



# LOVE IS...

**Resources for everyone  
engaging with children,  
young people and  
young adults**

# Welcome to the United Reformed Church (URC) Children's and Youth Work (CYW) resources

Are you old enough to remember the cartoons that started with the words 'Love is...' and then finished with something profound or humorous? They were created by Kim Casali (née Grove) in the 1960s, originating from a series of love notes she wrote to her future husband. Take a look on [www.loveiscartoon.com](http://www.loveiscartoon.com)

I wonder which insights you would write to finish the sentence Love is...? Those of us with faith have experience of God's love in Christ that we want to share with children, young people, young adults and their families. Understanding love and experiencing loving relationships are important foundations to a life of faith, hope and love. We also see people struggling with the concept of love and what it really means, especially when it comes to self-love and wellbeing. And yet, depending on which version you use, love is mentioned well over 300 times in the Bible. We'd like to invite you to explore that theme throughout 2023, as God's family together.

Gathered in this resource pack, you will find a wealth of material to use for your work with children, young people, young adults, and in intergenerational contexts – all centred around the Children and Youth Work (CYW) theme for the year. Be creative. You will find there is plenty that can be adapted, so don't limit yourself to looking only at the section that most obviously fits your context.

By following links to our website, given throughout this publication, you will find further supporting material. Later in the year, a free downloadable Holiday Club resource will also be available. See [www.urc.org.uk/who-we-are/what-we-do/children-youth](http://www.urc.org.uk/who-we-are/what-we-do/children-youth) for details. You can also find a downloadable version of this booklet there.

We'd love to know how you use these resources and how we might improve on them for next year – please do email us at [children.youth@urc.org.uk](mailto:children.youth@urc.org.uk) with your feedback and ideas.

If you don't have any children or young people connected with your church, please do:

- enjoy the colouring pages and use selected prayers and other materials with your adult groups
- pray for those churches nearest to you that do – maybe share some ideas with them
- offer these resources to your nearest uniformed organisation or school.



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## Special thanks to:

CYDO+ team – especially Matt Baines, Jess Poole, Judy Harris, Richard Knott, Hannah Middleton, Steven Mitchell, Leo Roberts and Ruth White.

PILOTS – Anne Hatch and Leo Roberts.

Boys Brigade – Stewart Cutler (Chaplain).

Friends and Colleagues at Church House and elsewhere – Matt Barker, Sharon Lloyd, Alison Hadley, Sam Richards, Lorraine Webb and Jo West.

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# For URC babies and toddlers plus

## Loving God – we love God

### Curiosity tray

On a tray, place lots of things that reflect love and loving God. Hearts, houses, cats or dogs, play people.



### Sticky hearts

Make a large, felt heart, or create some heart outlines, and cover them with clear film. Match heart shapes onto different hearts to reflect the love we have for God or fill the hearts with smaller hearts.



### Story-basket play

Create a story basket, by putting together lots of things that could be used to make up a story (eg scraps of felt, play people, bricks, ribbons). Create some stories about loving God.



### Make a big 'love heart'

Use masking tape, stones or paper to make the outline of a heart on the ground. Have your child come up with ways to use the heart, such as making it a racetrack, a collection area for their soft toys or other favourite objects, or a place to sit while they sing songs.



## Loving others – God is love

### Heart hands

When we place a hand in paint, we can sometimes find a heart shape in the middle. So, let's make hearts in our hands. Alternatively, put heart shapes on our palms with hand cream and rub them in with love.



### Heart cushions

On an old cushion or pillowcase, make some footprints in paint to create the 'V' of love.



### Heart pictures

Gather lots of paper or fabric heart shapes, or make them out of heart-shaped cutters and dough. Create lots of pictures using your heart shapes. Talk about how we have all kinds of love to share and that it can look different every time.



### A quiet book on loving others

Make a quiet book with images of things we love that help others, eg making people happy, caring for nature, colours that make us feel loved and cheerful. Use felt or cloth hearts in different colours and sew them together down one side to make a book. Inside, glue on shapes in different textures.



## Loving ourselves – God loves us

### Create a 'love' dance

Love feels so good that we often smile, laugh, sing and dance when we are with those we love. Choose a song your child likes and make up actions or dance moves you can do together. Have a good time and savour the moments spent with someone you love. Being joyful helps us show and accept love.



### A fabric-hearts sensory bin

Cut out heart shapes from a variety of different textured materials. Place them in a box and encourage babies to take them out of the box and feeling the different textures. Love comes in all sorts of ways and this box can enable babies to explore the variety of love, through textures.





## Baby sign-language

This image says 'I love you' in British Sign Language or Makaton or Baby Sign language. Teach your baby this sign or make up an original sign together that your own family can use to tell each other how much you love each other.



## Fingerprint hearts

Make some hearts made from fingerprints. When someone touches your heart, it stays there forever. A fingerprint is special to us, just as God's love is special to each of us.



## Mirror image

Prop up a mirror so children can smile into it. Encourage toddlers to acknowledge themselves and love their image, just as God loves them and created each of them individually. Talk to your toddlers about all the positive aspects that make them unique.

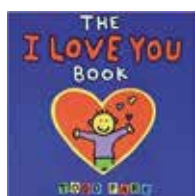


## Modern parables



**God's Great Love for You**  
by Rick Warren

**Guess How Much I Love You**  
by Sam McBratney



**The I Love You Book**  
by Todd Parr

**How Big Is Love?**  
by Emma Dodd



## Prayers

From Diddy-disciples © Sharon Moughtin-Mumby  
(Used with permission)



### 1. 'My Hands were Made for Love'

Tune: 'Hickory Dickory Dock' (traditional)

*Invite the children to sit in a circle for a moment of quiet:*

*'It's time to remember all the things we've done this week. It's time to say 'thank you' to God for all the times when we've been part of showing God's love. Let's start by wiggling our fingers! I wonder when you've shown love with your hands this week?'*

*Wiggle fingers as you sing:*

***My hands were made for love!  
My hands were made for love!  
Thank you for the love they've shown.  
My hands were made for love!***

*'Let's wiggle our feet! I wonder when you've shown love with your feet this week?'*

*Wiggle feet as you sing:*

***My feet were made for love!  
My feet were made for love!  
Thank you for the love they've shown.  
My feet were made for love!***

*'Let's put our hands gently on our neck. Let's sing: 'Ahhh! Ahhhhh!'*

*Can you feel your throat vibrating and dancing? I wonder when you've shown love with your voice this week?'*

*Put fingertips to your throat and feel your voice 'dancing' as you sing:*

***My voice was made for love!  
My voice was made for love!  
Thank you for the love it's shown.  
My voice was made for love!***

## 2. 'Look how much Jesus loves me!'



Tune: 'Here we go Looby Loo' (traditional)

### **Higher than the stars,**

Stretch up on tiptoes and reach high with 'twinkle' hands.

### **Deeper than the sea,**

Crouch down and reach low, rippling fingers like water.

### **Wider than the sky,**

Stand and stretch arms out.

### **Look how much Jesus loves me!**

Big shape using your whole body.

*'Jesus doesn't just love us when we're calm and well behaved. Jesus loves us all the time!'*

Now either invite the children to choose which feelings they'd like to explore:

*'How are you feeling today?' or: 'Let's all be cross! Can you show me cross?'*

Lead the children in singing along with their chosen facial expression and action.

(Example):

**When I'm feeling cross!** Cross action and face.

**When I'm feeling cross!** Cross action and face.

**When I'm feeling cross!** Cross action and face.

**Look how much Jesus loves me!**

Big shape.

Repeat for different feelings, inviting the children to explore a range of positive and negative emotions. For instance: *When I'm feeling... happy, sad, surprised, scared, excited, lonely, poorly.*

You may like to end with:

*'So many different feelings!'*

Yawn.

*'I'm feeling tired after all that. Are you? Can you show me tired? Let's sing quietly. This time at the end we won't make our big shape. Let's fall fast asleep instead':*

**When I'm feeling tired,**

**When I'm feeling tired,**

**When I'm feeling tired,**

**Look how much Jesus loves me!**

Yawn.

## A playgroup session

Start the session by sitting the children in a circle, with you sitting at their level.

### **Talk**

Talk about loving God. Use your hands on your heart as a sign for love. What is love? Where does love come from? How do we love?

### **Sing**

Sing 'A Little Bit of Love Goes a Long, Long Way' (with actions). [www.grahamkendrick.co.uk/alittlebitoflove](http://www.grahamkendrick.co.uk/alittlebitoflove)

### **Make**

Create hearts for a 'Box of Love' to share (these can be added to by the families at Messy Church or by members of the congregation, etc.) See photo and instructions on the next page.

### **Talk**

Talk about loving others. Talk about kindness and how your love can show kindness through your actions. Kind hands and a kind voice are what Jesus wants us to have, just like he did. Jesus' hands did wonderful things. Ours can do the same. Jesus had such kind words to say to those he loved. He always wanted people to know that God loved them so much. We can use our words the same way.

### **Make**

Draw around hands and cut them out. Stick them to pieces of card and add messages. (See photo and instructions on the next page).

### **Talk**

Talk about loving ourselves. Jesus made a new commandment, or rule, for us to keep. He asked that we all love each other just the way that he loves us, no matter what. But also Jesus wants us to love ourselves. Ask the children if they love themselves. I wonder what thoughts they will share?

### **Pray**



Let's pray.

Loving Lord Jesus,

Help us always to show a little bit of love that will go a long, long way. Help us to be kind to our friends and our family, and to love them the way we know they love us and you love us.

Help us always to have kind hands and a kind heart, like you, and let love be our greatest gift.

Amen

## Kind hands

1. Draw around children's hands onto paper or card. Decorate them (we used marble rolling).
2. Cut out the hands (adult help needed).
3. Write words and cut them out too.
4. Use a glue stick to create your picture.



## A box of love

1. Cut out lots of hearts.
2. Have everyone decorate their hearts in the same way or individually.
3. Now, wrap an open box with pretty paper. An adult can create 'springs' out of garden wire, by wrapping the wire around a pencil.
4. Using double-sided sticky tape, attach the hearts to the ends of the springs.



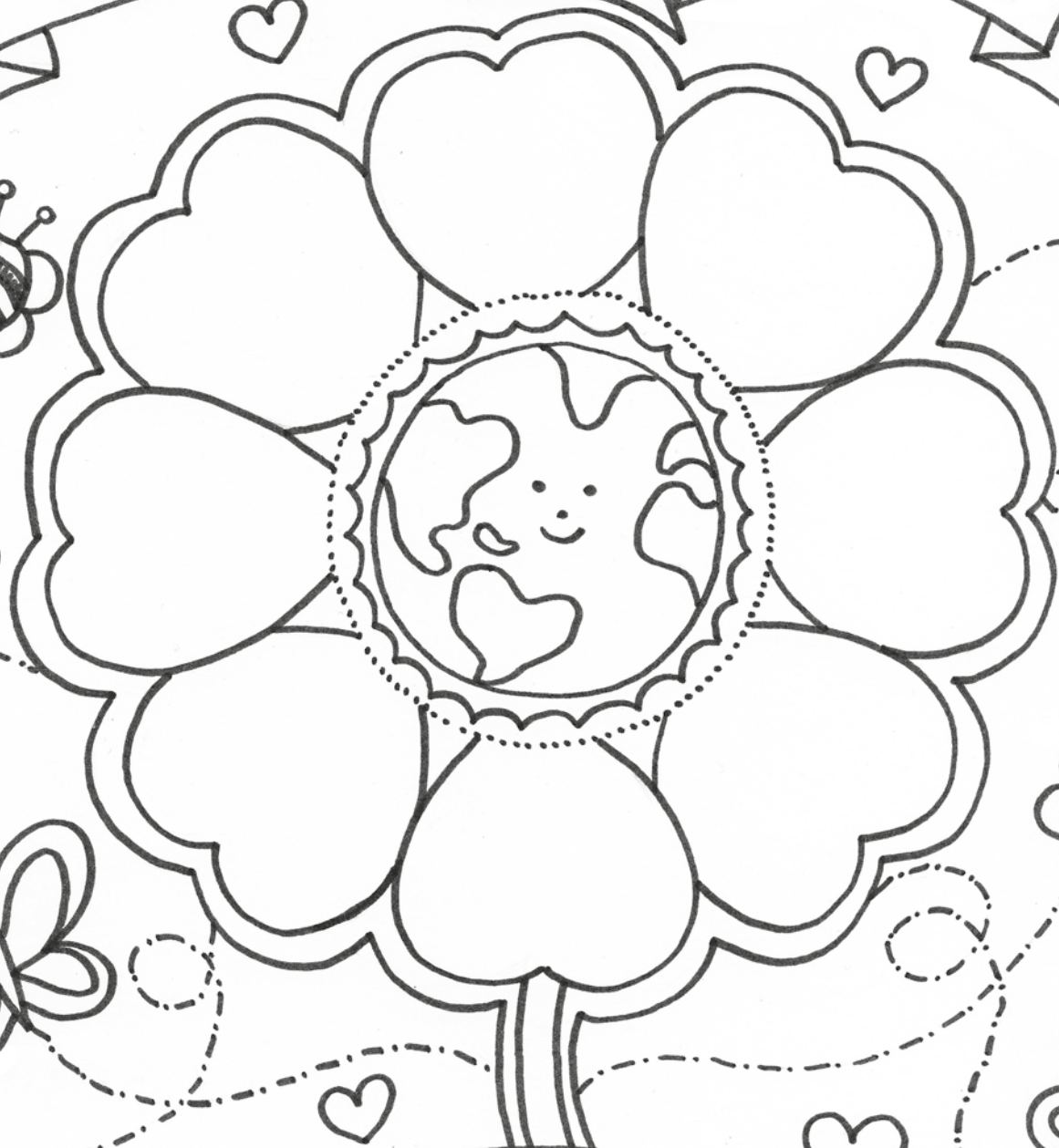
We sit together on the carpet to talk about love and sing our songs.

**Love is... being able to share all of yourself in a secure, unjudgemental and accepting relationship.**  
– Peter

**Love is... allowing someone to warm their cold feet up on you.**  
– Lythan



GOD IS



LOVE

1 JOHN 4:8



## What is love?

### Talk

What do you think love is? How can you tell if someone loves you? Are there different kinds of love? We celebrate love on Valentine's Day but does everyone enjoy that? Are there other times we celebrate love?

### Make

Make a 'hug' using paper and ribbon – something that you can send to someone you love but who you can't currently hug. Maybe this is a grandparent who lives far away or a friend who's in hospital. Alternatively, squeeze the end of a cardboard tube (perhaps from inside a roll of kitchen towel) into a heart shape and use it with paint to stamp a heart pattern and make a card.



### Do

Think about the people who love you and care for you, or who are kind to you. Send a card to say 'Thank you for loving me' or to tell them what you're thankful for.



### Play

Love is contagious. Use heart-shaped stickers or pegs with heart-shapes on them. Give each person five stickers or pegs. While music is playing, run around and try to stick/peg a heart onto someone else's clothing. If you run out, use some of the hearts that have been put onto you. You can also re-use any that have been stuck/pegged on you. At the end of the music, who has the fewest pegs?

### Pray

Pass a teddy around the group. As each person receives the teddy, they can either name someone who loves them (eg 'Thank you, God, for Sophie' or 'Thank you, God, for my brother') or just say 'Thank you, God, for the people who love me'. Some people might choose to give the teddy a cuddle as they pray!

## Love of God

### Talk

The Bible tells us 'God is Love'. What do you think that means? Can you think of things God has done that show love?

### Make

The book of Psalms contains songs written about how the singer loves God in all different states and times of life: happy, worried, sad, ashamed or excited. Make a musical instrument – elastic bands over a box, a shaker, glass bottle glockenspiel, etc – and write a song to sing about how much you love God, or use the instrument to play along to a song you already know. Maybe you could make a worship band and play together!

### Do

Think about God's creation and the things that might make God sad. Take a paper heart or green circle and tear it in two, then use a plaster to stick it together. On the plaster, write what you could do to help make the situation better. For example, if pollution makes God sad, you could walk to school instead of going in the car. If loneliness makes God sad, you could take time to go and chat to someone you think might be lonely. Now try to do the thing you wrote on the plaster.

## Play

Play 'Stuck in the Mud'. When touched by the person who is 'it', you stand still and curl up small (as though life is tough for you) and stay there until you're tagged by another player who says: 'God loves you'. Think about how God's love frees you to live a full life.

## Pray

Bat a balloon, or several balloons, in the air, from person to person. As each person hits the balloon, they shout, 'I love you, God, for ...' and say something that God's done for them. For example: 'I love you, God, for making trees.'

## Love of others

### Talk

Do you have to like someone to show them love? Which people might most need our love?

### Make

Using a clean jar, make some hand scrub to give as a gift to someone who works hard to care for others.

