

John Teaches Christian Love

Christians are known by their love for one another.

Lesson Focus

John wrote to Christians, instructing them to show true biblical love. Believers must not love the world or the things in the world but love God and others and obey God's commands. Love begins with God, who showed us the greatest example of love by sending his Son to die for sinners.

Key Passages

1 John 2:15–16, 3:16–18, 4:7

Memory Verse

Philippians 3:20–21 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

John wrote his first epistles to believers whose faith had wavered in response to false teachers who had denied the full divinity and humanity of Jesus (1 John 2:18–27). The apostle wrote to reaffirm the core tenets of Christianity and to encourage the believers to stand firmly and confidently in the faith. He assured his readers that they could know they had eternal life in Jesus Christ (1 John 5:13).

John began by establishing his authority as an eyewitness to Jesus' life and resurrection and an apostle of the gospel message (1 John 1:1–4). This message that John was writing about was the same message from the beginning of the gospel. God is light. If we walk in the light, we have fellowship with God and with others who are walking in the light, having been cleansed from sin by the blood of Jesus. But if we practice deceit, we walk in the darkness and have no fellowship with God (1 John 1:5–7).

Although John wrote in absolutes, he recognized that we would fail in our pursuit of righteousness, but he reassured his readers that Jesus had served as the propitiation for sin (1 John 2:1–2) and that forgiveness would be granted to those who confessed (1 John 1:9). But the Christian life is characterized by obedience to the commandments of God (1 John 2:3–6). John was not writing a new commandment but recalling the one Jesus had already given them;

they were to love one another (John 13:34; 1 John 2:7). A true child of God would love his brothers; one who lives in a state of hatred toward the brothers cannot be in the light (1 John 2:9–11).

The believer loves not the world; the lover of the world loves not the Father (1 John 2:15–17). John warned against false teachers, antichrists, and deceivers (1 John 2:18–27). Some had been shaken, thinking that brothers had denied the faith, but John clarified that they could never have been one of them to begin with because no one who denies Christ can have the Father (1 John 2:23). John called the believers to abide in God and to practice righteousness. The one who is of God cannot keep sinning because of the seed of God in him (1 John 3:9–10). In this way, the believers could confidently discern between the true brothers and the deceivers.

In addition to obeying God's commandments and pursuing righteousness, the mark of a genuine believer is love. God is love, so those who are of him will demonstrate love (1 John 4:7–8). Godly love is demonstrated in the sacrifice of the Son as the propitiation for our sin (1 John 4:10). In the same way, we ought to love one another. John called the believers to love in deed and truth (1 John 3:18). This is not simply a feeling of affection or a proclamation of emotion, it is a sacrificial action toward the brothers. As believers, we are called to obey God's commandments and demonstrate love for one another.

Historical/Apologetics Background

John emphasized love as a mark of the true believer. Those who abide in God, who is love, will reflect his love. Christians will love God by keeping his commandments and love others through self-sacrificing service to one another. But love can be a difficult concept to understand because our modern culture has so diluted its meaning. Today, most people think of love as an emotion, attraction, desire, or admiration. It is generally something that is felt and often dependent on the object. But that is not at all the biblical definition of love. Biblical love is a selfless, sacrificial, unconditional service that is intrinsically connected to action. Biblical love is entirely independent of the object's value or acceptance. Jesus demonstrated love by sacrificing his life for his enemies (Romans 5:6–10).

In Greek, there are four different words that would translate into love in English. *Eros*, which could be defined as sexual or romantic love, does not occur in the New Testament, even in describing marriage (Ephesians 5:25). *Storge* was used to refer to the natural affection between those who were related and appears occasionally in compound words. *Philos* was used to mean spontaneous natural affection with an emphasis on feeling. *Agape* is by far the most frequent New Testament word for love, and it refers to goodwill that proceeds from duty or principle rather than attraction. The use of these two words overlap to such a degree that a distinction is not always clear. But the general idea is that *agape* is an unconditional, sacrificial love and *philos* is affection borne of friendship. Peter made a

distinction between the two when he wrote to supplement brotherly affection with love (2 Peter 1:7). Also, John commended Gaius for showing love to believers who were strangers (3 John 5–6).

