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THE  
BUILDING  
BLOCKS  
OF FAITH

**What we want students to learn:** That students would understand that God's love for them sets in motion their love for others.

**What we want them to do with what they've learned:** To practically determine ways in which this love is practically lived out in their daily lives.

**Scripture Focus:** John 13:33-35, 1 John 3:16-18

**Overview:** As Jesus was nearing His final moments with His disciples, He made a statement that summed up so much of His time with them. Jesus said, in essence, "Love each other as I have loved you. In fact, you should love so completely that when people look at you, this love is the first thing they see." As you help your students capture the real implications of being loved by God, this command sums it up so succinctly. Having known Jesus' love, your students should extend this love to others. It's the only right response. Loving as Jesus loved is a sacrificial and selfless love. This is the kind of love John writes about in 1 John 3. These two passages combine to paint a really thorough picture of how we are to live out the love God has shown us. They serve as a significant challenge to your students, one that should motivate them to practically demonstrate love to the world around them.

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## TEACHER PREP VIDEO

Each **Activate** lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your **God's Love** lesson 13 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 13, and click on the "Background" tab. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video at the top of the Lesson Manager window.

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## BIBLE BACKGROUND

The **Bible Background** is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every **YM360** Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context" we mean at the very least helping students know **who** wrote the book, **when** it was written, and **why** it was written.
- **What's the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

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## THE DETAILS

### Who wrote these Books?

Both the Gospel of John and 1 John were written by John the Apostle. John was one of Jesus' disciples and was referred to as "the beloved disciple." John was probably only a teenager when he spent three years as Jesus' disciple. In addition to his Gospel and 1 John, he ended up authoring 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation.

### When were the Books written?

Scholars don't know exactly when John would have written his Gospel. It was likely sometime between A.D. 70, when the Temple was destroyed, and A.D. 100 when John is believed to have died. 1 John was also probably written sometime after the Temple was destroyed, but probably no later than 90 AD.

### What was the purpose for writing these Books?

#### **John**

John had one purpose in mind: that his readers would know Jesus Christ as Messiah. John's message was evangelical at its core. He was chiefly concerned with both Jews and Gentiles knowing Jesus' true identity and understanding it in such a way that they came to a vibrant faith in Him.

#### **1 John**

John was writing to a population (1st Century Christ-followers) who had seen their ranks diminished at the onset of Roman persecution. John was calling his audience to a faith that was doctrinally sound and application oriented. He reminded his readers of the teachings of Christ and urged them to put them into practice.

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## THE MAIN POINT

These passages work in concert to make a point that is common throughout the Bible, especially the New Testament. The point is simply that if we're truly followers of Christ, then we must embrace love as an essential part of who we are. The logic is pretty straightforward: God showed us love. God wants us to show His love to others. See? Easy.

In John 13 we see Jesus nearing the end of His time on the earth. In one of His final intimate moments with His disciples, He leaves them with a "new command": to be known as people who love! Jesus called them to love others in the way that He had loved them. What a powerful command. When you add this to John's words in 1 John, we get a fuller picture of what Jesus was referring to. Our love for others should be selfless, action-oriented, and sacrificial. As your students wrap up their examination of God's love, what a fitting final challenge: to be recognized by our love.

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## LESSON PLAN

The **Lesson Plan** contains three elements: An introductory activity called **The Lead In**; the Bible study section called **The Main Event**; an application-focused segment called **The Last Word**.

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## THE LEAD IN

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- **Goal:** The idea is for students to begin thinking about how NOT to blend in.
- **Set-Up:** Pre-arrange to display some images of disguised cell towers to go along with your discussion. Try the following website and see if the post "Cell Towers In Disguise" is still active: <http://churchm.ag/cellular-towers-in-disguise/>. If so, arrange a way to show some or all of the images in class. If the site is inaccessible, you can easily find a vast amount of sample images by simply doing a Google image search for "cell towers disguised." Arrange a way to display the images in class.

FIRST, ask for a volunteer to explain the concept of camouflage. (The basic idea is concealment, usually by blending into the surrounding environment.) Then, ask for some examples of camouflage being utilized. (Examples may include anything from hunters to military applications, to animals in nature.)

Someone in your group might name "disguised cell towers" as an example of camouflage. If they do, use it as a transition into a discussion. (If no one names cell towers as an example, introduce the idea once they have come up with a few other cases.) Ask if students have seen them. If you've arranged to show images of the disguised cell towers, display them to your group.