Option 1:

1. Mix one tablespoon each of coconut oil and honey (preferably organic).
2. Add 1/4 cup sea salt and 1/4 cup fine sugar to this and mix well.
3. Add the juice of a lime and blend for 30 seconds.
4. Put in a jar and write these instructions on a label: Massage the mix gently onto your hands for one minute. Rinse with warm water. Store in an airtight container and use within a week.

Option 2:

1. In a jar, mix 1/2 cup of sugar, one tablespoon of olive oil and 10-15 drops of lavender essential oil.
2. Write these instructions on a label: Massage the mix gently onto your hands for one minute. Rinse with warm water. Store in an airtight container and use within a week.

### Do

Use a heart shape or rectangle of card and decorate around the edges. Write a secret message in the middle. You could write it with lemon juice, which will disappear until it's held up to a light, or with a white wax crayon/candle, which will become visible if it is washed over with watered-down paint or a water-based coloured pen. Alternatively, you could cover it with paper and, using a biro, press down hard to write your message, so as to leave an indent. On the back of the card, you can explain to the recipient how to reveal the message (by rubbing the side of a pencil over the indented message). Now, slip it secretly into their pocket, bag or lunchbox, so that they will find it when they least expect it.

## Play

Sit the group in a circle, in pairs. Each pair has a bowl of Skittles or Gummy Bears or similar (depending on age). Going around the circle, one person from each pair rolls a dice in turn and, when a six is rolled, the person who rolled it has to try to feed the other person in their pair from the bowl, using only chopsticks. Meanwhile, the rest of the group continue to play until another six is rolled. The winning pair is the pair who empty their bowl first.

## Pray

Use a cut-out of your handprint and write or draw on it five people or groups of people who need God's love – one for each finger/thumb. Ask God to bless these people. In the palm of the hand, draw yourself and ask God to help you share God's love with those who need it.



## Love of self

### Talk

Why is it important to love yourself and what do you think that means?

### Make

Make a healthy snack.

Option 1:

1. Heat the oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 4 and line two baking trays.
2. In a bowl, mash two bananas and mix with 150g porridge oats, two tbsp almonds, 1/2 tsp cinnamon and a pinch of salt to make a sticky dough.
3. Gently stir in 100g raspberries, trying not to break them up.
4. Use a tablespoon to scoop up the mixture and roll it into balls, place on a baking tray and flatten slightly.
5. Bake for about 15 minutes, then leave to cool.

Option 2:

1. Take a wooden skewer and thread different coloured pieces of fruit onto it to make a rainbow fruit-kebab.

### Do

Make a 'treat jar'. Put strips of paper or lollypop sticks in a jar with activities and ideas written on them that are little treats for yourself. When you feel in need, pull one out and do it. For example, read a book, watch your favourite movie, drink hot chocolate with squirty cream, have a bubble bath, hug your teddy, etc. Alternatively, why not do a keep fit routine together?

### Play

Everyone is special. Take an orange and look at it really carefully, thinking about its size, shape and how it feels in your hand. God knows each of us as individuals and loves us just as we are. Now stand in a circle. Each person needs to pass their orange to the person on their left and gain an orange from the person on their right, but without using their hands! Do this while some music plays. Then put all the oranges in the middle and see whether everyone can identify which was their starter orange.

### Pray

Give each person a mirror and ask them to look at themselves and think of three things that are special about them. Be aware that some may find this difficult and be prepared to help them with suggestions. Encourage them to say, quietly or out loud: 'Thank you God for making me me'. All sing together: 'If I were a butterfly'.

## Love of God's world

### Talk

How does creation show us God's love and how can we show our love of God's creation? Is it the same as loving God or different?

### Make

Create a big picture together, using clean items found in your recycling bin or items from nature, if you're able to go outdoors. Take a photograph of the picture before putting everything back where you found it.

### Do

Go on a litter pick in your local area. If possible, try to find a way to separate out things that can be recycled. Find out where to take things for recycling in your church and make a poster for the church noticeboard. Does your church have an area of ground you could tidy up or weed or plant with some wild flowers?



## Play

Go on a treasure hunt in your local area. How many different birds can you see, how many different insects, how many different leaves? Alternatively, cut pictures of different birds, animals and plants into six pieces each. Give each team one piece from a picture and spread the other pieces around the room, face down. The team should send one runner at a time to search for one piece for their jigsaw. The first team to complete their picture wins. To make it harder, you could give the team two pictures to build.

## Pray

Hold a seed in your hand and look at it. Although it looks dead, God can waken the life in it, if we do our part. Think about what that seed might grow into. Quietly thank God for the wonders of creation and ask God to help you look after the world. Now plant the seed and take it home to care for it.



*Love is... making  
sure your actions  
match your words.  
– Lorraine*

*Love is... loving your  
neighbour and the stranger  
as much as you  
love yourself, as  
Jesus said.  
– Philippa*

**families  
on faith adventures**

*@ home*

Families on Faith Adventures @ Home is a pick-and-mix journey around the Bible with stories, activities, challenges and prayers for families to engage with together. Find our catalogue of resources on <https://urc.org.uk/your-faith/children-young-people/families-on-faith-adventures-at-home>

# URC children – going deeper

## Discussion starter activity

Draw three huge hearts or write the word 'love' three times in bubble writing. Fill with phrases and pictures of what each of the three types of love look like – Love of God (faith), Loving others (action) and Love of self. This can start out as a group or an individual activity, enabling a discussion.

## Love for God (faith)

### Exploring the Bible



*"My children, our love should not be only words and talk. Our love must be true love. And we should show that love by what we do." (1 John 3:18)*



*"Jesus said, 'I give you a new command: Love each other. You must love each other as I have loved you. All people will know that you are my followers if you love each other.'" (John 13:34-35)*

Read the two passages and explore them through discussion; What does it look like to love others? Why is love proof that we are followers of Jesus? How did Jesus love his disciples and what can it teach us about loving others? Use the activity ideas below to explore this further and lead to action.

## Love for others (action)

### Passing it on

Create some 'love batons'. Each time you do something that is love in action, give the person a love baton. It simply bears the words 'You have been loved. Go and pass it on'.



### Give it away and get more back

This is a tabletop talk activity. Each person has a piece of A4 paper (it works better if they each have a different coloured paper). Explain that this paper represents God's love for you. We are not meant to keep it to ourselves, we are meant to give it away.

Cut the four corners off and then pass the sheet on to the next person. What do you notice about the number of corners on your sheet? There are more. You now have eight; it has doubled. Cut your eight corners off. What do you see now? You should have more corners again.

**Group challenge:** How many corners can you end up with if you keep taking them off?

You should end up with something like a circle, where it's hard to see clear corners – this is a reminder that God's love is never ending, it can never run out.

**Wondering together:** What does it mean to give love away and get more back?



## Jammy noses game

This is a team relay race: just a bit of fun to think about how love is the 'glue' that keeps us together. Position a chair at one end of the room and another at the opposite end. On the chair furthest from you, place a plate which has on it a pile of jam and a pile of cotton wool balls. On the other chair, place an empty plate. Team members must take it in turns to run and dip their nose into the jam before using their jammy nose to pick up a cotton wool ball. They then run back to the empty plate, shake their head to release the cotton wool ball and 'tag' the next runner. Keep going until all the cotton wool balls have been transferred.



## Social action is making love tangible

How can we show the people in our communities and world that they are loved? Below are some suggestions for how your group could show God's love for people in your community:

- Go on a prayer walk around your community, asking God to show you where there is a need and what you can do to help.
- Give love away – make some gifts to give away to people in the community. You could make cards with some special verses in them from, for example, Isaiah 54:10, Psalm 86:15, Ephesians 3:18-19, Psalm 36:7, John 3:16 or Romans 8:38-39. Or you could make up small bags of chocolates with one of these cards inside – or one simply saying: 'You are Loved'.
- Connect with a local charity and volunteer/fundraise/raise awareness with them.
- Support a worldwide charity and host events to raise awareness and funding.
- Why not use the URC's Go with Greta resources to find out more about another country?

[www.urc.org.uk/your-faith/children-young-people/children-youth-work/go-with-greta-and-connect](http://www.urc.org.uk/your-faith/children-young-people/children-youth-work/go-with-greta-and-connect)

## Love of God and love of self

### Guided meditation

This is an opportunity to exploring how much God loves us as individuals.

Find a quiet space, indoors or outside. Have comfy pillows and sheets to lie on and soft music playing in the background, as appropriate. Someone will need to read the following meditation slowly:

*We are going to use a mindfulness meditation.*

*It will help us to think about our bodies, each part of it in turn.*

*In the Bible, we are reminded that we are made by God, each part of us was created by God and God loves us. The Bible tells us we are fearfully and wonderfully made.*

*You might like to think about this more as we relax.*

*Lie down comfortably and close your eyes. You can use pillows or blankets to make yourself as comfortable as possible.*

*Listen to my voice and relax. Sometimes we get a giggle during relaxation, this is ok but try not to disturb the people around you because we are all concentrating.*

*Take a few deep breaths as you begin to relax. Breathe in long and deep to the count of five, hold it for three, then release it slowly to the count of six.*

*Breathe a few times until we are all relaxed.*

*Bring all your attention to your right foot, noticing how it feels. Feel it on the floor. Squeeze the right foot tightly (your entire right foot and all five toes). Hold this tension for two deep breaths and, as you do, repeat to yourself: 'I am made and loved by God'.*

*Now, suddenly release all the tension in the right foot. Relax it completely, stretch it out and notice the tension release. You may feel a tingling sensation in your foot.*



*Take a deep breath, and then...  
Move your attention to your left foot.*

Same instructions as for the right foot.  
Move slowly up and around the body, squeezing one body part at a time to create tension, immediately followed by the release and ease. Follow each part with a deep, cleansing breath or two. Here's a sample progression you can follow:  
Right foot; left foot.  
Right knee and calf; left knee and calf.  
Right thigh; left thigh.  
All feet and legs.  
Hips and bottom.  
Belly.  
Entire lower body, from tummy down.  
Chest, lungs and heart.  
Right arm; left arm.  
Right hand; left hand.  
Shoulders and neck.  
Face.  
Whole body at once – twice.



*Finally, lie perfectly still. Repeat the deep breathing from the start, for three breaths.  
When you are ready, open your eyes and sit up slowly.*

Time for a drink and discussion

- How did you find the experience?
- How did it help you to be aware of each part of the body?
- How does it make you feel to be made and loved by God?

### **Father's love letter**

This is a children's version of a love letter from God to us: [www.fathersloveletter.com/kids-fll.html](http://www.fathersloveletter.com/kids-fll.html)  
Read through it together.

Are there any parts (scriptures) that you connect with? Are there any that you struggle with? If so, perhaps put that phrase somewhere you can see it every day to help you begin to accept it for yourself.

### **Get creative**

- Take some of your favourite verses and have a go at Bible-journaling with them.
- Take some of your favourite verses and put them inside an origami heart for you to keep reading. Or take some verses, put them in the heart and give the heart to someone else.
- 

How to make origami hearts:

- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohkqMv9I0fc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohkqMv9I0fc) – Origami heart
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CJOZKBr1Qg&t=187s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CJOZKBr1Qg&t=187s) – Origami heart with pocket (advanced). (Only need first four minutes of video).



## Thinking about types of love

### Seven types of love

There are seven types of love in the Bible. Let's explore these types of love together. I wonder which ones you think are most important? Can storge only be found in families? What does 'unconditional love' mean?

- Eros – Romantic love, between two people who are committed to each other.
- Ludus – Playful love. It's when you fancy someone and have butterflies in your tummy.
- Philia – Affectionate love between friends.
- Agape – Unconditional love of God.
- Storge – Love found in a family.
- Pragma – Enduring love, that keeps going in hard times.
- Philautia – Loving yourself.

Two clips to explain different types of love to children:

- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FCxsl2xLzI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FCxsl2xLzI)
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wIVFuZ0QjLE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wIVFuZ0QjLE)

### Love hunt

Take the story of Ruth and think about what you know about the story of Jesus. Can you find examples of the seven types of love in these stories? Can you think of examples of each type in your own lives? Think about stories/TV/films you know and what types of love you can see in those.

You could maybe watch *Moana* or *Lava* or one of the other films in our Family Film Night resources, created by some of our URC CYW writers: [www.urcscotland.org.uk/synod/children-and-youth-ministry-committee/childrens-ministry/resources/film-night/](http://www.urcscotland.org.uk/synod/children-and-youth-ministry-committee/childrens-ministry/resources/film-night/)



### Love Top Trumps

Design a set of Top Trumps for people in the Bible, or from history, and rate their stories against each type of love. For example, Mother Theresa might score high in love of others but low in love of self. Once designed, you can use them to play with friends.

Here is an example that might help or, of course, you can design your own.

**Jesus**

**TOP TRUMPS FACT FILE**

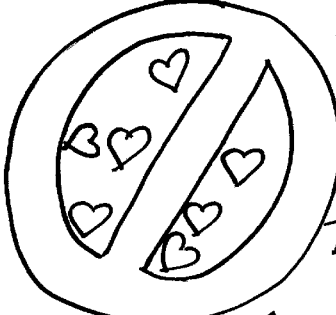
Jesus, Son of God, came to earth to help save humankind. Instead of hanging around with the rich, the influencers and elite, he befriended fishermen, taxmen and shockingly, women! Some class him as a rebel. Some say he's a good man. Others see him as a threat. However you view him, he's here to make a change.

Ludas
Philia
Agape
Eros
Storge
Pragma
Philautia

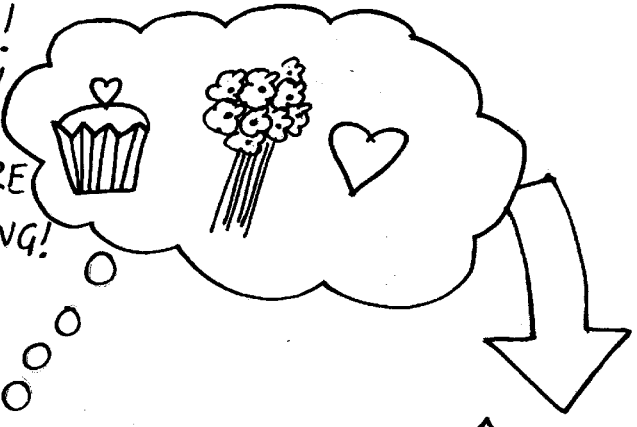
Faith Adventures for Children Together. This new resource, launched March 2023, is written with children's groups /Messy Church/junior church groups in mind and provides all the material you need for up to four sessions per month, including a take-home sheet to encourage faith at home. Watch Facebook and the URC website for more details.



LOVE IS....

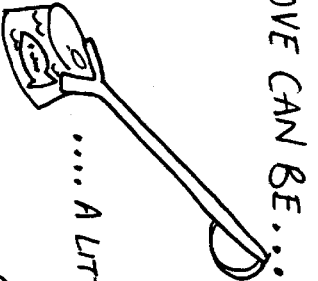


STOP!  
I KNOW  
WHAT  
YOU ARE  
THINKING!



IT'S NOT ALL  
ABOUT FAIRY  
TALES AND PINK  
ICING!

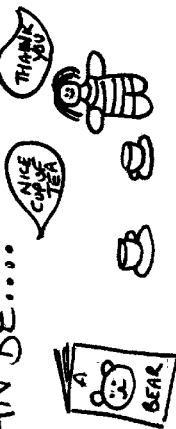
LOVE IS....  
FULL OF SURPRISES!



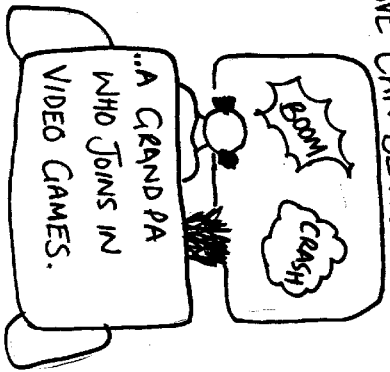
LOVE CAN BE....

.... A LITTER PICK.

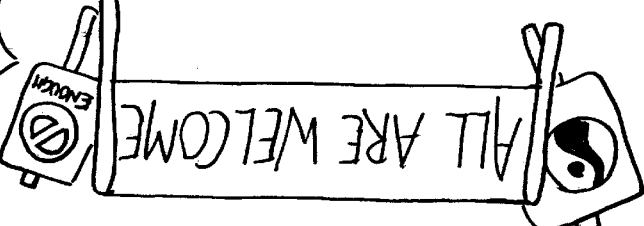
LOVE CAN BE....



.... JOINING IN YOUR  
SISTER'S GAME.



LOVE CAN BE....



LOVE CAN BE....