Although we should be careful of drawing distinctions in the original language where none exist, it is clear that Christian love as described in the Bible goes beyond brotherly affection and is distinct from the emotion-based definition commonly used today. We are called to love each other as Christ loved us and laid down his life for us. We had done nothing

to earn his admiration or esteem. We were weak and hostile to God. We did not love God, but he loved us first (1 John 4:19).

John called us to love God by keeping his commandments and to love the brothers by laying our lives down for them (1 John 3:16). Just as Jesus chose to sacrifice himself for our benefit, we should choose to demonstrate sacrificial love toward the brothers, even those who have not earned our affection or esteem. By this we can know that we are children of God (1 John 5:2).

Review Questions

K–1st Review Questions

1. Biblical love is all about choosing to put another person first or last? *First.*
2. True or False: We should love others because we might get something in return. *False.*
3. John instructed Christians NOT to love what? *The world (or the things in the world).*
4. The term *world* means a way of living and thinking that ignores God or loves God? *Ignores God.*
5. What three things did John say are from the world, which we should not love? *(Ask several students.) Selfish desires—wanting to be lazy or disobedient; desires of the eyes—wanting things we see for ourselves; and the pride of life—thinking we're the best and can do great on our own.*
6. It is not wrong to have nice things, but what do we need to be careful of? *That we don't let things become more important than God.*
7. What command did John give believers about love: love yourself, love other believers, or love your pets? *Love other believers.*
8. Christians show love for God by keeping his what? *Commandments.*
9. As we obey God's commandments, we will also be doing what? *Loving other believers.*
10. How did Jesus show the greatest example of love for us? *He gave up his life when he died on the cross.*
11. Who did John say we should lay our lives down for, or be willing to help even if we have to give something up? *Our brothers (and sisters) in Christ.*
12. What did John say believers should do if they see another believer in need? *Meet their need. Help them.*
13. How should believers show love: by saying nice words or by their actions? *By their actions.*
14. Where does love come from? *God.*
15. How did God show his love for us? *He sent his only Son, Jesus, to die for sinners.*
16. Who can show real love? *Only those who have turned from their sins and trusted in Jesus for salvation; believers.*

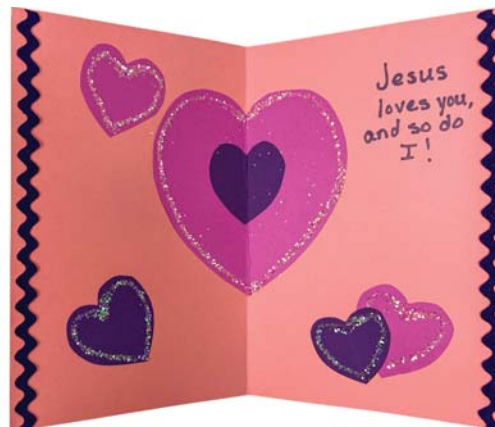
Pre-K Review Questions

1. Love in the Bible is all about choosing to put another person first or last? *First.*
2. True or False: We should love others without wanting something back. *True.*
3. John instructed Christians NOT to love what? *The world (or the things in the world).*
4. The term *world* means a way of living that ignores God or loves God? *Ignores God.*
5. What kinds of things did John say are from loving the world? *(Ask several students.) Wanting to be lazy or disobedient; wanting things we see for ourselves; thinking we're the best and wanting to do everything great on our own.*
6. It is not wrong to have nice things, but what do we need to be careful of? *That we don't let things become more important than God.*
7. Christians show love for God by keeping his what? *Commandments.*
8. As we obey God's commands, we will also be doing what: loving the world or loving other believers? *Loving other believers.*
9. What did John say believers should do if they see another believer in need? *Help them.*
10. How should believers show love: by saying nice words or by their actions? *By their actions.*
11. Where does love come from? *God.*
12. How did God show his love for us? *He sent his only Son, Jesus, to die for sinners.*
13. Who can show real love: everyone or only believers in Jesus? *Only believers in Jesus.*
14. Real love begins with: the world, us, or God? *God.*

Friendly Hearts Card

Materials

- ☐ Heart Cutouts (page 2) printed on colored paper
- ☐ Card stock sheets in various colors
- ☐ Crayons or markers
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Glue
- ☐ Decorations: stickers, glitter, rickrack, etc.



