, everybody! New month, new stories—and I’m so excited to begin another journey together. Before we begin, though, I’ve got a thought that’s been running through my mind . . .

Hold up a shoe box.

“Running through my mind. Shoe box. See what I did there? Anyway, with all of the craziness going on in the world, I keep having the same thought over and over: What can I do? What are some things that I can do to help others, to show others a little bit of love? What can I do to help those around me? Do you have any ideas? If so, I’ll toss you a markers so you can write your answers on these boxes. After you’ve written your answers down, stack the boxes one on top of one another on the stage.

Allow some time for kids to write their answers. If nobody responds, give examples, like “helping with a hard assignment at school,” or “cleaning up at home without being asked,” or “inviting someone to sit with you at break.” Remind kids to stack them up when finished.

“Wow, look at that stack! Those are some really practical ideas for how to love and help others. Nicely done!”

TENSION

COMMUNICATOR: “Showing love to others doesn’t always have to be some big, grand gesture. Some of the things you guys came up with are pretty easy, like everyday type of things. Helping others is a great way to show love.

“But what about loving God? If I asked, most of you in this room would probably give a good, church-y answer and say that you ‘love’ God. But . . . what does that mean, exactly? What does that look like to love God? Showing love to people, for example, by inviting someone who doesn’t have many friends to sit with you at lunch, is easy to spot. But loving God? How do we know when we are doing that?”

“All good questions. Thankfully, we’ve got a book that can help us find answers (*Hold up Bible.*) right here. The Bible is made up of a lot of different parts. Some of the Bible is about the experiences of people who were friends with Jesus when He was on earth. We can learn a lot about our friendship with God from their interactions with Jesus!”

TRUTH

COMMUNICATOR: “Our story comes from the book of Matthew, and I know this will come as a shock to most of you, but it was written by a guy named . . . Matthew. A tax collector. Someone who walked and talked with Jesus Himself. Matthew was a friend of Jesus.

“When Jesus began to teach and travel 2,000 years ago, many people were impressed by His perspective. People were often amazed at the things He said—His interpretations of Scripture, His thoughts on God and His Kingdom, even ways to treat other people . . . He was teaching about things in a way a lot of people had never heard them.

“While many people were drawn to Jesus, there were some who were very suspicious about who He was and the things He was teaching. One such group was the Jewish religious leaders known as the Pharisees. The Pharisees



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were experts on God’s commandments. They studied God’s Word for years and talked and taught and debated about the meaning. They knew God’s commandments inside and out and saw it as their job to protect God’s Word and keep it pure.

“They started out with really good intentions. But over time, they became incredibly strict about following the rules rather than focusing on God. They were focused so strictly on following God’s law that they weren’t loving people very well. And unfortunately, as what happens with most people in power, they wanted to protect their position and authority from anyone who would challenge it.

“Enter Jesus.

“From the get-go, the Pharisees were incredibly suspicious of Jesus. Jesus told people that He was the fulfillment of the Scriptures they had been reading and studying. He was the way, the truth, and the life. He was showing them how the Scriptures were to be fulfilled. For example, Scripture said that the Sabbath was to be a day off from work. It was intended to be a day of rest. But Jesus healed people on the Sabbath. Jesus wasn’t doing physical labor; He was resting like God intended. But He healed the hurting, which was God’s intention for the law. But the Pharisees considered that breaking God’s law, even though it wasn’t. The Pharisees wondered: who does this Jesus guy think He is, anyway?

“One day, several of the Pharisees wanted to test Jesus with a question. Almost like lawyers cross-examining a witness, they wanted to ask Him—trap Him, really—with questions about God’s law. After all, it was their specialty. They thought up a really tough question and went to Jesus.

Open the Bible to Matthew 22:36 (NIRV) and read.

““‘Teacher,’ he asked, ‘which is the most important commandment in the Law?’”

“In other words, of all of the commandments and decrees written in the Law, they were trying to pin Jesus down to pick one more important than the others. What a question! Of ALL of the commandments, which is the best one? Which is most important? And if Jesus were to pick one, then He would also be saying that the other commandments weren’t AS important . . . and that would certainly make some people angry.

“Now, when I say the word ‘commandments,’ I am guessing at least some of you might think about the most famous ten, right? Don’t kill, don’t steal, don’t covet, keep your hands to yourself . . . the ones Moses received from God on Mount Sinai. In the Pharisee’s question, it does include just those ten but also WAY more. There are actually 613 total laws or commandments written in the Old Testament.

“And this religious leader was asking Jesus to narrow those down to the most important one? Whew . . . that’s a tall task.”

“Here is how Jesus responded.

Open the Bible to Matthew 22:37-38 (NIRV) and read.

““‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your mind.’ This is the first and most important commandment.””



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PRELUDE SOCIAL STORY WORSHIP GROUPS HOME

25 MINUTES

“They got Him! He answered! Jesus must be saying that the commandments about lying or murdering or stealing from others don’t matter as much! But wait . . . Jesus wasn’t quite done. He continued.”

Open the Bible to Matthew 22:39 (NirV) and read.

““And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as you love yourself.””

“Hold on a second . . . that’s two commandments. The Pharisees asked what the most important commandment is . . . singular. He gave them two. One about loving God . . . and one about loving people.

“It’s not that Jesus wasn’t good at math. Rather, He was making a very important point: Jesus was saying that the commandments having to do with loving God couldn’t be separated from the commandments having to do with loving people. If you truly love God, then you will love the people God created. And if you truly want to love people, you need to be in a right relationship with God. And because you cannot separate them, it is like they are one command. Let me illustrate.