# A puppet drama

## What's it all about?

What's needed:

- Three puppets
- Two books (a Bible and a dictionary/encyclopaedia)
- Knowledge of songs listed in the box to the right.

(All writing in **ITALIC CAPITALS** is to be sung loudly!)

Setting: First puppet is reading a book and sighing in frustration.

Second puppet is wandering past, humming a song.

Second puppet looks at the first puppet when it sighs.

**2:** What's up?

**1:** This! (*gesturing to the book*)

**2:** What?

**1:** This! It's of no help at all. (*Throws book to the floor*)

**2:** Woah, what's it done to you?

**1:** I'm trying to find out what love is and... (*interrupted*)

**2:** "WHAT IS LOVE? OH BABY DON'T..." (*tails off as 1 glares at them*) Sorry, please continue.

**1:** (*Stares*) Annnyyaaaaay, as I was saying, I just want to know what love... (*interrupted again. Looks shocked at 2*)

**2:** (*Swaying with emotion*) "I WANNA KNOW WHAT LOVE IS"

(*Third puppet walks on in the background and stares at the madness that is occurring*)

**1:** ...Um, yeah, so, it's driving me crazy... (*interrupted*)

**2:** "CRAZY LITTLE THING CALLED LOVE" (*stares at 1 and giggles*)

**1:** (*Shouts*) Will you stop doing that? (*3 jumps back in shock*)

**2:** "I WOULD DO ANYTHING FOR LOVE, BUT I WON'T DO THAT. NO, NO I WON'T DO THAT"

**3:** Hey, what's going on?

**1:** I'm trying to find out more about what love is – Don't! (*holds hand up to silence 2 as 2 prepares to burst into song. 2 covers their mouth and giggles*) – and I can't find any answers in that book. And all 2 (*name 2*) is doing is singing at me. But I really want to know, what is love and how do people get it?

**2:** "CAN'T BUY ME LOVE"

### Songs you'll need to know:

- *What is Love?*, Haddaway
- *I Wanna Know What Love Is*, Foreigner
- *Crazy Little Thing Called Love*, Queen
- *I'd Do Anything for Love (but I won't do that)*, Meatloaf
- *Can't Buy me Love*, The Beatles
- *It Must be Love*, Madness
- *All you Need is Love*, The Beatles
- *Let There be Love*, Nat King Cole.

1: *(Glares at 2)* I'm serious. What is it?

2: "IT MUST BE LOVE, LOVE, LOVE" *(3 quickly places hand over 2's mouth and shakes head. Takes hand away and turns to 1)*

3: You've been reading the wrong book. It's right here, in the Bible.

1: In the Bible?

3: Yes. In one Corinthians, chapter thirteen, verses four to seven. It tells you all about love. Want to hear it?

1 and 2: Yes!

3: *(Clears throat)* Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, and it is not proud. Love is not rude, is not selfish, and does not become angry easily. Love does not remember wrongs done against it. Love takes no pleasure in evil, but rejoices over the truth. Love patiently accepts all things. It always trusts, always hopes, and always continues strong.

1 and 2: Wow! That's love?

3: Yes, and do you want to know something even more amazing? *(1 and 2 nod, enthusiastically)* It tells us about God.

1: What? You mean it tells us that God made love, that sort of thing?

3: Well yes, but more than that. Let's change the word 'love' to 'God', shall we see what it says now? *(1 and 2 nod even more vigorously)*

3: God is patient and kind. God is not jealous, does not brag and is not proud. God is not rude, is not selfish, and does not become angry easily. God does not remember the wrongs done against them. God takes no pleasure in evil, but rejoices over the truth. God patiently accepts all things. God always trusts, always hopes and always continues strong.

1: So, God is love.

3: Yes.

2: And God loves us like this?

3: Yes.

1: Wow, so this is what love is. It's amazing. God's amazing!

2: "ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE" *(1 and 3 stare at 2)*

2: Sorry, sorry, couldn't resist. It just seems all you need is love, which means all you need is God.

*(1 and 3 laugh and nod)*

3: *(To 2)* Got a final song to take us out on?

2: Just so happens... ahem... "LET THERE BE CUCKOOS, A LARK AND A DOVE, BUT FIRST OF ALL PLEASE, *(all three puppets together)* LET THERE BE LOVE."

# Love is... inclusive

When exploring the theme with children and young people with disabilities or additional needs, it is important to remember that each is an individual and to adapt the activity to fit individual levels of understanding and different sensory, physical and communication needs. Love is getting to know people as individuals, after all!

To explore this theme, we will focus on recognising love in general and linking that to God's love. Love is a concept that is familiar in some form to everyone, being a basic human need – even in the form of feeling safe and your needs being met.

## Love of self

### Sing and dance

'Yes, Jesus loves me': [www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUePulhSqkQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUePulhSqkQ)

### A mirror affirmation

It's important to take care of ourselves. We are special and God loves us, just as we are. Pass a mirror around and, as the child looks in it, sing (to the tune of 'Hot Cross Buns'): 'God loves you. God loves you. (Child's name) you are special, God loves you.' Or (to the tune of 'I Hear Thunder'): 'You are special, you are special. (Child's name, child's name). You're a friend of Jesus. You're a friend of Jesus. God loves you. God loves you.'

### Using the senses

Let the child choose something that they would like from a basket – perhaps a battery operated or wooden massager to rub their hand or back with, some scented hand cream to massage into their hands, a teddy to cuddle, some nail varnish (with parent/carer permission), a hand-held fan to feel on their skin. Encourage the child to join in singing:

'I am special, God loves me, I'm a friend of Jesus, God loves me,' as they enjoy the sensory experience of the thing they have chosen.

For older or more active children and young people, play the music of 'I'm accepted, I'm forgiven', or some similar affirming music, in the background while they have a pamper session or cosy themselves in a blanket, or have a drink of hot chocolate, etc.

## Love of God

### Sing and dance

'Jesus' love is very wonderful': [www.youtube.com/watch?v=yeuUoAcmD44](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yeuUoAcmD44)



We show our love of God when we include God in our everyday and when we take care of God's world. 'Love the Lord Your God': [www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdMlxCdIY-c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdMlxCdIY-c)

Play the video or sing the song and do the actions.

Learn the Makaton sign for 'Amen' and use it through the session or do an active AMEN by reaching down to the ground and slowly raising your arms to above your head during AAAAAAAAAA – then jump up and clap hands as you shout: MEN!

Amen means 'I agree', so encourage the group to do an AMEN whenever you say 'I love God and God loves me.'

Show your love for God's world by going outside, if possible, and being in nature, looking at all the beautiful things that God has made. Maybe pick some litter (using grabbers and gloves to protect against touching unsavoury items) or hug some trees. How many different colours or textures or shapes can you find? Maybe design a treasure hunt for the group to do together, looking for trees and leaves and plants and insects.

### Love sensory box

Use a variety of hearts with different textures – felt, corrugated card, sandpaper, silk, shiny paper, holographic paper – and in flat and 3D shapes. Maybe use some that are filled with potpourri, etc, as long as the children are comfortable with scents. Fill a tray with shredded paper, coloured rice, etc, and hide the heart shapes amongst it for the children to search and find and touch. While you're playing in the sensory box, talk about the people who love the child or whom the child loves, about how God loves them, about the ways we show love.

### Love of others

We can show our love of others by the kind things we say and do. Use the cards below, or make your own, to think of nice things to say about each other. Use photos of everyone in the group, in turn, and encourage the rest of the group to decide on a symbol to match them. If you've got a badge-maker, you could use the symbol to make a badge for that person and let someone in the group help to put it on them.



### Making others happy

Another idea would be to have a snack together, encouraging each person in the group to serve someone else – asking them they would like (using whatever communication method they prefer and interpreting where necessary) and then fetching that item for them.

### A message of love

Why not work together to produce a big card or picture that can be put on display in the church or presented during a service or sent to a nearby care home or children's centre. Use handprints, or a collage/ mosaic of different textures and colours. Get the group to suggest what might be a nice design. Use Widgeit or some other method to write an encouraging message inside.



# Worshipping intergenerationally

In worship, we seek to enable the whole family of God – all people, of all ages – to encounter God. The joy and challenge is in how we lead worship with all ages in mind without making things more onerous, without turning worship into a stage production or a children's performance or making worship childish. It is about using multi-age worship concepts (multi-age, multi-ability, multi-sensory, multi- intelligence) that help to deepen connections between at least two different generations. Don't get so caught up in creativity that people are distracted from God.



In planning intergenerational worship, as with any type of worship planning, consider: the congregation, the setting, the type of service (traditional, contemporary, something else), how much time there is, and the theme.

In planning the worship, consider incorporating variety:

- senses – touch, taste, see, smell, hear
- how people learn – consider whether people might learn best individually or with others, visual learning, music, movement, use of the natural world, etc
- providing opportunities for small intergenerational groups within worship
- including fun, excitement, surprise, awe and wonder, eg science experiments, games, interactive activities, etc
- making sure your language is accessible, inclusive and understandable to everyone
- involving different people from across the generations in planning and in leading the worship
- when using any aspect of worship, especially movement (eg actions, dancing, clapping), ensure you are being inclusive and respectful of different needs and abilities.

Keep it simple and be strategic in the ways you aim to engage all people in worship and create or deepen intergenerational connections.

## Love of God

Set up the space for worship in the style of a café. Why not serve biscuits, with an icing or chocolate cross drawn on, with your coffee/soft drinks?

Use a themed story: *Guess How Much I Love You* by Sam McBratney:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPLwMxogYDU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPLwMxogYDU)

During the service, you could use a game of snap – either actual or on a screen – and weave the different elements into worship (a prayer, a reading or retelling the story) whenever hearts are snapped. Pause at each section to consider how much more we can love God and that God will always respond with more.

The prayers can be kept short and the reading shared in a dramatic visual way. Invite others to take part in these elements of worship, so that multiple intergenerational voices are heard.

In smaller, intergenerational groupings, around tables, play a game of card snap. Whenever you snap hearts, stop and explore a 'wondering question', eg I wonder how we can show our love of God? I wonder if our love of God can make differences to the world we live in? I wonder if our love of God changes as we grow in faith?

The final prayer can be a prayer response and intercessions. Maybe use a prayer activity that reflects on how much we love God, such as placing hearts with our prayers written on them on a long measuring tape, down the length of the room. End with an active blessing or the Messy Grace [www.messychurch.org.uk/messygrace](http://www.messychurch.org.uk/messygrace)

## Love of others

Set up the space in café-style. Why not serve heart-shaped biscuits with your coffee/soft drinks? Use a themed story: *Invisible String* by Patrice Karst: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=MR0JUpQKhdw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MR0JUpQKhdw)

This service is about the connections we have with other people and how we are all connected through love. Begin by making connections in church: with a web. One person holds the end of a ball of string and throws or passes the ball to someone else in the group. When each person receives the string, they should be encouraged to say their name and something about themselves: eg where they were born or something they have done, a place they have visited or something they are passionate about. Then, keeping hold of



their piece of the string, they should pass it to someone else. Once the ball of string is thrown back to the person who started it, encourage everyone to look along the lines of string that connect them to two other people and to pray for those people.

Our prayers, reading and reflections are all around the invisible string that connects us all to each other and to God.

Create a web of connections on a map. Use a map of your local area with lengths of string placed at the side. Place a pin where the church is. Add a string from the church to somewhere members of the congregation, or the church as a whole, have a connection and consider how we can act to make a difference and show love in these places.

Weave a web of prayers by placing a large heart in the centre of the room. Give everyone a long piece of wool. When praying, each person should keep one end of their piece of wool and connect the other to the centre of the heart. Think of the people you want to pray for and visualise your prayer traveling along the wool, straight to the heart of God.

## Love of self

Set up the space for worship in the style of a café. Why not serve star-shaped biscuits with your coffee/soft drinks?

Use a themed story: *Incredible you* by Rhys Brisenden [www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PEAQeiQ0Sc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PEAQeiQ0Sc)

This service is based on how incredible we are and the amazing things God has given to us. We want to reflect on how we should care for ourselves, remembering that Jesus said we should love others as we love ourselves.

Using some mindfulness approaches: encourage everyone to take time to see how incredible they are. Play the game *Guess Who?*, either using the board game or with members of the congregation as the characters.

As you play, have on display this verse from the Bible as a reminder of how precious each one of us is to God:

*"You formed the way I think and feel. You put me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because you made me in such a wonderful way. I know how amazing that was!" (Psalm 139:13-14)*

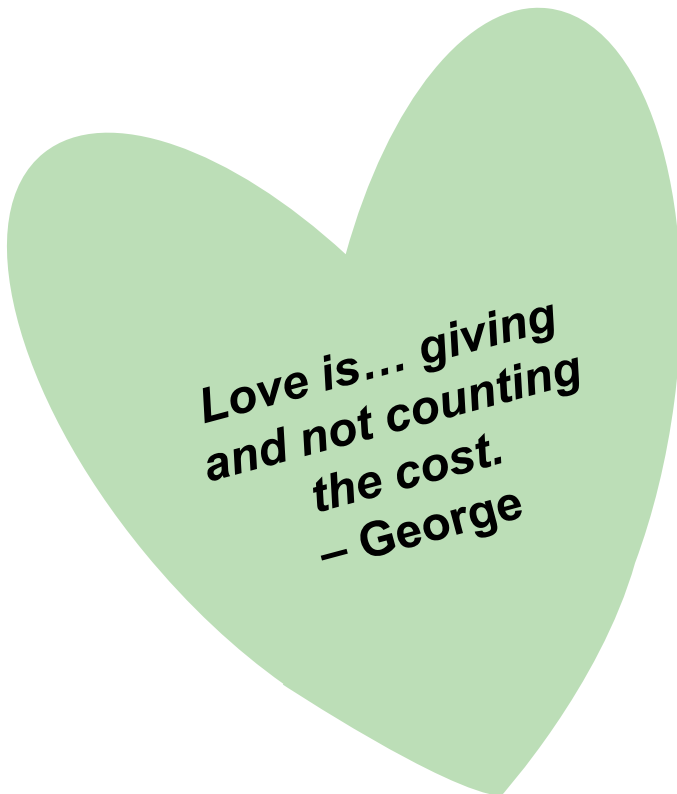
Consider these 'wondering questions':

- What is special about you?
- How are you similar and different to the people around you?
- What is your favourite thing about yourself?
- What is God telling you to do today to help you feel loved?  
What is God saying to you today that makes you feel loved?

Think about how we are all unique. God has made us all differently, but he knows every part of us and knows all about us. He knows not just our appearance but our personalities too. Let us celebrate our uniqueness and our differences, maybe by using some of these different ways:



- Mindfulness mirrors with positive quotes from Scripture such as Psalm 139:14, Ephesians 6:10, Jeremiah 29:11, Deuteronomy 31:6. Sit by a mirror and reflect how unique we are to God.
- Self-portraits – create some self-portraits using some random objects you have around, including junk, or use Lego, playdough or drawing.
- Mindfulness doodling on tablecloths – lay out some felt pens and let people simply doodle as they consider how loved and precious they are.



If you're thinking of running a holiday club, why not look at our holiday club materials, which include guidance on how to plan and run the club, detailed session plans, supplementary videos to use, and appendices on how to adapt the material for younger children, young leaders, vintage holiday club or an intergenerational event.



# Love is... a life lived to the full!

## From the Boys Brigade

The Boys' Brigade's prayer is that children and young people will experience life to the full through coming to know Jesus for themselves.



### Prayer



God, you have made life full of so many different things. Things that are happy, sad, colourful, dull, warm, cold... You made everything, including us! We are glad that we can do so many things with lots of different people. Thank you for all of it! Amen



### Full hearts

Hearts are a sign of love. Draw a big heart on a piece of A4 paper. You can cut it out if you want to. It's great to have so much love... but what is that heart full of? Inside the heart, draw all the people and things you love. Isn't it amazing how many things you can fit in!

You could make an enormous heart with all these hearts inside and remind everyone that we are all in God's heart because God loves all of us!

### Full of good things

What colours are all the Jelly Babies? And what flavours? Which is your favourite?

Try a blindfold taste test. How hard is it to tell the flavours apart when you can't see the colours?

Jelly Babies were called Peace Babies after the First World War. Why do you think they were called that? To remind us that even though we might look different on the outside and even have different flavours, we all belong together!

### Full of feelings

Play a game of charades where everyone has to act out a feeling. There are loads to choose from, not just happy and sad but excited, lonely, cold, warm, sleepy, sick, puzzled, annoyed...

Talk about how easy or hard it was to convey a feeling and for people to guess it. Sometimes it can be easy for people to know how we feel, but sometimes we keep our feelings to ourselves so that people can't tell.

Talk about times when we have felt some of these feelings... Isn't it amazing that we have all felt them? When we share our feelings, whether those are good feelings or difficult feelings, it usually helps. It means more people can share happy times and, when we are sad, people can help, so we don't feel alone.