Instructions

Print Heart Cutouts on different colors of paper. Make enough for each student to cut out several hearts. Pass out one sheet of colored card stock to each student. Help students fold their card stock in half to make a card. Have students glue their hearts on their card and then add decorations.

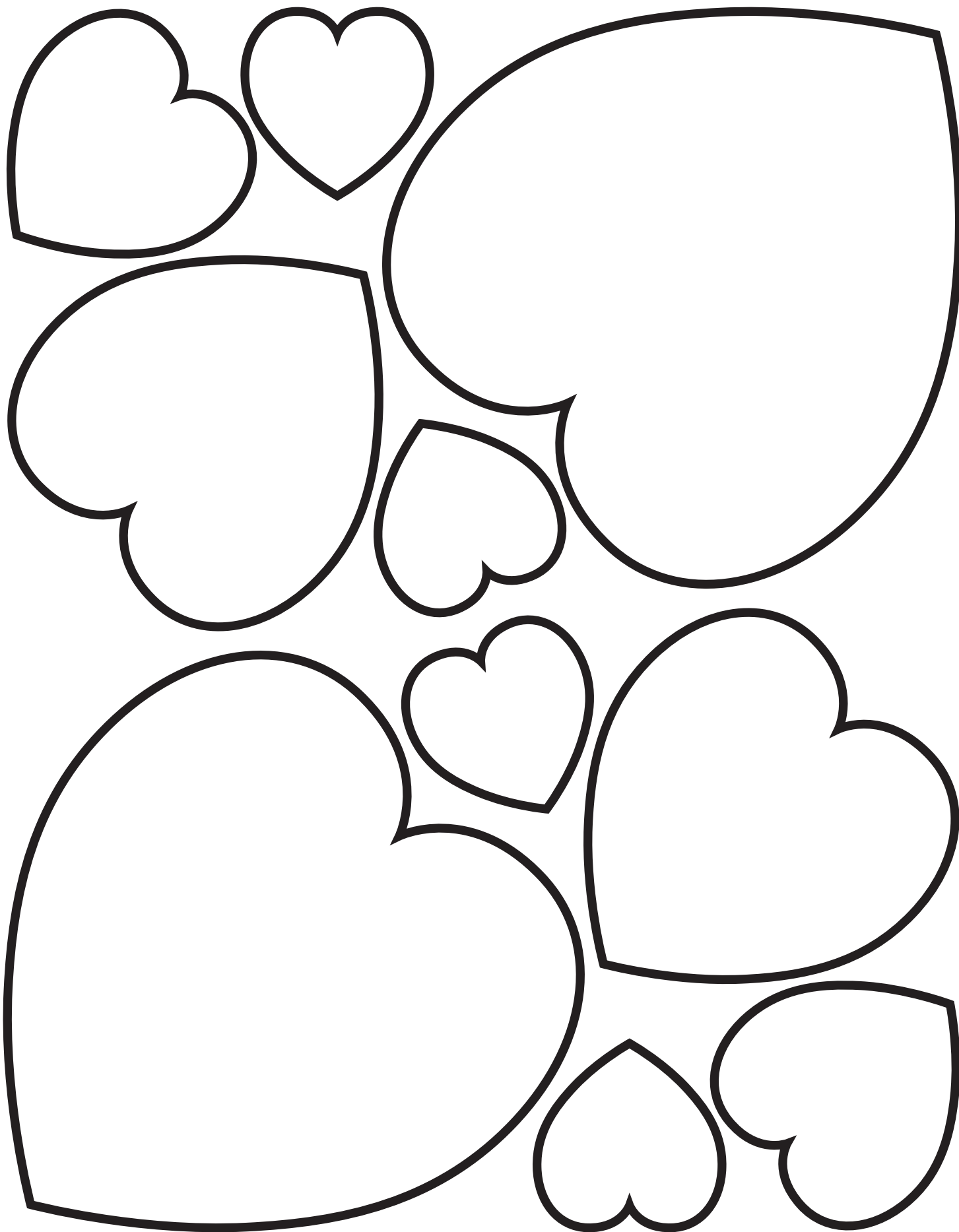
Discuss what text students can add to their cards. Write simple suggestions on the board for students to copy (e.g., "Jesus loves you, and so do I!" "Hope you feel better!" "Thanks for all you do!" "I love you!").