Hold up a box.

“I have more blank boxes here . . . and a marker. In your stack, we came up with ways to help or love people. Here’s my question to you now: What are some ways that we can show God we love Him? We’ll start with three.

Prompt examples like “do what He asks,” “worship,” Read the Bible,” etc. Write each response individually on a box, and stop at three suggestions.

“Perfect. Let’s set these here.

Take three of the “Love God” idea boxes and set them down next to each other, as a foundation.

“You also gave me some really good ideas earlier about how to help and love others, right?”

Pick three of the boxes that were suggested by the kids earlier and stack them on top of the “Love God” boxes in an opposite direction, solid and balanced.

“Give me three more ways to show God some love!

Take three more suggestions, and write them on new blank boxes. Then stack them, Jenga-style, on top of the previous ones. Continue a few rounds of this. Share ways to Love God, writing on boxes and alternating stacks of three in a row. MAKE SURE TO LEAVE SOME ‘LOVE PEOPLE’ SUGGESTIONS LEFT OVER, UNSTACKED.

After creating a sizable tower, continue.

“Kids, take a close look. This is a sort of representation of what Jesus was telling the Pharisees. We are seeing how loving God and loving others are connected. They are in balance with one another, holding each other up, one needing the other to stand tall. The love of God supports the love of others, and the love of others supports the



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25 MINUTES

love of God.

“You know what is really cool, though? Jesus actually got at this whole idea of balance in what He said next.

Open the Bible Matthew 22:40 (NirV) and read.

““Everything that is written in the Law and the Prophets [the Old Testament] is based on these two commandments.””

“Everything. Not some, not part, everything. All of the Law, all of the prophecies of the prophets, everything.

“Jesus was saying that every single instruction that God gave in the Law came back to loving God or loving others. There is no instruction God gave that doesn’t fit one of these categories (point to the tower of boxes); therefore, they are inseparable.

“Let’s try something.

“There are a few of the 613 laws and commands in the Old Testament I found. You tell me if they fall into either ‘loving God’ or ‘loving people.’

“In Leviticus 19:17, they had a law which said, *Do not hate another Israelite in your heart. (NirV)*. Loving people, right?

“In Exodus 20:5 we can read about another law that said not to worship idols or false gods. That’s loving God, for sure.

“In Leviticus again, there are a bunch of commands: Do not oppress the weak, do not take revenge, do not bear a grudge, don’t embarrass other people. That’s all loving people!

“We could go through the entire list of 613, and they would fit into one of those two categories—loving God or loving people. And they are inseparable.

“And when the Pharisees heard Jesus’ response, they had no defense. Jesus had passed the test.

“Do you remember earlier I said that the Pharisees’ passion to protect God’s Word came at the cost of loving the people around them? It was almost as if they became so legalistic, so stubborn about the law of loving God that they forgot about the other part of it—loving people.

“Later, when Jesus was talking about the Pharisees, He accused them of creating heavy burdens for people to carry but not being willing to lift a finger to help them. In other words, He was saying that the Pharisees claimed to love God . . . I mean, they took God’s Word very seriously and didn’t want anybody to go against the commandments. BUT in trying to make other people love God, they didn’t show love to other people. They pointed out the failures of others. They kept a record of mistakes and transgressions. They wrote down the names of those who didn’t keep God’s instructions as perfectly as they claimed to. And Jesus called them out and said that they didn’t truly love God if they didn’t truly love other people.



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Point to the tower.

"You can't have one and not the other. Before Jesus came, there were over 600 laws that people had to follow in order to live God's way. Thankfully, when Jesus came along, He took all those laws and made them very, very simple. Love God . . . love others.

SLIDE: GOD'S BIG STORY TIMELINE

SLIDE: WEEK 1 TIMELINE IMAGE

If you're making a timeline of printed images, take this moment to place today's timeline image on the clothesline.

APPLICATION

COMMUNICATOR: "When you think about what it means to love God and to love others, know first that it's not a choice. It's not one or the other. It's both and.

"Start by loving God. Talk with God through prayer. Worship God through serving others. Read the Bible and discover more about God.

"Those things are great, but here's a secret.

Walk over to the tower and take the remaining suggestions of "loving people" and start to stack them.

"One of the best ways to love God is to love the people God created.

"It doesn't mean that the other commands and laws don't matter. It just means that love is the command that all the rest are built on. It's a balance.

"When you help your sister with her homework, you're showing that you love God.

"When you take some of your tech time to help your mom with cleaning up the kitchen, you're showing love to God, too!

"There's all sorts of ways you can love others and show them how much you love God, too.

"Love God. Love others."

LANDING

COMMUNICATOR: "As you head to your Small Groups today, think about this question:

SLIDE: KEY QUESTION

"What do you love? Other than pizza and Netflix and your phone and video games. Think bigger than that. What do you love, and how would you show it? What are some situations where you could show some love to others and, by doing those things, show some love to God? How can you act, what things could you say, or what things could



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25 MINUTES

you do to show love? You'll discuss these questions further in your Small Groups, but right now, let's pray and ask God to help us see ways, even small ones, to spread a bit of love to those around us! Let's pray.

Communicator leads group in a prayer related to what they just heard. After prayer, Communicator dismisses kids to Small Group.

AUDIO: PLAY HIGH-ENERGY MUSIC AS STUDENTS EXIT.

SLIDE: THEME

OPTIONAL VIDEO (MEDIA PACKAGE): THEME LOOP