# We love because...

## Session plans for children's groups, from Pilots

*"We love because he first loved us" 1 John 4:19*



### Introduction

The following activities and worship outline were written by Pilots, a non-uniformed organisation for children and young people that comes under the URC Children umbrella. The sessions could be used by any group, and Pilots companies may wish to use them to create a Sunday worship on the theme for Pilots' Sunday. You will find links in the Resources section below.

### Session one: God's love

*"Love is patient, love is kind. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres"*  
(1 Corinthians 13:4a and 7a, NIV)

### Gathering

Have a selection of children's books for younger readers available, where the story is about trying to help, such as Mr Bear to the Rescue by Debi Gliori. Read the story together. Older children will enjoy the book as much as younger children. Discuss what they like about the story. Ask everyone to think of an act of kindness they experienced this week. How did it make them feel?

### Read the Word

*"We love because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19, NIV)*

*"Love is patient, love is kind. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Corinthians 13:4a and 7a)*

The John passage tells us that we can love because of God's love for us. The verses in Corinthians tell us what love is and what it can be. In the same way that we benefit from God's love, we, in turn, can treat others in the same way. To our friends we can be patient, kind, protecting, trusting, hopeful and not give up on them.

### Reflect and interpret

- Read 1 John 4:19 again. Ask 'I wonder how God shows his love for us?'
- Consider ways of interpreting some of the six examples of 'Love is...', from Corinthians, using music, drama, writing a story for a newspaper or cartoon strip.

### Make and play

A chance to be creative and/or play game(s) on the theme.

- Make a set of 'Love is...' paperweights, by writing the words onto flat stones or pebbles. Make a number of each and invite everyone to take one home for a friend.
- Have lots of paper/post-it notes with 'Love is...' written on them. Invite everyone to complete the phrase (eg 'giving someone my last Rolo' – to quote an advert! Or 'the way my dog looks at me'). Do this as an introduction to the Gospel verse so that their minds aren't fixed on 'correct' responses.
- Make a set of paper circles. On each one write one of the 'Love is...' words from the above Bible passage. Look through the story books or daily newspapers with older children and talk about the action in the stories. Place the circle with the most appropriate 'Love is...' word on top of the story. Some stories will have more than one.



- Think about how God loves us and how we can show our love for others (passing that love forward).
- Pass the parcel (version 1). Have a game of pass the parcel. In between each layer, place a paper saying 'Love is ...'. When a layer is removed, everyone can give an example of an experience of the 'Love is...' phrase (it doesn't need to have happened to them).
- Pass the parcel (version 2). Have a small bag of sweets between each layer. When a child 'wins' they have the choice of giving the sweets to someone else and staying in the game or keeping them and bowing out of the game.



### Pray about it

Pray with paper chain prayers. Everyone should have a few paper chain strips and a pencil. Think and talk about how God loves us. Younger children could draw their ideas. Think about asking God to help you help others. Make the individual paper prayer link or chain and join all the chains together. As you gather for worship, place the chain in the centre of everyone and say a few words bringing the prayers to God. Everyone says Amen.

### DIY

Prepare pages with the six 'Love is ...' phrases from 1 Corinthians on them, typed in large print. Encourage everyone to take these home. Each time they experience one of the phrases, they can decorate or colour it on their sheet.

## Session two: our love

*'What we are is God's gift to us – What we become is our gift to God...'* Eleanor Powell

### Gathering

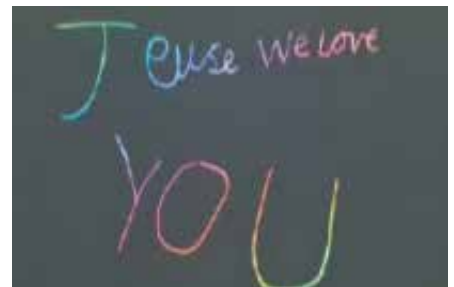
Think of:

- the ways we love
- who we love
- what we love
- why we love.

Write these on post-it notes. How do these measure-up with the 'Love is ...' phrases that were identified in session one?

When we love:

- Do we try to love like God loves?
- Are we kind and selfless?
- Do we hold grudges?
- Are there some people we don't want to love?
- Do we love the 'wrong' things?



### Read the Word

*'A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.'* (John 13:34-35, NIV)

### Reflect and interpret

Have a look in the Old Testament at Deuteronomy 6:5. How might we 'use' our love? What could we give? What are our skills and talents? Think about how to love God with all our 'heart', 'soul and strength'? Is helping someone carry their shopping (strength) loving God? Is stopping someone being bullied (heart) loving God?

- Do only Christians love one another?
- In the New Testament, Jesus gave us a new commandment: to love one another. How might we do this? Perhaps by:
  - not saying bad things about anyone
  - not getting bad tempered
  - being forgiving
  - encouraging others
  - being kind, friendly and helpful
  - putting others before ourselves
  - praying for others.

Use drama, music, art, Lego, or anything else you feel appropriate, to express some of the above.

- Listen to the song (which also has lyrics for congregations): 'A New Commandment I Give unto You': [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2X8m9tVR0\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2X8m9tVR0_Y)

How easy or hard is it to keep that commandment?

### Make and play

- Have a 'Bake Off' afternoon or evening. Make heart-shaped biscuits and decorate them, put them in bags and give them to someone who lives alone, or someone who is sad or may be lonely. Maybe sell them at church and give the money to a local charity.
- Based on 'love one another as I have loved you': play 'Follow the Leader' or 'Simon Says' or 'Mirror Gestures'.
- For older groups, see if they can get from HATE to LOVE by replacing one letter at a time. (Answer: HATE-HARE-CARE-CORE-MORE-MOVE-LOVE).

### Pray about it

- Make a giant heart shape – thinking about the 'new commandment' and using what has gone on in the above sections, write prayers on post-its and place them on the heart.

### DIY

Love changes us when we know more about things. Invite everyone to talk about how they came to be passionate about something. For example:

- Cruelty to animals (maybe they saw something on TV and then looking up the work of the RSPCA)
- Homelessness (maybe their friend had problems at home and came to live with them for a while)
- Fair Trade: (maybe they like chocolate and researched fair trade brands)
- Saving the planet (maybe they were inspired by watching programmes by David Attenborough).

Encourage them to research and find out more about their subjects.

Learn one of the Bible passages about God's love, by heart.

## Session three: living love

*"For God so loved the world..." (John 3:16)*

*"God is love and where true love is, God himself is there" (From the hymn 'Here in Christ we Gather' by James Quinn)*

### Gathering

Love is... an action word – we have to live it!

Ask everyone to think of ways we can see 'Living Love' in action today. Below are some ideas for leaders to set the ball rolling.



Encourage the group to come up with their ideas.

Local charities such as:

- Animal sanctuaries
- Refugees
- Homelessness
- Local Food Bank
- Christian Aid
- The Church.

Write these thoughts on post-it notes.

### Read the Word

Jesus feeds the 5,000: Matthew 14:13-21.

### Reflect and interpret

It is almost impossible for us to imagine loving the whole world, but as Christians that's what we are called to do. Jesus was concerned for the physical needs of the people. He wanted them to be fed, something that seemed an almost impossible task.

Having read the story of the feeding of the 5,000, interpret it through drama, music, Lego or some other way – a cartoon strip perhaps? Maybe today, Jesus would have taken the crowds to McDonalds or another fast-food place. Jesus performed the miracle, but he needed someone who had the food to want to share.

### Make and play


- Make a collage of pictures/stories from magazines and newspapers, about people and charities showing 'Living Love'.
- Working in groups, make a list of songs about 'Love'. Make it into a game: everyone stands in a circle and names a song, singing it if they can. If they can't think of one, they have to sit down. Or you can play it in groups and sing the first lines, as in the Nursery Rhyme game (see the Pilots website: <https://urcpilots.org.uk/> or page 102 of this pdf: [www.urc.org.uk/images/Children-and-youth/FOFA-Affiliated/6\\_Games.pdf](http://www.urc.org.uk/images/Children-and-youth/FOFA-Affiliated/6_Games.pdf))
- Make an 'I love you' card in sign language, by drawing around a hand and carefully cutting it out. Stick the thumb, forefinger, and little finger onto a piece of stiff card. Leave the middle two fingers 'free' and bend these towards the palm. Write your message above it.



### DIY

- Contact a local charity and invite someone to visit and talk about their work
- Organise a fund-raising activity for that charity or another of your choice
- Explore Walking the Way Challenge. Perhaps they can do some of the challenges listed.

 "We all have love to give and deserve to be loved."

 "Helping someone else through difficulty is where civilisation starts, We are at our best when we serve others. Be civilised." Margaret Mead

Discussion starters going deeper for young people

- Love is... Love isn't...

Love is... not  
giving up  
when things  
get tough.  
– Lorraine



- 'Love, it will not betray you, dismay or enslave you. It will set you free' ('Sigh No More', Mumford and Sons).

Thinking back to session one, would young people think that this is true?

- Do we overuse the word 'love' – on radio phone-ins, at the end of phone calls, and in messages, people say 'Love you' or send emojis of heart, etc. Do they mean actual love?
- How powerful a word is it?
- Is it easy or hard to tell someone you love them?
- Who loves us? Whom do we love? Make a list.
- How are we loved? How do we love?
- What is the difference between loving someone and being in love with someone?
- How can we love ourselves? Connect that with how we take care of ourselves, which might include mental well-being.

### Ideas and resources

Compass games are available on the Pilots website: [www.urcpilots.org.uk](http://www.urcpilots.org.uk)

- 'Love your neighbour' (Compass pg 99)
- 'Cross tag' (Compass pg 88)
- 'Getting to know you' (Compass pg 94)
- 'Nursery rhyme game' (Compass pg 102)
- 'The king says' (Compass pg 111).

### Suggestion for Pilots led-worship

An opportunity to share with the church how Pilots have been exploring the latest URC Children's and Youth Work's worship resource and an opportunity to widen discussions you may have had with Pilots and hear adult views.

### All Aboard!/Call to worship

God is love and where true love is God himself is there

### Hymn/song

### Prayer and Pilots prayer

### Lord's Prayer

### Introduction

Use the introduction to this worship material

### God's love and our love

Use material produced by the Pilots as the congregation for their comments/thoughts

### Readings

Deuteronomy 6:51 Corinthians 13 4-8a/John 13:34-35

### Hymn/song

### Living love

### Reading

1 John 4:19/Matthew 14:13-21 – Jesus feeds the 5,000

Involve the congregation in discovering:

- What are we doing?
- What is our church doing?
- What more could we do?

### Intercessions

### Hymn/song

### All Ashore!/blessing



# Love is... participation

Love is getting together and connecting. Love is hearing the voices of others and enjoying working together to make something bigger and better.

## What is participation?

Participation is when people unite to do something worthwhile, and everyone has a meaningful part to play. At the very least, participation makes a difference to the individual; at most, it also helps change the world around them; and sometimes it does both.



Five top tips:

1. Be clear about why you want people to participate.
2. Start with participative processes from the design and planning stage.
3. If the children and young people are involved from the start it will usually work better.
4. Monitor and reflect as the project develops.
5. Review together.

## Asking questions

It is important, if you are consulting children, to use open questions that explore what they are thinking rather than guiding their responses. Asking open questions allows a more detailed answer; the person questioned may feel free, though sometimes a little exposed.

It's also important to help children understand the type of question you're asking. Otherwise, some of them might believe there's an answer that you're expecting (ie it's a 'quiz' question) and try to get it 'right'.

Here are a few statements that could help:

- 'We really don't know the answer to these questions.'
- 'There are no right answers. We want to know what you think.'
- 'You don't have to answer the same way your friend does.'

- 'Thank you for taking the risk of giving your ideas, they are exactly what we need.'
- 'We are asking you because you are the experts in this subject, you are the people who know what is going on... locally... with this subject.'

## Ideas for encouraging participation

### Mural consultation

When creating a project, put together a mural of images and words that reflect everyone's ideas. This encourages taking part and doesn't require writing.

### Discussion carousel

When discussing ideas, set one circle of chairs inside another, with seats facing each other in pairs. Everyone has a three-minute discussion with the person opposite, then the people sitting in the outer circle move one place along. This continues until everyone has shared with everyone else. This works best with older children.

### Hot air balloon

This is particularly good when planning the steps for carrying out a project. Draw a hot air balloon. This technique asks you to think about what you need in the basket to get the project going, what will blow the project off course, what will hold it back and what will make it fly.

### Warm/cool stickers

When choosing between suggestions, lay all the ideas out separately in front of everyone. Give people two colours of stickers or felt-tip pens (orange representing warm and blue representing cool). Ask everyone to use these to mark how they feel about each of the ideas. Use the results to shortlist the suggestions for further discussion.



Let's

us not

LOVE



with

Words

or

SPEECH

BUT

WITH ACTIONS

AND IN








TRUTH.

1 JOHN 3:18



## Walking the Way challenge

<p><b>How many challenges can you do? Colour the box with a heart as you complete each challenge. Each box focuses on one of the five love languages</b></p>	<p><b>Love God (and God's world)</b></p>	<p><b>Love others</b></p>	<p><b>Love self</b></p>
<p><b>Words of affirmation</b></p> 	<p>Go for a walk and see if you can spot ten signs of God's love — shout out how great God is!</p>	<p>Be a ninja affirmer. Sneakily give words of affirmation to others. Perhaps you could slip a note into someone's bag or pocket or peg a message to their clothes without them noticing. Tell them something good about themselves — something you like about them or which would make them feel good.</p>	<p>Sometimes it is hard to say nice things to yourself. Decorate a mirror, a notice-board, a notebook with words to remind you that you are good enough, you are loved by God just as you are, you have gifts and talents and characteristics that others appreciate in you. Look at it every day.</p>
<p><b>Physical touch</b></p> 	<p>Explore God's creation using your sense of touch — hug a tree, walk in the grass without shoes on, stroke a pet.</p>	<p>Understand that not everyone is comfortable with touch — you may not be either. Could you give away a teddy to someone who needs a hug, knit a scarf to keep someone warm, or make a heart out of soft material for them to hold.</p>	<p>Get some nice hand cream and give your hands a massage, or paint your nails with some nail varnish, or wrap yourself up in a snuggly blanket (like a hug) to watch your favourite movie on TV.</p>
<p><b>Giving and receiving gifts</b></p> 	<p>Think about the gifts you have been given by God. Take five minutes and count how many things you could say thank you to God for. If you are in a position to, can you give 5p for each thing in your list to a charity of your choice?</p>	<p>What gifts can you give to others? Can you donate a tin or more to the foodbank or some outgrown clothes or toys to the charity shop? Knit some tiny hats for premature babies at your local maternity hospital or make up a bag of toiletries for your local homeless shelter.</p>	<p>A gift can be a present but the word gift also refers to something God has made you good at. Think about your gifts — perhaps you're good at playing an instrument, good at taking care of people, good at cooking or baking, good at making things. Take some time to practise the things you are good at and think about how you can use your gifts for God.</p>
<p><b>Quality time</b></p> 	<p>Spend some quality time with God — find ten minutes every day for a week to read a Bible story and talk to God.</p>	<p>Try to make proper contact with two of your friends and family — maybe phone them instead of sending a text message, or arrange a play date or get together. Spend a day trying to speak and listen to the people you meet.</p>	<p>Set aside fifteen minutes every day to do something you really enjoy such as reading a good book, chatting to a friend, doing your hobby, riding your bike etc. Tick this box when you have done this five days in a row.</p>
<p><b>Acts of service</b></p> 	<p>Can you do some guerrilla gardening (find a neglected area, tidy it up and plant some plants or wildflower seeds) or make a feeding station for birds or hedgehogs.</p>	<p>Watch out for opportunities to do good or help people around you. Can you do a random act of kindness for someone else every day for a week?</p>	<p>Put some effort into making your environment nice — tidy your room, make your bed properly, clean your shoes, plant some pot plants for your windowsill.</p>



# Love is... Lego church

## Build a parable

As a group, use Lego to build one of the following parables together:

- The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)
- The Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1-7)
- The Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32).

Read the story together and identify what characters and items you will need to create to tell the story. Is there anything not mentioned in the story that might need building?

When you have finished building, invite your participants to consider the results. Identify one of the characters the group has built and ask, 'I wonder how this person is feeling?' Think about some of the following questions:

- I wonder, where in the story do you see love being expressed?
- I wonder, where in the story do you think love is most needed?
- I wonder, if you were to change anything about the story, what it would be?
- I wonder, where are you in the story?
- I wonder, have you discovered anything new about the story by building it?

If possible, put your story on display, so that the group has a visual reminder of the things they discovered together.