Suggested Discussion

? What was the main thing we talked about in our lesson today? *Love.*

We read from God's Word about his love, which is very different from the world's idea of love. As Christians, we are commanded to love our brothers and sisters in Christ—other believers.

Today, you made a card that you can give to someone to show them love. Maybe you'll give it to a friend who isn't feeling well, or to your mom to encourage her. Whoever it is, give the card to them as a way to show love by your actions.



Print on colored paper, enough for each student to cut out several hearts.

Lesson Review Games

These games are written for team play, however, they can easily be adapted for smaller classes.

Allow students to refer to the Flip Chart during the games.

Basket Toss

Students give the correct answer and toss the beanbags. Each basket has greater points.

Materials

- ☐ Review Questions
- ☐ One beanbag for each team
- ☐ Three laundry baskets or boxes
- ☐ Masking tape

Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions for your use. Use masking tape to make a tossing line. Bring in three baskets or boxes. Set the baskets in a line, with each one a little

farther from the tossing line. Label the baskets with 5, 10, and 25 points so the farther away it is the higher the score.

Divide the class into two or more teams depending on size. Have the teams line up at the tossing line. Take turns asking the first students in line from each team a review question. When a student answers correctly, he will have a chance to toss a beanbag into a basket then go to the end of the line. If the beanbag misses, there are no points scored. If someone does not answer correctly, he may ask his teammates for help. Keep track of the scores on the board. Continue until all the questions have been answered. Repeat questions if necessary.

Board Game

Teams will answer questions and make their way to the Finish on the Game Board.

Materials

- ☐ Review Questions
- ☐ Game Board (provided in the Teacher Kit)
- ☐ Dice, numbered cards, or spinner
- ☐ Buttons or other small items as game pieces for each team

Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions for your use. Divide the class into teams. Team members will take turns answering the review questions. If they answer correctly, they will roll the dice, spin, or draw a numbered card and move that number of spaces on the Game Board. Follow the directions on the spaces to move ahead, fall back, or switch places with another team. If someone does not know or does not answer correctly, he may ask his teammates for help. Alternate between teams as long as time permits, repeating questions if necessary. The first team to make it all the way to the end wins.

Bowling

What do you do with extra water bottles and softballs? Go bowling, of course. Students will answer questions then bowl for points.

Materials

- ☐ Review Questions
- ☐ Six to ten empty water bottles
- ☐ Softball or other small playground ball
- ☐ Masking tape
- ☐ Dried corn or beans (optional)

Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions for your use. Pour a small amount of dried corn or beans into the bottom of each

water bottle and tighten the lid. Set out the water bottles on one end of the room. Use masking tape to form a "lane."

Divide students into teams. Have students line up. Ask the first student a review question. If he answers correctly, let him roll the ball toward the bottles. Each bottle that is knocked down is worth 1 point. A strike (knocking down all the bottles) is worth 20 points. Take turns asking questions of each team. If a student gives an incorrect answer or does not know the answer, he can ask his teammates for help. Keep track of the scores.

Football Frenzy

Who can score the most touchdowns?

Materials

- ☐ Review Questions
- ☐ Football Cutouts, one per team
- ☐ Tape or poster putty

Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions. Print and cut one Football Cutout for each team. Color them different colors for each team, or have teams choose and write a name on their football. On the board draw 6 vertical lines and label them 50, 40, 30, 20, 10, and End Zone to represent yard lines on a football field. Make the lines long enough so there is room for the footballs to be placed along them with room in between. Divide the class into teams. Place

each team's football at the 50-yard line using tape or poster putty on the back.