THEN, ask students to identify their favorites. And maybe have fun by asking what some other ways in which you could disguise them are. When you've finished, lead students in a short discussion. Ask questions similar to the following:

- **OK, so, what is the point behind these?**
  - Answer: It's not just to disguise them. It's an effort to keep aspects of our technological lifestyle from dominating our surroundings any more than they already do.
- **Does it work? Are they disguised?**
  - Answer: Some of them are. Some aren't. In fact, some may draw more attention than they divert.

FINALLY, wrap up your discussion by agreeing that some of these towers do seem to blend into the background. Say:

- **If you weren't looking for them, you could drive right past these towers and never even know they were there. This is a great thing for an unsightly cell tower. But as we dig-in to our final look at God's Love, we're going to find that God expects us to embrace the exact opposite principle than the one at work in these cell towers. Far from blending in, we're called to stand out. To be recognized. And this lesson will help us identify exactly what we're to be recognized for. Let's look closer.**

## THE MAIN EVENT

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- **Goal:** The idea is for students to understand that God's love for them sets in motion their love for others.

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- **Set-Up:** Before this final lesson, you may want to review the previous two lessons. You'll be tying all the concepts together in this lesson.

FIRST, spend a few moments reviewing the truths taught in God's Love, Lessons 11 and 12. Give students a chance to recall the things they remember. Use these to help with the discussion:

- **Not only is God loving, But He is also love. Love is an essential part of His character.**
- **God demonstrated this love to us by sending Christ as the payment for our sins. He did this so we could have a relationship with Him.**
- **There is absolutely nothing that can separate us from this love.**

THEN, lead students in a brief discussion to transition into the Bible study time. Ask questions similar to the following:

- **Humor me: How do you know a bird is a bird?**
  - o Answer: It has wings, feathers, a beak, it flies, etc.
- **One more: How do you know a cake is chocolate?**
  - o Answer: Maybe it's brown, it tastes and smells like chocolate, etc.
- **One last question, I promise: How do you know a bus is a school bus?**
  - o Answer: It's yellow with red flashing stop signs on the side, it may have students in it, it has the name of a school or school district on the side, etc.

Explain to students that you're not trying to insult their intelligence; you're trying to get them to think about the concept of distinguishing or identifiable characteristics. Explain that for each of the things listed, there are specific characteristics each of them has. Explain that near the end of Jesus' life, He told His followers that there would be a certain characteristic that would set them apart as His disciples. This is the subject of this final Bible study about God's love.

NEXT, have students find John 13 while you give the context to the Book using the "The Details" section of the Bible Background. Remind them that in the passage they are about to read, Jesus is speaking with His disciples following His last meal with them before He would be arrested and eventually crucified. He has just demonstrated what it means to serve one another by washing the feet of the disciples. Explain that Jesus knew His death was imminent and is giving some of His final encouragement and instructions to these men.

Then, read or have a student read John 13:33-35. When you've read the passage, lead the students in a brief discussion using questions similar to the following:

- **Jesus begins these verses with the words, "A new command I give you . . ." Can you remember the "original" command given to His followers regarding love?**
  - o Answer: We find in Matthew 22:37-40, "Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and all your mind.'" This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself.""
- **So, if loving other people wasn't a new command, what do you think Jesus meant? What was He getting at?**
  - o Answer: The command to love others wasn't new in itself. What made it new was the clarification to love others as Jesus loved. So, it was new in the sense that Jesus deepened it. He made the command sacrificial and selfless in a way that "Love your neighbor as yourself" wasn't.

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- **Because this was before Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, at that time His followers couldn't have fully known what Jesus' love "looked" like. (They soon would.) You and I have the entire picture. If we are to do as Jesus commands and love others as He loved us, what will this love look like?**
  - Answer: Answers may vary but should include things like self-sacrificing, self-giving, and selfless. Christ's love always puts others first.
- **Based on our previous Bible studies, where did Christ get the power to love in this way?**
  - Answer: Being fully God and fully man, Jesus is love just as God the Father is love. Jesus' unfailing love is an essential part of who He is.
- **What is the purpose of loving one another in the ways that Christ loved us?**
  - Answer: So all people will know the dramatic difference the love of God makes in the lives of His people. When we're seen loving sacrificially and unselfishly, people notice. It runs counter to the ways of the world.