## Prayer hearts

Read the following passages:

Jesus said: *"The most important commandment is this: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'*

*The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."*  
(adapted from Mark 12:29-31)

Jesus said *"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy'. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.*

*He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."*  
(Matthew 5:43-45)

Invite participants to build love hearts as prayer objects that they can hold in their hands. These could be simple red, pink or purple hearts, or you could create exciting patterns using different colours and shapes of brick. The important thing is the overall shape. Alternatively, invite participants to choose three colours of bricks. The first colour stands for the people who are closest to you: your neighbours, friends and family. Build a small heart from this colour of brick. The second colour stands for anyone who could be considered your enemy: the people who give you a hard time, who you would rather not be around. Use this colour to build a second layer to the heart, around the first. The last colour stands for God. This will be the top layer of the Lego heart, encompassing the first two.

When the hearts are complete, invite participants to hold their Lego hearts and close their eyes.



They could hold the heart in front, with their arms in a relaxed position, or they could hold it to close to their heart.

Ask some of the following questions and invite participants to think about them silently, leaving space for reflection.

### Reflections

- Who do you love?
- What are some of the ways you show people that you love them?
- What are some of the ways that other people show you their love?
- Who are your enemies? (These could be people you find it difficult to get on with, that maybe make your life difficult for you.)
- What feelings do you experience when you think about these people?
- How easy would it be to show them love?
- Are there small actions that you could start doing to show these people love?
- What difference might these actions make?




Invite participants to take three deep breaths, and then give the following prayer prompts:

- Use this time to thank God for the people you love.
- Thank God for the people who love you.
- Ask God to help you love the people you find difficult to get on with.

Alternatively, lead the group in a prayer, allowing pauses for participants to think about the people mentioned:

Think about the people closest to you: Your neighbours, friends and family. Is there anyone who needs help or a listening ear? Hold them in your heart as we pray.

[Pause] 

Think about your enemies: the people who give you a hard time, who you would rather not be around. What are the things that make it difficult to love them? Hold them in your heart as we pray.

[Pause]

Think about God. Sometimes it can be hard to know how to love God, who we can't see. But as we grow in love for our neighbours and our enemies, who we can see, we also start to grow in love for the God who loves each one of them.

[Pause]

Loving God, **help us to grow in love.\***  
Amen.

\* You might like to invite participants to join in with the words in bold.

Depending on the age and concentration levels of your participants, they may find it difficult to keep their eyes closed for all of the reflections/prayers. Consider asking fewer questions during the reflection or turning this into a discussion time.



# Love is... movie-night together



## How to Train Your Dragon (PG)

Hiccup is a teenager from the island of Berk, where fighting dragons are a way of life. His views and weird sense of humour make him an outcast, even though his father is chief of the clan. When he befriends an injured dragon, who he names Toothless, he has the chance to plot a new course for his people's future.

## Onward (U)

Teenage elf-brothers Ian and Barley embark on a magical quest to spend one more day with their late father. Their journey is filled with cryptic maps, impossible obstacles, and unimaginable discoveries. But when dear Mom finds out her sons are missing, she teams up with the legendary manticore to bring her beloved boys home.



## Turning Red (PG)

A thirteen-year-old girl is torn between remaining her mother's dutiful daughter and the changes of adolescence. And as if this were not enough, whenever she gets overly excited she transforms into a giant red panda.

## A Beautiful Day in the Neighbourhood (PG)

An investigative journalist receives an assignment to profile Fred Rogers, aka Mr Rogers. He approaches the interview with scepticism, as he finds it hard to believe anyone can have such a good nature. But Rogers' empathy, kindness and decency chip away at Vogel's jaded outlook on life, forcing the reporter to reconcile with his own painful past.



## Spider-Man: No Way Home (12)

With Spider-Man's identity now revealed, our friendly neighbourhood web-slinger is unmasked and no longer able to separate his normal life as Peter Parker from the high-stakes of being a superhero. When Peter asks for help from Doctor Strange, the stakes become even more dangerous, as he discovers what it truly means to be Spider-Man.

## A Quiet Place (15)

A family must live in silence to avoid alien creatures that hunt by sound. Knowing that even the slightest whisper or footstep can bring death, Evelyn and Lee are determined to find a way to protect their children, while desperately searching for a way to fight back.



## Everything, Everywhere, All at Once (15)

When an interdimensional rupture unravels reality, an unlikely hero must channel her newfound powers to fight bizarre and bewildering dangers from the multiverse as the fate of the world hangs in the balance

### Questions for discussion:

1. According to this movie, what does love mean? What does it tell you about love?
2. How do the characters show love to one another in this movie?
3. Do any of the characters struggle to love themselves in this movie? Why do you think that is?
4. Has this movie made you think differently about what love is? Why?
5. Where could you find God in this movie? Does it make you think of any Bible passages you know?
6. What links can you find between this movie and 1 Corinthians 13?
7. What one thing could you do this week to show that you love and appreciate someone?



## Crafty love

### Edible noughts and crosses

What you need:

- Jacob's (square) crackers
- Icing tubes
- Heart-shaped sweets or love hearts (consider making your own peppermint creams in a heart shape:



[www.carnation.co.uk/recipes/peppermint-creams-recipe](http://www.carnation.co.uk/recipes/peppermint-creams-recipe)

What you do:

1. Create a grid on the cracker to give you nine small squares.
2. Divide the sweets into two piles, one for you and one for your opponent. (This will work best with each person having different coloured sweets.)
3. Play noughts and crosses. (Wash your hands before you begin!)
4. The winner gets to eat the cracker
5. Keep playing until you run out of crackers.

Alternatively, have fun arranging the hearts on the cracker, securing them with a little bit of icing, and enjoy eating them.

### Chalk-heart trail

What you need:

- Pavement chalks.

What you do:

1. Create some large heart templates in thick card (cereal packet/package box).
2. Choose places to leave 'Love is...' messages around your church or wider community.
3. Place the template on the pavement and hold it firmly in place. Then shade out from the edge, using as few or as many colours as you like so that, when you remove the template, you have a blank heart shape in the middle. Or just draw around the template with thick lines.
4. Use the chalk to write a short message in the middle of the heart. For example: God loves you! God loves to see you smile/play/share/pray/pause/love others. Love is... picking up litter/saying hello/giving up your seat/serving others.

Further ideas:

- You could do this as an activity to bless people – see if you can leave hearts without people noticing you doing it!
- You could make a trail for people to follow – in which case, number the hearts.
- You could make some hearts as a group (using any media) and then leave them in places to brighten people's day – perhaps they might take them to keep?
- Hearts are the most obvious symbol for love so, for an extra challenge, can you come up with an alternative image or shape to use? What represents love in the same way that a heart does, for you?

### Love-song challenge

Your challenge is to take some original lyrics from a well-known song and alter them to craft your own love song from/about God. First, consider what you would like your audience to know about love, play around with the wording trying to ensure it fits with the rhythm of the music. As an example to help you, there is a sample song below based on 'Firework' by Katy Perry. Once you are happy with your completed version, decide how you would like to perform it. This could be as a solo or group karaoke, or you could use puppets to perform it during a service or youth group session. However you perform it, have fun doing it.

'Cause baby, you're a CHILD OF GOD  
Come on, show 'em what you're worth  
Make 'em go, 'Oh, oh, oh'  
As you TELL 'EM 'BOUT MY LO.....VE  
Baby, you're a CHILD OF GOD  
Come on, let your FAITH, BURST FREE  
Make 'em go, 'Oh, oh, oh'  
AS YOU TELL 'em 'BOUT ME, ME, ME.



## Reflect

A music lover's version of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7:

*Love is patient - with downloads  
Love is kind - with volume in public spaces  
Love does not want what belongs to others –  
no piracy  
Love does not brag – about its collection  
Love is not proud – of its selection  
Love does not dishonour other people –  
or their taste in music  
Love does not look out for its own interests –  
no exclusive headphones  
Love does not easily become angry –  
with blocked access  
Love does not keep track of other people's  
wrongs – or dud tracks  
Love is not happy with evil –  
appreciating guidance ratings  
Love is full of joy when the truth is spoken –  
and sung!  
Love always protects – the sound quality  
Love always trusts – the beat  
Love always hopes – for great remixes  
Love never gives up – the music goes on.*

A classic-car nut's version of 1 Corinthians  
13:4-8, 13:

*Love is patient – with rusty nuts and bolts  
Love is kind – salt is unkind  
It does not envy – the other person's car  
It does not boast – about the beautiful condition  
It is not proud – of all the hours spent restoring  
It is not rude – when others are rude  
It is not self-seeking – unlike that  
top-of-the-range stereo  
It is not easily angered – by all the things that  
go wrong  
It keeps no record of wrongs – but keeps  
details of all expenditure and service history  
Love does not delight in evil – and hates to  
see damage  
But rejoices with the truth – and a finished project  
It always protects – keep it in the garage  
Always trusts – in the breakdown service  
Always hopes – we won't breakdown  
Always perseveres – no matter how difficult the job  
Love never fails – to see past the potential to the  
beauty within  
And now these three remain: faith, hope and love,  
and the greatest of these is love.*

What do you love? Can you write your own version  
for that?

## In your own words

Here are some different paraphrases of the 1  
Corinthians 13:1-3 passage.

Here is a paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 13:1-3:  
Without love we are nothing.  
Without love, everything we say is just a noise.  
Without love, everything we know is meaningless.  
Without love, everything we do is worthless.  
Without love, we are nothing at all.

- Do you agree with these statements?
- How would you rephrase this passage to explain it to a non-Christian friend?
- What do you love? Can you write your own version for that?

Read the whole of the 1 Corinthians 13:4-7  
passage, substituting 'God' for 'love'. What strikes  
you? Does your experience of God confirm any of  
these statements?



Use this game as a stepping stone to exploring what the young people would like from a relationship, what is important to them and how this reflects in their faith journey.

Would you rather:

- someone gave you flowers or that flowers were never given to you?
- be in a relationship with someone who loves God or doesn't love God?
- meet the love of your life when you are young or when you are older?
- be in a relationship with someone who said nice things to you or gave you nice things?
- marry someone who is funny but poor or someone who is boring but rich?
- have one true love or lots of lovers?
- settle for an easier, less satisfying relationship or work a little harder for a more satisfying relationship?
- be with someone safe and secure or someone impulsive and daring?
- be with someone who always tries to please you or someone who wants to be pleased?
- be with someone who is patient or is kind?
- be with someone who is always honest or someone who protects you from hurt?

How do your answers correlate with 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NIV)?

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. Perhaps the group can come up with some of their own 'would you rather' for each other?

**Love is.../is not...**

Copy and cut up the set of template cards, ensuring there are enough sets to be used in pairs. The aim of the game is for each pair to decide whether the card should go in the 'love is...' or in the 'love is not...' pile. You could consider using these cards as a type of charades game, acting out the scenarios.

LOVE IS	LOVE IS NOT	
		Compromising with your partner
Keeping calm in an argument	Listening to your partner	Having your own interests
Your partner shouting at you if you have upset them	Your partner wanting to be with you all the time	Using kind words to explain something you have done wrong
Flirting with other people	Always doing things to please your partner	Being able to make mistakes and say sorry
Being honest no matter what	Feeling able to share your feelings, dreams and thoughts with your partner	Telling your partner what your needs are
Letting your partner have their way	Only doing things together rather than doing things with your friends	Choosing what you will both do because you are good at arranging things

## Create a community LOVE IS collage

Read through 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIVRV) and make a list of what it tells you the qualities of love are. Can you find an example of each of these qualities in your group, your church community or wider community?

Create a collage using words cut from magazines etc for the text and photos/logos/drawings of the different groups and people – highlighting different aspects of love shown in different ways by everyone in your church community. You don't need to keep repeating 'love' – just focus on the qualities shown.

God is love – so re-read the whole 1 Corinthians passage substituting 'God' for 'love'.

What strikes you? Does your experience of God confirm any of these statements?

## Love song hunting

In smaller groups list as many songs as they can that include the word love in the title or chorus in a set time (for example two minutes). Compare the lists from each group, if you want a scoring system, give five points to each group where a song appears on their list but also on one or more other groups list and ten points for each song that only appears on their list.

## Karaoke

You could compile your own list of love songs and have a karaoke game with the word 'Love' substituted with the word 'God'. Did the song still work? Did it add or detract from our understanding of love or of God with this change? Will you be able to listen to/appreciate these songs in the same way again?

## Name That Tune

Play a 'name that tune' style game with the opening bars of some love songs of your choice. You can either play this individually or in teams. Create a scoring criteria, perhaps 20 points for those who guess within ten seconds (or however long you decide to initially play the tune for) and then ten points for say 20 seconds and five points for 30 seconds.

To ensure there is no cheating, someone from within each team needs to run up to the leader with the answer on a piece of paper, in return the participant gets a different coloured card given to them depending on how quickly they guess correctly... for instance within ten seconds a blue card, 20 seconds a green card, etc. At the end, add up the scores.

## Love heart relay

Run a team race where each member has to negotiate an obstacle course balancing a Love Heart sweet on their forehead without using their hands. Talk about how love can sometimes feel like an obstacle race – things come in the way to make things difficult, maybe even threaten to break your heart – sometimes taking things slowly and patiently can help, focusing on the love you feel. Talk too about how meaningful some of the words written on the Love Heart sweets are. What would be written on there if God were writing them?



## Find your soul mate

Create a set of labels of things which go in pairs – knife and fork, salt and pepper, cup and saucer, ewe and ram etc. Without letting anyone see the labels, pin them onto the back of the participants. Everyone then goes round the room asking questions about the label on their back that can be answered yes or no eg Am I an animal? Am I bigger than a 5p piece? Once they have guessed what it says on their label, they should try to find the person whose label makes a pair with theirs. Talk about how sometimes when going into a relationship of any kind, you need to know as much about yourself as about the other person, but also that it's important to listen attentively and ask the right questions.

# Self-love pamper evening

*“Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*

*This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself.’”  
(Matthew 22:37-40)*

As Christians we think, and sing a lot about, loving God and loving others, but Jesus’ teaching makes it clear that we need to make room for self-love too. Talk about what loving yourself as God loves you really means. How does it differ from being selfish or self-centred? Did Jesus ever show self-love and take time out? Why might it be important? Think about the value of rest. Why not hold a pamper evening or two to put the focus on self-love and care?

Important: Many of these activities involve substances coming into contact with people’s skin, so be sure you are up-to-date with any allergies present in your youth group.

## Smoothie making

Use fruit and green vegetables to create some healthy self-care smoothies together. Or be more indulgent and create thick shakes by adding ice-cream. You could even make some mocktails.

## Face masks

You could buy inexpensive kits or try making your own with natural ingredients. Simply mash up half an avocado, mix in a tablespoon of honey and apply to the face for a super moisturising face mask. Leave for ten minutes, then wash off. Don’t forget the cucumber slices for the eyes!

## Nail care

Set up a nail care station for mini manicures. Young people can have their nails filed and shaped before painting, for pure indulgence you could start with a hand massage. For those who do not wish to have their nails painted you could have a selection of nail-art stickers for the young people to access.

## Hand and shoulder massages

A pamper evening is an opportunity to relax, and what’s more relaxing than a gentle massage?

Any demonstration is appropriate only if done leader-to-leader, with the young people then giving their friends massages (unless you are able to bring in a professional!).

## Hair braiding and styling

Hair braiding works best with long hair, but people with short hair shouldn’t miss out. Bring some hair styling products and hair glitter, and everyone can join in! Supply different hair slides and bands to allow all to ‘restyle’ their hair without having to apply any sort of product.

## Temporary tattoos

Use temporary tattoos, face paints and glitter to create beautiful designs or let your imagination go wild!

## Bath-bomb making

Why not make bath bombs to take home? You can find lots of simple instructions on how to do this online. [www.southerncrushathome.com/diy-bath-bombs-homemade-easy-step-by-step-tutorial/#](http://www.southerncrushathome.com/diy-bath-bombs-homemade-easy-step-by-step-tutorial/#)

## Lip-balm making

Find an online recipe to make lip balms together. Try to find one with natural ingredients like beeswax, shea butter, essential oils and coconut oil. [www.thecoconutmama.com/homemade-lip-balm](http://www.thecoconutmama.com/homemade-lip-balm)

## DIY pamper boxes

Self-love shouldn’t finish when the evening is over. Why not have a craft station where people can create decorated boxes to take their lip balm, bath bomb and other items home in? Many places offer free samples that you could also include.

## Foot washing

John’s Gospel tells us that Jesus washed his disciples’ feet to demonstrate the full extent of his love for them (John 13:1-5). Could you start or finish your pamper evening with an act of foot washing?

If there is anyone in your church community who specialises in any of these activities, why not invite them along to give the group a demonstration and to provide advice?



