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.

What children should be able to do by the end

Describe how Jesus showed love by washing his disciples' feet and choose one way to help someone this week without asking for 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 to show the class and one paper card per child.

Before class, read the full passage and the activity example. Practice unfamiliar names and choose an age adaptation.

Words to explain

Love: caring about another person and choosing actions for their good. Serve: use your time or actions to help someone.

Your 60-minute flow

0-5 minutes | Welcome & wonder

Use Welcome & wonder on page 2. Invite answers and allow children to listen quietly.

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 named verses. Use the three retelling paragraphs and The Jesus connection on page 2.

27-35 minutes | Talk it through

Ask the three questions on page 2, one at a time. Give thinking time and use the answer guidance.

35-50 minutes | Create & practice

Use the purpose, example, and steps on page 3. Then use the separate Student Discovery Page on page 4. Unfinished drawing may go home.

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 learning check on page 3 and repeat the main teaching. Tidy supplies and give caregivers the Family Connection on page 5.

Love that takes the first step

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

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 in your preferred translation. NIV is our reference translation; this is an original retelling, not a Bible quotation.

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.

Love that takes the first step

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

My love in action card

Why children are doing this: Children turn Jesus' example of service into one safe, specific plan of their own.

Teacher example: Say: I can help put away our class crayons after the activity because that helps everyone. Show a card with who you will help, what you will do, and when.

Teacher instructions: Explain one step at a time and help children try it. Children may draw or tell you their answers.

1. Show the towel and briefly recall Jesus washing his disciples' feet. Give each child one paper card. Explain that the card will hold a plan to help someone.

2. Read these invented situations: a new child sits alone; someone drops their pencils; a friend asks you to hide bullying. Ask what help is needed. Explain that bullying needs trusted adult help.

3. Show the teacher example. Ask children to draw or write who they will help, what they will do, and when they can do it. An adult may write a child's spoken plan.

4. Ask partners to explain their plans and practice the words or action. For example, practice asking Would you like help? Children take the card home as a reminder; helping does not require a reward.

Grades 1-2

Help each child choose one familiar task, draw it, and tell you who it helps. Write their sentence if needed.

Grades 3-5

Ask children to add when they will act and whether permission or adult help is needed. Discuss why helping does not mean doing everything someone demands.

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.

Check what children learned

Name one loving action and explain who it helps.

Student Discovery 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.

Love that takes the first step

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

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 safe way you can help someone this week. Show who you will help and what you will do.

Think about it

Why is love more than liking someone?

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

Love that takes the first step

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

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 task that helps someone at home. Agree when to do it. Afterwards, talk about whom it helped without turning the tasks into 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 serves mixed groups in grades 1-5 in an evangelical setting. Retellings and prayers are original. NIV is our reference translation; use your church's preferred Bible translation. No extended Bible text is reproduced.