THEN, transition to 1 John 3:16-18 by having students find the passage while you say something like:

- **As we just said, the disciples wouldn't have fully understood what loving like Christ would look like. But after the crucifixion and resurrection, John wrote letters to Christ followers with the cross in full view. He encouraged them to live lives pleasing and obedient to Christ. Let's read these together to find out more about how Christ's command to love as He did can be applied to our lives.**

Rea or have a student read 1 John 3:16-18. Lead a discussion using the following questions:

- **In verse 16, how did Christ show His love for us?**
  - Answer: He laid down His life (died) for us, as the payment for our sins.
- **John instructs Christ-followers to do the same, to lay down our lives for our brothers. What does this mean in practical terms?**
  - Answers may vary but could include: putting the needs of others before our own, giving up our desires for those of others, and so on. In essence, it's self-sacrifice.
- **In verse 17, John asks how someone who sees the need of another but doesn't show pity or help can have the love of God in him or her. What do you think he's saying here?**
  - Answer: As we live life together, the love of God in us compels us to do all we can to meet the needs of our brothers and sisters. It's impossible to have this kind of love yet consistently ignore the needs of those around us for our comfort or self-satisfaction.
- **Describe how it's possible to truly "love with words" only and never love in "actions and in truth."**
  - Answer: Trick question. It's not possible. We can say a love without sacrifice and action is real love, but it's just not. Loving words with no action are empty and have little long-term meaning.

FINALLY, lead them to think about the practical applications of this by saying something similar to the following:

- **Jesus' command and John's encouragement weren't just for those hearing these things in person. They are for you and me and all Christ-followers. We can't claim to follow Christ as His disciples yet disobey His commands. His command is to love all people as He loved, sacrificially. It's a love that can only be lived out by sacrificing our own needs and putting God and others first.**

Allow for students to respond with any thoughts or questions. Then, transition into "The Last Word."

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## THE LAST WORD

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- **Goal:** The idea is for students to grasp how this love is practically lived out in their daily lives.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need the words "practical," "visible," and "realistic" displayed somewhere. You should also have Post-It notes available in three different colors (one of each per student), a piece of paper, and pen/pencil for each student.

FIRST, remind students that you're about to hone-in on the takeaway from this passage of Bible study. On a whiteboard, chalkboard, poster, or PowerPoint slide, list the following words:

- **Practical**
- **Visible**
- **Realistic**

THEN, give each student a piece of paper and three different colored Post-It notes. Have them make three columns on their paper and place a different colored Post-It in each column. You may want to have some soft music playing in the background if the silence could become a "distraction."

NEXT, at the top of the first column, have students write the name of a family member. Instruct them to take a minute to quietly think about how they can demonstrate love with their actions to this family member. Say:

- **The three words on the board are to guide you in coming up with your action plan. Make sure the actions you choose are practical, visible, and realistic.**

Instruct them to write their "act" on the Post-It note in the "family member" column. Whether or not they write the name or initials of the person they have selected is up to your discretion.

THEN, in the second column, have them write the name of a friend they know who has a need. Repeat the instructions above using a second, different colored sticky note. Again, make sure their actions are in line with the words you've written on the board.

Continue in the same manner in the third column, where they are to write down the name of someone who is difficult for them to love, or maybe someone they are tempted to treat poorly.

FINALLY, once you've allowed time for all of these, give students a minute or two to pray for the three people they have selected, and that God would give them the courage and boldness to fulfill this action. When they finish praying, instruct them to take these sticky notes with them and to put them in a place where they can remember to follow through on these acts of love.

As a way of closing out this unit, take some time to pray for your students. Begin this prayer time by saying something like:

- **Over the last three weeks, we've looked at the love that is an essential part of God's character. We discussed how He demonstrated this love to us by sending Christ. We also discussed how Christ**

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commands us to demonstrate this same kind of sacrificial love to others. This can sometimes be difficult to do. But we have Christ's example and the power of the Spirit in us to help us boldly follow through. I want to close our time in this study together by spending a moment praying for you as you go out and share God's story through a life of love.

Close in prayer.

- Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're posting them on Instagram, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Use the **Social Media** guide to stay in touch with students via text or Instagram, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at [feedback@youthministry360.com](mailto:feedback@youthministry360.com).