# Bible studies from Youth Assembly 2023

## Bible study one

*“God’s love for us is amazing! God looks on us as sons and daughters. People don’t recognise the relationship because they don’t recognise God.*

*Dear friends, we are children of God already” (1 John 3:1, from Good as New: A Radical Retelling of the Scriptures by John Henson)*

Questions:

1. In some versions of John’s verse it uses the word ‘lavish’. What do you think that means in this context? Use your Bibles to look at different translations of the verse.
2. In this third chapter of a letter from John, he focuses mostly on the concept of love: because of God’s love for us we are not only called children of God, we are actually made children of God. How do you feel about this?
3. John also talks about how sin, including hate, is never the result of a proper relationship with God. What do you think this means? Does this mean hate as injustice or division?
4. ‘People don’t recognise the relationship because they don’t recognise God.’ Does this mean that God will never accept them as a child of God?
5. How can we enable people to have a relationship with God and experience the ‘lavish’ love of God?

## Prayer



Thank you, Jesus, that you have given us a job to do.

You want us to share your love.

**Wow, God, your love has no limits.**

Thank you, Jesus, that you care about each one of us.

We are special to you.

**Wow, God, your love has no limits.**

Thank you, Jesus, that that you care about those we love – our families and friends.

**Wow, God, your love has no limits**

Thank you, Jesus, that you care about the people we meet occasionally on the streets or see around the place we live.

**Wow, God, your love has no limits.**

Thank you, Jesus, that you also care about the people who live far away and who look and sound different to us.

**Wow, God, your love has no limits.**

Thank you, Jesus, that you love even those who do not like us or who we find difficult to like.

**Wow, God, your love has no limits.**

Thank you, Jesus, that you care for and love everyone, everywhere.

**Wow, God, your love has no limits.**

Amen



## Affirmation cards

Give each person a piece of A6 card and ask everyone to write their name on their card.

Pass the card around the room and ask everyone else to write one thing that they love about the named person that they might not necessarily know about themselves. Pop the cards in an envelope to hand back out at the end of the session. At that point, we will pray about what has been written.



## Bible study two

“Jesus said, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence. This is the most important, the first on any list. But there is a second to set alongside it: Love others as well as you love yourself.’” Matthew 22:37-39  
(The Message)

Questions:

1. Often we don't see ourselves the way that we see others. How can we truly love others when we have a blurred vision of ourselves?
2. Loving God with all our heart is a challenging thing to do. How do we use our love of God in our life and actions?
3. If the soul defines our personhood and who we are, then loving God with all our soul is to love someone with all we are. How can we do this if we don't love and appreciate ourselves?
4. It's important that we love God with our whole minds. This requires us to read and study our Bibles, talk about God's word and challenge those issues that arise in the world that go against God's word. What do you do to take time to enrich your mind with God's love?

## Prayer



Hand out the affirmation cards to each person and give time for people to silently read through the things that other people appreciate about them.

Invite everyone to join in this prayer, repeating each line after you:

Each person holding a pebble, and with calm music in the background, take five minutes to pray about the people around you and the words of affirmations that you have written about them – thank God for everyone here.

Dear God,  
help me to know  
that I am held  
by you.  
Thank you  
for all the people  
that encourage me  
and support me.  
Amen



## Prayer

Creator God,  
We pray that the fruitful conversations we have shared today enable us as young people of the URC and followers of Jesus, to be your people. We pray that people would know we are Christians by our love. We pray that together we might create a world of equality and love among all.  
Lord, hear our prayer.  
Amen



# URC Youth Bible study

(From the Chaplain to the Youth Moderator).

This year, the URC Youth Assembly is exploring what Love is. Love is many things: kind, patient, humble, selfless and much more. This is an introduction to self-love and why we need to love ourselves to allow us to love others effectively.

## Bible readings

Matthew 22:34-40, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7



## Listening to God through the Bible

This is a simple way of reading the Bible prayerfully as a group:

1. When we read or listen to the Bible, we pray that God's Holy Spirit will speak to us through it. We might hear God speaking, we might hear a particular word or phrase that stands out for us, or we might be struck by what someone else thinks is important. God can speak to us in all these ways.
2. The first time you hear this reading, try just to listen. You might close your eyes, sit comfortably and ask God to speak to you.
3. Don't worry if you get distracted and other thoughts come into your head. When you notice this happening, just bring your attention back to the reading. Don't worry if you have missed something.
4. After hearing the reading, think: Were there any words or phrases that stood out for me? How did this reading make me feel? (Bored, confused, curious, excited?).
5. I wonder what you think is important in this reading? If you are in a group, you might like to say out loud the word or phrase that caught your attention (but you don't have to).
6. Listen to the reading again. After hearing the reading, did anything stand out for you this time? Listen to what other people might have heard in the reading.
7. You might like to pray about what you heard in the reading. Ask God to speak to you again during the coming week if there is something you need to hear.
8. You might like to go back and look at the reading again during the week. Read it for yourself instead of listening to it. What stands out for you this time?

## Read and listen

Start by listening to the New International Version translation of Matthew 22:34-40:

[www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+22%3A34-40&version=NIV](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+22%3A34-40&version=NIV)

What words or phrases stand out to you? What does the part about our neighbours mean to you? How do you love God with all your heart, soul and mind?

Now listen to The Message translation of the same passage:

[www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+22%3A34-40&version=MSG](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+22%3A34-40&version=MSG)

Are there any different words used in The Message translation that stood out to you? Why? The Message version states that we are to 'Love others as well as you love yourself' but what does that mean?

### **Imagine**

Imagine that you have two donkeys. Both donkeys are used to give people rides and help them with shopping, etc. One donkey you feed the best quality hay and nutrients that it needs, and you never let it work more than four hours a day. The other donkey you often forget to feed and quite regularly work for more than 12 hours a day. Now, the donkey you look after well, grows in strength and energy and is able to carry more, but the donkey you forget to feed, and who you over work, soon gets tired and weak, and will likely collapse due to lack of nourishment.

We are like the donkeys: if we love ourselves, we are able to share love with more people and with more generosity. However, if we forget to love ourselves, we will quickly fatigue from sharing love with others. We are told in the passage to 'Love the Lord your God, with all your heart/passion, soul/prayer, and mind/intelligence'. Yet if we forget to look after ourselves, we can often find that our passion and intelligence can quickly fade.

### **How can we love ourselves?**

To love ourselves may seem difficult to some of us and quite selfish to others, but it actually tells us in the Bible what love looks like. Listen to 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 from the NIV translation.

[www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+13%3A4-7&version=NIVUK](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+13%3A4-7&version=NIVUK)

Which words describing love stand out to you the most? Which do you find the easiest to show to others? And what do you find the hardest to show to those around us? Now listen to the passage again, and as you listen to the description, think about how you show yourself love.

### **Reflecting on the passage**

I wonder if you ever show yourself patience and kindness? It is easy to get annoyed with ourselves if we don't get something right first, second or, even, third time and to criticise ourselves on our looks, skills and capabilities. We are often the first to put ourselves down and say unpleasant things about ourselves. Are you often unkind about yourself? Do you compare yourself to others, wishing that you could be better/more like that person?

Matthew 22:39 tells us to 'Love your neighbour as yourself', so if we are unkind, impatient and just plain nasty to ourselves, then we are going to end up being unkind, impatient and nasty to others – which in turn will mean that the heart, mind and soul we love God with is actually not that pleasant.

### **Going forward**

We have read that the greatest commandment is to love God completely, with our whole selves, and to love our neighbours as we love ourselves. However, we can only do this well if we love ourselves – showing the kindness and patience that shapes love to ourselves.

To be able to share God's love with those around us and to love God completely, we need to make sure that we are fully charged with the love that God has for us. Over the next week, remember to ask God to help you love yourself the way he loves us, to charge yourself up, allowing you to love God and your neighbours completely. If you need help in remembering that you are loved and perfect, remember what we are told in Psalm 139:14, NIV: 'I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.'

Want to know more about what love is? Can you help your church share God's love with your local community? You will find more ideas and opportunities in other sections of this resource.



# Drama script – Roses are red

In this drama script, Alex is struggling to know what to write in a Valentine's Day card for their partner. They want to write something about love but are not sure how to describe it or what love is, until some people come to help.

## Characters:

- Alex: Dressed in jeans and top, or similar
- Love: Dressed in red or clothes that have hearts on
- Forgiveness: Dressed in purple
- Patience: Dressed in green
- Kindness: Dressed in orange
- Acceptance: Dressed in a variety of clothes: a puffer jacket/flowing dress/suit tie/hat, etc.

## Props:

- A big Valentine's Day card
- A pen
- Chair.

**ALEX:** (*Looking at the Valentine's card*) Um... hum: Roses are red, violets are blue... I think that I will stick with you like glue. No, that's rubbish. Roses are red, violets are blue... give us a snog and I'll give you one.... Oh, I don't know!

**LOVE:** You ok? You look puzzled.

**ALEX:** Yeah, I think so. I'm trying to think of what to write in this Valentine's card.

**LOVE:** Perhaps I could help?

**ALEX:** I don't think so, but thanks.

**LOVE:** Trust me, I'm sure me and my family could help. Hang on, let me get them. (*Gestures for Kindness to come and join them. As they do, Love walks away*)

**ALEX:** It's ok... they've gone. Ok then!

**KINDNESS:** Hi, my brother says you might need some help writing your Valentine's card?

**ALEX:** Well yes, but I'm not sure how you can help me?

**KINDNESS:** I'm sure we can do it together, come on let's think hard... I even have a pen you could use, if you need it. Let's start with you thinking of all the things that you love about the person.

**ALEX:** Love, you see that's such a big word and I'm not even sure how I'd describe it.

**KINDNESS:** Do they do nice things for others and for you? Do they help you out?

**ALEX:** Yeah, they do – I mean they give me advice when things get tough and they look after me if someone has upset me. These are good things to write in my card – thanks.

**KINDNESS:** That's ok, happy to help. See you soon... hopefully.

**ALEX:** You never told me your name?

**KINDNESS:** My name? I'm sure you can work it out. (*Winks and walks away*)

**ALEX:** (*Thinking hard and then seems to have an idea*) Um... hum: Roses are red, violets are blue... you are so kind and I love to be wined and dined... No, perhaps not! (*Forgiveness appears*)

**FORGIVENESS:** Hey, are you Alex? I've come to help you with some card you're writing?

**ALEX:** (*Looking at where Kindness walked away*) Er yes... um, thanks. Was that your sister I was talking to earlier? I'm guessing her name might have been Kindness, though that's an unusual name for someone. I'd love to know your name. I hope it's not hate!

**FORGIVENESS:** Before I tell you my name, let me suggest something to help you write your card. It's really all about not letting anything they have done wrong get in the way of you knowing what to write...

**ALEX:** Like what?

**FORGIVENESS:** Hmm... like when they don't always listen to you or don't always ring when they say they will. Does that sound familiar? It's about not giving up on them too quickly, giving a second chance and trying to understand.

**ALEX:** Ahhh! You mean be forgiving?

**FORGIVENESS:** Exactly, forgiving... I think I've helped a little, so I shall let my other sibling come speak to you.

**ALEX:** Wait, you haven't told me your name.

**FORGIVENESS:** You already know it.

**ALEX:** Huh? Well, if I was just speaking to Kindness, I guess you must be Forgiveness!

**FORGIVENESS:** Got it in one. Now, if you'll forgive me, I need to dash. But here comes my sibling...

**ALEX:** Another sibling? Goodness, how many of them are there?

**PATIENCE:** Hi, before we start, I just know you can do this, but you may need just to stop and think about it for a while. Just take your time, there is no rush.

**ALEX:** So, Kindness and Forgiveness are part of your family?

**PATIENCE:** Yes.

**ALEX:** I think I can guess who you are...

**PATIENCE:** Oh really, go on then, what do you think my name is?

**ALEX:** (*Enthusiastically*) You're telling me not to rush, take my time... I think your name is Patience. Am I right?

**PATIENCE:** Yes, you are right – you're getting good at this. See how it helps if you take the time to think about it! I wonder if you can guess my next sibling's name just as easily. Oh look, here they come.

**ALEX:** (*Distracted*) Rabbits are bouncy and foxes are sneaky, with you I'll grow old even though your knees are creaky.... Nope, still not quite there.

**ACCEPTANCE:** (*Very bouncy*) Hi, how are you getting on with your card? Oh, I love the pictures on the front, they are just great and everything you have done so far has been just right. (*Big smiles*)

**ALEX:** OK Happy! I get it! Yes, they make me happy and the things you're saying make me happy too, so I'm guessing that's your name.

**ACCEPTANCE:** Happy is important, but that's not my name. But don't worry about it, it's ok that you got it wrong. It was a good guess.

**ALEX:** Hmm... this one is a bit more tricky. If you are not Happy then perhaps you are Contentment?

**ACCEPTANCE:** Not quite, I'll tell you, shall I?

**ALEX:** No, I've been taking lessons from Patience. I'll keep guessing for a while. But I wouldn't say no to another clue!

**ACCEPTANCE:** The way I am dressed should give you a clue. Look carefully.

**ALEX:** Well, you have a mismatch of clothes on and your hair is all different colours. It's almost as though you are representing a bit of everyone! (*Laughing*)

**ACCEPTANCE:** No one is excluded, in my eyes.

**ALEX:** Ahhh, (*snaps fingers*) got it! You're accepting people for who they are... you're Acceptance!

**ACCEPTANCE:** And I am accepting you for who you are, too. Does your loved one do that? Do you do that for your loved one?

**ALEX:** I'm, I'm not sure.... Actually yes, I do think so. I feel like I can really just be myself around my love and, although sometimes I can be quite quirky, they say they actually love that about me and wouldn't change me one bit.

**ACCEPTANCE:** Sounds like acceptance to me. Ooh, someone else to see you. I'll be off.

**ALEX:** Another one? Oh, it's you again! Hi.

**LOVE:** Have my children helped you with your card?

**ALEX:** Definitely! I have loads of ideas: I'm gonna write about how my loved one does kind, nice things for me, how they are patient and gentle, and that when I'm with them I feel very happy and accepted. And that I accept them for who they are, the good bits and the quirky bits.

**LOVE:** Perfect.

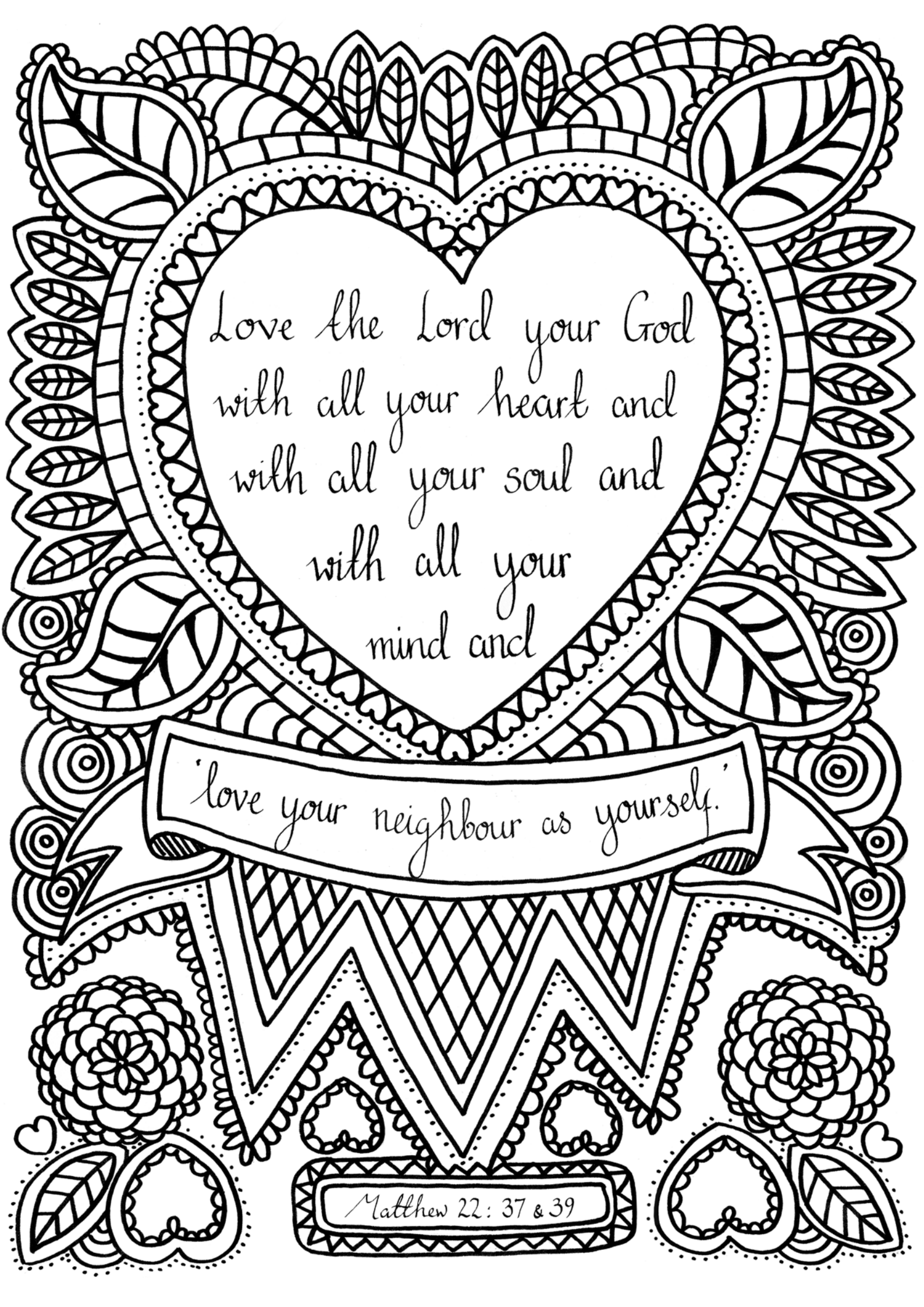
**ALEX:** I know all your children's names now but not yours.

**LOVE:** Have you not guessed it yet?

**ALEX:** No.

**LOVE:** My name is Love.





Love the Lord your God  
with all your heart and  
with all your soul and  
with all your  
mind and

'love your neighbour as yourself.'

Matthew 22: 37 & 39



# URC young adults plus

## A love letter from God

### Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina aims to explore the words in a passage in a relatable and prayerful way. The hope is both to create a love letter from God to the young person and a response from the young person to God.

Ask all to close their eyes and really listen to the words, as one person reads aloud the following Bible passage:

*"I love you very much. You are so precious and valuable to me. I think about you all the time and have wonderful plans for you. The thoughts and plans that I have for you are to give you a future and a hope that is beyond anything you could ask for or even think."* (John 3:16,17; Jeremiah 29:11; Psalm 139:1-18; 103:1-18; Ephesians 3:20; Isaiah 55:8,9).

After the reading, give everyone a copy of the words and ensure they have a pen. Allow three minutes for everyone to read the passage again in their heads and highlight any words that jump out at them, thinking about why these words particularly resonated.



Read or listen to the passage once more, and this time write a response to God. Just write and don't think too much, almost as though the pen is guiding itself across the page. There is no right or wrong way to respond: one word, a picture or a paragraph of words are all fine.

Some people find it hard to concentrate in silence, so consider having gentle, quiet music playing in the background. If you chose not to have music, encourage the use of noise-cancelling headphones or personal music through earphones for those who need to drown out even the smallest noise, such as a ticking clock.

On the following pages, there are more passages from the Bible that share the message of God's love for us. You could use the approach above to respond to these. Alternatively, encourage the group to read through them and select one that is most meaningful to them. Get them to recreate it by, for example, using Bible-journaling methods, doodling or building a word cloud.

**Love is ... really  
being listened to  
and heard.  
– Rosalind**



## A love letter from Jesus

I love you very much. You are so precious and valuable to me. I think about you all the time and have wonderful plans for you. The thoughts and plans that I have for you are to give you a future and a hope that is beyond what you could ask for or even think. (John 3:16,17; Jeremiah 29:11; Psalm 139:1-18; 103:1-18; Ephesians 3:20; Isaiah 55:8,9)

You are my child. You belong to me, for I not only created you, but I also redeemed you when I died on the cross for all the sins of the world. (John 1:1-4,14; 3:16,17; Col. 1:12-16; Gal. 3:10-13; 4:4,5; 1 John 2:2)

Through my perfect life and death, you have been reconciled to God. No matter who you are or what you have done, God is not counting your sin against you. You are free to come as you are and be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:19-21; Romans 12:1)

When you call to me, I will answer. When you seek me with all your heart, you will find me, for I am anxious to be found by you. When you give me permission, I will make my home with you. (Jeremiah 29:12-13; Matthew 11:28-30; John 14:23; Revelation 3:20).

I love you with an everlasting love! Nothing can change that. When you hurt, I hurt with you, just as a parent suffers when their child is in pain. (Jer. 31:3; Romans 8:31-39; Matt. 23:37-39; 25:34-45; Hosea 11:1-8)

When I was on Earth, my mission was to share good news with the poor, heal the broken-hearted and set all people free. I came so everyone might experience the abundant life that was originally intended for the human race. (Luke 4:18; John 8:31-36, 44; 10:10)

I invite you to come to me just as you are. I will accept you with all of your hurt and failure. In fact, the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are 'poor in spirit', those who recognise their brokenness and need for me as their Saviour (Matthew 11:28-30; 5:3; Rom. 12:1; Ps. 51:17). You will experience love that casts out fear, peace that passes understanding, and joy that no one can take away. (1 John 4:17-19; Philipians 4:6,7; John 16:22)

You will discover new meaning and purpose in life, as you share your story with others and invite them to experience my love and be reconciled to God. (Mark 4:20; 5:19,20; Revelation 12:11; 2 Cor. 5:19,20.) I will enable you to be patient with others as they are growing and will transform you so that kindness, compassion and forgiveness flow from within. (Galatians 5:22; John 7:37-39; Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:32) Don't be afraid to speak the truth, but do it always in love. (Ephesians 4:14-16)

As you experience my unconditional love, you will grow into maturity and learn to love others as I have loved you. People will be drawn to me by the light that shines out of your life. (John 12:32; 13:34,35; 15:12; Matthew 5:16) I long for the day when we will be together again in person. All tears will be wiped away and there will be no more pain, crying, sorrow or death. (John 14:1-3;; 1 Corinthians 15:26; Revelation 20:14; 21:1,4)

Until then, trust me! I will take care of you, for I love you with all my heart. (Matthew 6:33; Phil. 4:19; Romans 5:6-10; 8:31,32; 1 Peter 5:7)

With love always,  
Your Creator, Saviour and Friend,  
Jesus

(See: [www.joyfulcatholics.com/letter-jesus](http://www.joyfulcatholics.com/letter-jesus))

## What's love got to do with it?

This is a set of starting points for discussing the theme of love with your youth or young adults' group. You may wish to look at some of these together, or to develop a Bible study around one or two of these.

### Where do we see love in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament?

Together, look at each of these stories – maybe try to retell the story as Remembered Bible before you look it up. Think about what each of these stories tells you about love and whether it has any message for us today. Some may be more challenging than others. What surprises you in the story and what questions might that prompt?

- Jacob and Joseph
- Moses, his birth mother, his foster mother
- Ruth and Naomi
- Abraham and Isaac
- David and Bathsheba.

### Where do we see love in the media?

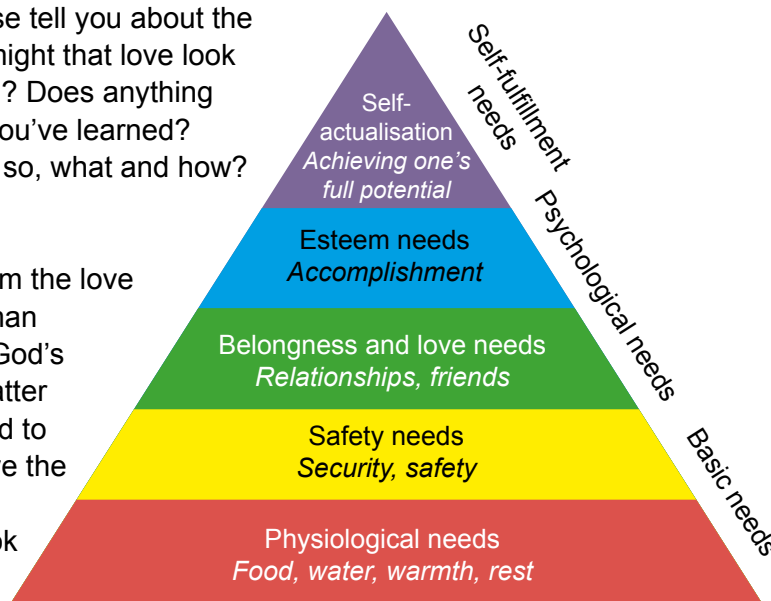
Using a TV guide, or a magazine such as Hello!, as a prompt, talk together about how love is portrayed in the media. Is it consistent? What are the key characteristics? How might this portrayal make us feel about our relationships – romantic, sexual and otherwise? How do they compare with the model of love as detailed in 1 Corinthians 13?

### Do we need love?

Do some research into Adverse Childhood Experiences, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the UN Convention on Children's Rights, The Children's Society's Good Childhood Report and think about what these tell you about the importance of love in a child or adult's life. What might that love look like? Do you think that we have a right to be loved? Does anything surprise you about the statistics and information you've learned? Does it make you want to change anything and, if so, what and how?

### God's love and love of God

The Bible tells us that nothing can separate us from the love of God. What sorts of things get in the way of human relationships? What does it feel like to know that God's love is everything, everywhere, all the time, no matter what you do? Is it comforting, scary, amazing, hard to believe, empowering? In turn, Jesus tells us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. What does that mean? What would it look like? Is it even possible? What sorts of things stop us from doing this? Do you think you'd need to be a monk or a nun to do this or are there things that we can do in our everyday life to make us more like this?



### Feed my sheep

When Jesus was taken to be crucified, his close friend Peter denied knowing him three times, because he was afraid to be associated with Jesus for fear of being arrested too. When Jesus met with Peter after the resurrection, he asked Peter three times whether he loved him. When Peter asserted that he did love Jesus, Jesus asked him to 'feed my sheep'.

Why do you think Jesus did this? How do you think Peter felt about being asked that question? What do you think Jesus meant when he said 'feed my sheep'?

Do you ever have times when you're afraid to speak openly about your faith, no matter how small? Do you feel that you could answer the question 'Do you love me?' and how might Jesus react to your response? If you're not yet ready to say 'Lord, you know that I love you,' what might be holding you back?

### Love your enemy

Perhaps one of the hardest things that Jesus asks of us is to love our enemy (Matthew 5:44) and to pray for those that persecute us. It's easy to love those people we get on well with, but this is something else. What do you think it means? Do you have to like someone to love them? What might that love look like? And how might you set about it? Does anything in 1 Corinthians 13 help?

### Different kinds of love

How many different kinds of love can you think of? The Ancient Greek philosophers identified eight different kinds of love. Discuss what you think each means and what they might look like:

- Agape – Unconditional love
- Eros – Romantic love, including sexual/physical love
- Philia – Affectionate love
- Philautia – Self-love (not selfish or self-centred love, but taking care of oneself)
- Storge – Familial love (the love you feel for family or friends)
- Pragma – Enduring love
- Ludus – Playful love
- Mania – Obsessive love.

How is a relationship with God similar/different to a relationship with a person? Where might you find God in these different types of love?

### Making love

We often hear the words 'make love' as another word for having sex. What do you think is the relationship between sex and love? How important is it that sex is within a loving relationship, and what are the reasons you would give for that? Attitudes to sex inside and outside marriage have changed with time. Do you think that this has been a good thing or not? What are the risks/challenges/benefits of casual sex versus long-term relationships? Do you think that the church has anything to say about sex and relationships, and should it? Maybe talk to some different generations about advice they would give to someone setting out on their first relationship.





## Love languages

### Chapman's love languages

Have you heard of the theory of love languages? It was originally authored by Pastor Gary Chapman, in a book titled *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate*, published in 1992. Essentially this thinking identifies five key ways that people experience and express love to others.

It does not exclusively apply to those in romantic-style relationships but can be applied to all. A person may identify with one or more ways, and often the way a person shows their love to others is how they would like it shown to them.

#### 1. Words of affirmation

For people whose love language is 'words of affirmation', words might actually speak louder than actions. These are people who love unsolicited compliments and verbal expressions of affection and gratitude. These are people who also take insults deeply to heart, and arguments involving name-calling might be harder for them to get over.

##### I wonder

*What words you like to hear and what words are hurtful? I wonder how you might help others not to misinterpret your words? How can we resolve feelings of hurt when words are misunderstood? How could we find the words to say to others when this isn't the love language we identify with?*

#### 2. Acts of service

People who prefer to receive 'acts of service' love to be shown, rather than told, they're cared for. When chores or inconvenient tasks are done for them, or when someone takes care of a task they've been avoiding, that's taken as proof they are loved and that they want to make life easier for them. According to Chapman, people who prefer acts of service appreciate nothing more than hearing 'Let me do that for you.' On the flip side, broken commitments and general non-helpfulness are likely to be an issue.

##### I wonder

*What acts of service you like others to show you and how you might choose to serve others?*

*What does it mean to you when someone does something for you?*

*Is it possible to misunderstand someone's intentions? How can we resolve feelings of hurt when we feel others have not done something for us that they easily could have done? Why might they have made that choice? What stops you from doing acts of service for others?*

#### 3. Receiving gifts

Sometimes this love language gets a bad rap, coming off as a bit materialistic, but for people whose love language is 'receiving gifts', it's less about financial value (usually) than it is about thoughtfulness. This type loves to receive presents that show them the other person is paying attention. They're likely to take birthdays and special occasions seriously.

##### I wonder

*What the best gift you received was and what made that gift special? Would others in the group appreciate that item as a gift too? I wonder what you would do if someone gave you something you didn't like or that wasn't suited to you? Is this just materialism? How does it feel if someone misses your birthday or Christmas?*

#### 4. Quality time

'Quality time' is another term for 'attention'. This group is most touched by time spent with others. Most people are annoyed when people are constantly on their phones, but for this group it's maddening. These people want to know that others are interested in what they have to say, how they're feeling, and what they want to do with their time. They're extra likely to be hurt if they don't feel listened to.

##### I wonder

*I wonder whether this love language is important to you? Is it difficult to share your time around those you love? What do you do if you feel someone is not listening to you? How can we resolve those feelings of hurt? What makes time spent together actual 'quality' time?*

## 5. Physical touch

Some people long for physical touch. This can be done in a safe and non-sexualised way. A simple arm around the shoulder when sitting side-by-side can mean the world to many people.

### I wonder

*How can you show this love language in a safe consensual way? Why may someone find physical touch difficult? What kind of feeling/reaction might physical touch evoke in a person? If someone finds physical touch difficult, is there another way of meeting this need that would be appropriate for all?*

Think about the five love languages. How might these translate into a wider understanding of love, rather than just relationships? What about love of God? How might we show God our love in different ways that might be meaningful to us? And how do we experience God's love – does that cover all five love languages too?

## Spiritual styles

In a similar way to different love languages being meaningful to different people, people also have different spiritual styles. You can read some examples here:

- [www.rootsontheweb.com/media/19319/roots\\_spiritual\\_styles\\_meet\\_the\\_styles.pdf](http://www.rootsontheweb.com/media/19319/roots_spiritual_styles_meet_the_styles.pdf)
- [www.rootsontheweb.com/media/19318/roots\\_spiritual\\_styles\\_introduutory\\_article.pdf](http://www.rootsontheweb.com/media/19318/roots_spiritual_styles_introduutory_article.pdf)

Can you create a quiz that helps people identify their spiritual style?

When we create an act of worship, it is good to think about these different spiritual styles and include action, emotion, symbol and word. Next time you are in an act of worship with others, see if you can spot examples of these being used. How do spiritual styles equate to love languages (if at all)?



Get your children and 11-14 year olds interested in social justice with our annual two-fold resource, *Go with Greta* and *#Connect2* which is produced with URC Commitment for Life. Each resource includes factual information and activities for five sessions and an intergenerational celebration, all based around a child or young person's life in a region supported by Commitment for Life and Christian Aid. [www.urc.org.uk/go-with-greta-and-connect](http://www.urc.org.uk/go-with-greta-and-connect).

Friends on Faith Adventures provides a two-year programme for a children's group centred on the Bible. Find the session plans and all the paperwork you need on [www.urc.org.uk/friends-on-faith-adventures](http://www.urc.org.uk/friends-on-faith-adventures).



## What you do for the least of these...

### Prepare

Consider displaying some artwork in the room: pictures of Jesus/others (Mother Theresa/Princess Diana) helping others (children/sick/homeless/prisoners). Include a picture of the statue of the homeless Jesus.

In today's world we are surrounded by many different voices, a lot of them talking about me, me, me and not so

much about others. In the age of Love Island and Married at First Sight, we are encouraged to seek our own happiness first; it's all about what others can do for us. Jesus' words challenge us to rethink this, to look at how we can love and serve others.




### Read

Divide into pairs and read the following passage together before having a brief discussion on your initial thoughts.

Consider these questions as you read:

- How does this passage make you feel?
- Can you identify with this passage?
- What is easy to do, what is hard to do? Why?

*Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what's coming to you in this kingdom. It's been ready for you since the world's foundation. And here's why:*

 *I was hungry and you fed me,  
I was thirsty and you gave me a drink,  
I was homeless and you gave me a room,  
I was shivering and you gave me clothes,  
I was sick and you stopped to visit,  
I was in prison and you came to me.'"*  
(Matthew 25:34-36 in The Message, Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson)

### Watch

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=0v23Ts0-iZw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0v23Ts0-iZw)

### Discuss

As a group, work through the following questions:

- Should these requests be taken literally or is there more meaning to them?
- What sacrifice may we need to make for us to fulfil this scripture?
- How can you see beyond the person and see the need?
- What can we do in these situations to ensure we are not being taken advantage of or scammed? How can we help others but still protect ourselves? Or should we?
- How does love of God and love of others tie together? Can you have one without the other?
- Does being a 'good person' matter? Can you do good for others, without it reflecting God? Do they go hand in hand?
- Human nature is to look after ourselves and ensure we are clothed, fed and warm. But what do we do when we look to others? Do we protect ourselves from facing the reality of other people's lives? Perhaps we feel guilt, shame, anger, helplessness – especially when we look around and see so many people in need?





What does it mean to help those in prison, for example? Surely we can't just go and visit everyone there. Some of this feels impossible!

- Jesus tells us that if we help people who need us, then we are stretching out the hand of God; we are showering them with love, God's love. Jesus even goes on to say that if we help others in need then it is as if we are helping him himself. What does this look like? How can we do this? What would help us to see Jesus in everyone we meet?

There is a lot to unpack in this passage, but perhaps if we take one element at a time it may seem more achievable. What might be a good first step?


### Read

*'I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you failed to do one of these things to someone who was being overlooked or ignored, that was me—you failed to do it to me.'*

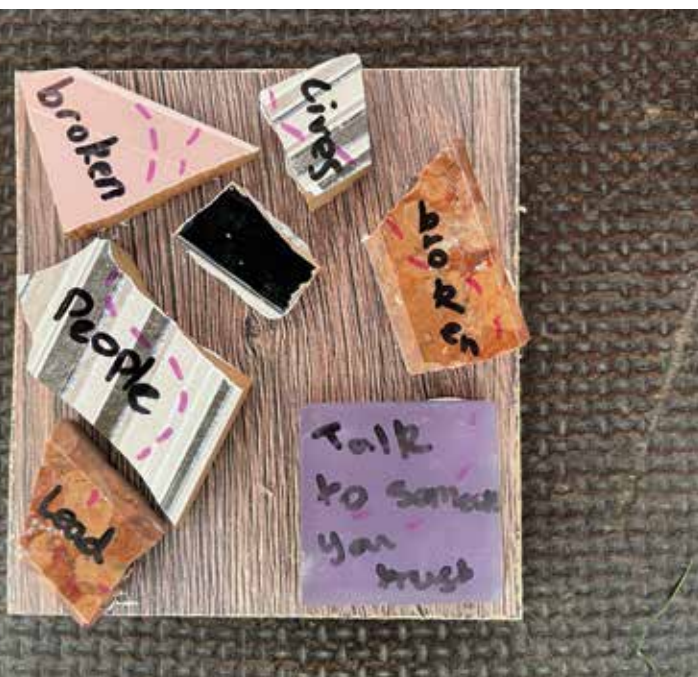
### Pray

Play some music, as appropriate, while giving everyone time to walk around the room looking at the artwork on the walls. Give God a chance to speak to through the images. Which pictures really resonate? Use [slido.com](https://www.slido.com) to share three words each that come to you while thinking about this theme. If you feel challenged by something specific in this session, write the word on a stone, carrying it around with you as a reminder to take an opportunity to turn your thoughts into action.

Finish off by saying this prayer together:

Gracious God,   
When I was hungry you fed me,  
When I was thirsty you gave me a drink,  
When I was homeless you gave me a room,  
When I was shivering you gave me clothes,  
When I was sick you stopped to visit me,  
When I felt imprisoned you came to me.

Thank you, Lord, for loving me unconditionally. Help me to mirror that love in the way I treat others, especially those who need my love and my service, and especially those I may not feel it easy to love. Amen





# Love is... anti-racist

The URC is committed to becoming an anti-racist Church. Mission Council commits the whole United Reformed Church to embark on a journey beyond good intentions, beyond being 'not racist', towards active anti-racist living. This commitment is neither an initiative nor a project, but a pledge for our future existence as one body with many parts – valuing the presence and gifts of all our sisters and brothers equally, and affirming each individual as being equally made in the image of God. (Paper G2, Mission Council 2020).

## Activity

Watch this video, especially made in response to the findings of a task group that reported to General Assembly in 2022: Telling It Like It Is: confronting racism in the Church.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=WdUwrW9mHCE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WdUwrW9mHCE)

## Discussion

- What surprised you in this video?
- Have you ever seen or experienced racism in the church?
- What do you think is the impact of these experiences?

As a group, try to create definitions for 'racism' and 'racist'. Listen carefully to everyone's thoughts and ideas, and work collaboratively to agree some wording. What do you think is the key difference between being 'not racist' and being 'anti-racist'?

Being anti-racist means learning about and identifying inequities and disparities that give any racial group (but white people in particular), material advantages over people of colour. Once you've begun identifying racial disparities, you then need to examine whether your own views, beliefs, or voting patterns have justified racial inequality. Confront the racist ideas you have held or continue to hold.

What practical steps can we take to become anti-racist? Come up with some suggestions and then discuss these.

### 1. Recognise your own unconscious bias

We have learnt to see certain characteristics as representing a threat – we have grown up racist, dividing the world into 'us' (safe) and 'them' (threat). We have picked up the attitudes of those around us and the structures of our society. Take a look at this video: Carrots and broccoli can make you less racist!

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGXzEXoFOzM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGXzEXoFOzM)

### 2. Be prepared to change your perspective

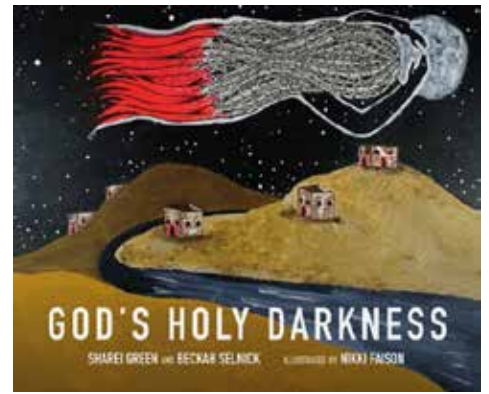
Consider the voices you listen to, the films you watch, the books you read – do they represent people of colour in positive ways and across the whole range of society? What about the Bible and Christian literature?

Create a list of positive and negative characteristics. Now think of the most recent film you have watched and see how many people of colour were represented and which of those characteristics they showed. Do you think this film was reinforcing racial stereotypes or challenging them?

### 3. Create a diverse and anti-racist environment

Ideas about race and identity are reinforced by our surroundings and influenced by what we see and hear every day. Being mindful of the amount of diversity and positive messages young people are being surrounded by can help them develop healthy positive attitudes to differences between people.

Consider all aspects of your church life. Where can more diversity be introduced and what could you do to encourage it? You might think about the use of images, examples used in sermons and talks, song and hymn choices (see *Sunflowers and Thistles* for some new songs about racial justice: [www.urc.org.uk/your-faith/prayer-and-worship/sunflowers-thistles](http://www.urc.org.uk/your-faith/prayer-and-worship/sunflowers-thistles), videos, books and invited speakers.



As a group, identify three things you could do, or ask the church to do, to increase representation (things you would like to change to make it more inclusive and a happier place for everyone).

#### 4. Empower young people to take action

Turn this into a discussion by asking young people to answer the question: 'How would I like other people to support me if I was being treated unfairly?'

Gather suggestions about how you might practice anti-racism and how to respond if you witness racism, so that you have a 'script' that can help you to make it known that racism in any form is not OK.

#### 5. Addressing white privilege

- Watch this video: [www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/52936388](http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/52936388)
- View 'What is White Privilege?' June 2020. Does this idea make sense to the group? Have they heard of white privilege before?
- Try the TikTok 10-finger privilege challenge: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=1KSxfhtRjHE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1KSxfhtRjHE)

Professor Andrews points out that you shouldn't feel bad if you're white: 'Don't take it personally. You can use it to your advantage because there are certain things that white people can do that black people can't get away with.'

What might he mean by that?

*"Every voice raised against racism chips away at its power. We can't afford to stay silent." Reni Eddo-Lodge*

Listening to the voices of those who experience racism is vital to understanding it. However, it is important to remember that these experiences are distressing. Be mindful and empathetic to the mental and emotional impact of these issues on those who experience it.

**'Without Love'** by Karen Campbell (Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries) Written for Racial Justice Sunday 2021

Without love, I can live,  
 But I will not thrive.  
 I will not reach my full potential.  
 I will not feel safe,  
 Or valued,  
 Or know the security  
 Of true belonging.  
 I will not be at ease –  
 In this place or that –  
 Or in my own skin.  
 Without love, I can live,  
 But restless, wandering –  
 Where being me is not enough,  
 And I am coerced to become  
 Someone else.  
 But who?  
 Without love, I can live,  
 But I cannot just 'be';  
 I cannot fully appreciate nor take  
 My place  
 In the give and take  
 And wonder of life.  
 Then, I am robbed of myself –  
 And so is the world.  
 Without love, I can live,  
 But how can I know  
 How to love...  
 Love life  
 Love others  
 Or love myself?  
 I can live without love.  
 But what kind of life?

© Karen Campbell

[www.urc.org.uk/without-love-a-poem-by-karen-campbell](http://www.urc.org.uk/without-love-a-poem-by-karen-campbell)

# Useful links

## Video

- Youth friendly Corinthians – [www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhh7Oo-e\\_X8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhh7Oo-e_X8)

## TV programmes/films

- Married at First Sight
- Love Island (18+)
- Love Actually

## Songs

- Jesus' Love is Very Wonderful – [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaMVjO\\_GruA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaMVjO_GruA)
- God is Love – [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sc1wHXmXKsk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sc1wHXmXKsk)
- King of Love – [www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmK-jSJMowU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmK-jSJMowU)
- God Loves Me – [www.youtube.com/watch?v=vALAbbKliKY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vALAbbKliKY)
- For God so loved the world (L I F E) (SHKP 21) – <https://youtu.be/Nxs6ESVTVMs>
- Our God is a great big God (StF 61/) – <https://youtu.be/pgFT6beutEI>
- When I needed a neighbour (StF 256 /) – <https://youtu.be/V0hKro89cVg>
- A new commandment I give unto you (RS745 / StF 242 / CMP 1) – [https://youtu.be/2X8m9tVR0\\_Y](https://youtu.be/2X8m9tVR0_Y)
- I'm special (JP / SHKP 56 /) – <https://youtu.be/GnmHpvom4Hk>
- A touching place (CG 1) – <https://youtu.be/QTlwZ3XNyEY>
- God in his love for us (RS 85 / StF 727/ CMP 832) – <https://youtu.be/ZwBLsS6M4jQ>
- God is love (RS 274 / StF403) – [https://youtu.be/Gju\\_BKA1PE](https://youtu.be/Gju_BKA1PE)
- God is love – Ubi Caritas' (RS 473/) – <https://youtu.be/N6j-mbONxi0>
- Vagabond – <https://youtu.be/s27D7M8biul>
- How deep the father's love for us (CMP 988 /) – <https://youtu.be/0nr31qDsl14>
- Life Vest inside – <https://youtu.be/nwAYpLVyeFU>
- 'A little bit of love' – Graham Kendrick: [https://youtu.be/CM2NAm\\_dhdQ](https://youtu.be/CM2NAm_dhdQ)
- Love one another – <https://youtu.be/LYIkcoAfLU4>
- Reckless Love – <https://youtu.be/Sc6SSHuZvQE>
- God is Love – <https://youtu.be/Sc1wHXmXKsk>
- Love the Lord Your God with all your heart – <https://youtu.be/vdMlxCdIY-c>

## Books/modern-day parables

- What Colour is Love? – [www.amazon.co.uk/What-Colour-Love-Linda-Strachan/dp/0747563551](http://www.amazon.co.uk/What-Colour-Love-Linda-Strachan/dp/0747563551)
- Owl Babies – [www.amazon.co.uk/Owl-Babies-Martin-Waddell/dp/0744531675](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Owl-Babies-Martin-Waddell/dp/0744531675)
- The 5 Love Languages of Children – [www.bit.ly/3HReYFk](http://www.bit.ly/3HReYFk)



## Quotes

What Mother Teresa says about love:

*“True love is love that causes us pain, that hurts and yet brings us joy. That is why we must pray to God and ask him to give us the courage to love.”*

*“I’m a little pencil in the hand of a writing God, who is sending a love letter to the world.”*

Archbishop Desmond Tutu spoke to the very nature of love when he shared that:

*“We are each made for goodness, love and compassion. Our lives are transformed as much as the world is when we live with these truths.”*

## Poems/prayers

‘Children Learn What They Live’ by Dorothy Law Nolte

If children live with criticism,  
They learn to condemn.  
If children live with hostility,  
They learn to fight.  
If children live with ridicule,  
They learn to be shy.  
If children live with shame,  
They learn to feel guilty.  
If children live with encouragement,  
They learn confidence.  
If children live with tolerance,  
They learn to be patient.  
If children live with praise,  
They learn to appreciate.  
If children live with acceptance,  
They learn to love.  
If children live with approval,  
They learn to like themselves.  
If children live with honesty,  
They learn truthfulness.  
If children live with security,  
They learn to have faith in themselves and others.  
If children live with friendliness,  
They learn the world is a nice place in which to live.

(Copyright © 1972/1975 by Dorothy Law Nolte)



**Love is....  
hard work.  
– Sam**

## Key

RS – Rejoice and Sing  
StF – Singing the Faith  
CG – Common Ground  
CMP – Complete Mission Praise  
JP – Junior Praise  
SHKP – Spring Harvest Kids Praise



# Puzzles

## Biblical relationships

Use the clues beneath to help you identify these well-known Bible duos. Unscramble the muddled-up names and match the correct names with their partners.

YARM	YARM
HAMBARA	IMOAN
THUR	DAAM
SMOES	LIBTHAZEE
ACISA	HOPJES
EDAHILL	BEECRAC
VIDDA	POZARHIP
ALISS	NOTNAHJA
VEE	HASRA
MRHATA	MANOSS
CHARIEZAH	UPLA

- Husband and wife. She laughed when she heard she was going to have a baby in her old age.
- A carpenter and his wife.
- The first couple.
- A strong man and the woman who sold his secret.
- Parents of Jesus's cousin John.
- The man who parted the Red Sea and his wife.
- Two friends who were imprisoned together.
- A future king and his best friend; Saul's successor and Saul's son.
- A mother-in-law and her devoted daughter-in-law.
- Two sisters, friends of Jesus.
- Parents of Esau and Jacob, he was almost sacrificed to God by his father.

### An important message

Can you sort these road signs in order so that one letter from each sign spells out the words LOVE IS...

*(There is more than one correct answer)*



## Word search

Can you find the highlighted words from this passage about love below?

p	r	o	u	d	h	t	u	r	t	r	a	c
g	a	r	b	e	d	u	r	l	o	v	e	o
s	o	t	r	u	s	e	v	i	l	y	l	n
t	d	n	i	k	m	t	h	a	h	a	r	t
e	r	h	j	e	a	l	o	u	s	w	g	i
a	r	u	m	v	n	o	p	l	i	i	n	n
n	a	b	s	e	f	t	e	a	f	a	o	u
g	e	l	v	t	v	a	s	t	l	o	r	e
r	f	e	r	a	s	a	c	c	e	p	t	s
y	r	d	o	w	r	o	n	g	s	a	s	h

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (International Children's Bible)

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, and it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> Love is not rude, is not selfish, and does not become angry easily. Love does not remember wrongs done against it. <sup>6</sup> Love takes no pleasure in evil, but rejoices over the truth. <sup>7</sup> Love patiently accepts all things. It always trusts, always hopes, and always continues strong.

<sup>8</sup> Love never ends. There are gifts of prophecy, but they will be ended. There are gifts of speaking in different languages, but those gifts will end. There is the gift of knowledge, but it will be ended.



Walking the Way  
Living the life of Jesus today



The United Reformed Church Children's and Youth Work  
86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT  
020 7916 8637 [www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk)

Follow us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/URCchildren.and.youth](http://www.facebook.com/URCchildren.and.youth)  
Visit our YouTube channel: URC Children's and Youth Work: [www.bit.ly/CYWyoutube](http://www.bit.ly/CYWyoutube)  
Sign up to our bi-monthly newsletter here: [www.bit.ly/URCCYWnewslettersignup](http://www.bit.ly/URCCYWnewslettersignup)



[www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk)