Alternate asking review questions to each team. If the answer is correct, move the team's football to the next yard line toward the End Zone. If the answer is incorrect, the team's football stays where it is. If a student is unsure of the answer, he may "pass" the question to a teammate to answer. Only one pass per question is allowed, and this does not affect the order of the questions being asked on the team.

When a team's football reaches the End Zone, they have scored a touchdown worth 6 points, and the team's football is placed back at the 50-yard line on the next turn. Keep track of scores on the board.

Continue asking questions and moving the teams' footballs until all the questions are asked or for a set time. You may repeat questions as necessary. At the end, the team with the most points wins.

Musical Questions

When the music stops, who will answer the question?

Materials

- ☐ Review Questions
- ☐ Chairs
- ☐ Worship music
- ☐ Different color/style chair, masking tape, colored paper, etc.

Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions. Set up chairs either in a circle or in two rows back to back so students have room

to walk around them. Mark one chair as the "question" chair (use a different color/style chair or mark it with tape, a paper question mark, etc.)

Instruct students to walk in front of the chairs when you play the music. When the music stops, they will race to find a seat. The student in the question chair answers a review question. Continue playing music and having students change seats until all the review questions are answered.

Racetrack

Who will reach the checkered flag first?

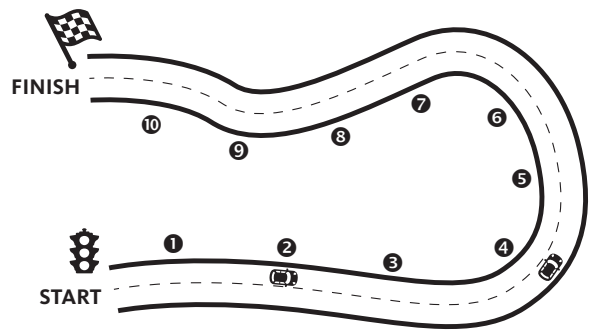
Materials

- ☐ Review Questions
- ☐ White board or chalk-board
- ☐ Markers/chalk
- ☐ Optional: paper cutouts for each team (cars, animals, circles, etc.), tape/poster putty

Instructions

Print one copy of the Review Questions. Draw a racetrack on the board. It may be as simple as a straight horizontal path or a curvy circle. Label "Start" and "Finish" (with a checkered flag) at either end of the track. Add numbers along the track (e.g., 1-10) at equal intervals between Start and Finish. The numbers will be used as placement points for the racers as they progress along the track.

Divide the class into teams. You may draw a different symbol (e.g., stick figure, circle, X or O) to represent each



team at the Start, or use paper cutouts as team markers and stick them to the board with tape/poster putty.

Ask the first team a review question. If they answer correctly, move their marker or redraw their symbol along the track at #1. If they answer incorrectly, give the next team a chance to answer and move to the first number. If they do not know, give the answer and ask that question again later. Continue to alternate asking review questions and moving teams' markers along the racetrack according to the numbers along the track. The first team to reach the Finish wins!

Come On In Games

We recommend that you work with sets of 10 cards at a time then add on the next 10 until the order of all the cards has been memorized.

We have provided a pronunciation guide for the books of the Old Testament. This document can be found in the Teacher Digital Resources.

Allow students to refer to the Books of the Bible Poster during the games.

Bible Book Match

Teams flip over flashcards to make matches.

Materials

- ☐ Books of the Bible Flashcards
- ☐ Tape or poster putty

Instructions

Print two sets of flashcards on card stock. Lay the flashcards out on the floor facedown or attach them to the

wall. Divide the class into two teams. Teams will take turns choosing two flashcards, turning them over to see if they match. If they do not match, flip the flashcards back over. Teammates can help each other decide which flashcards to choose. You may want to have the whole class play this game together.

As students find matches, discuss each Bible book (give a few details from the back of the color flashcards, if available).

Bible Speed Round

Teams race to get their sets of Bible books in order. How fast can they go?

Materials

- ☐ Books of the Bible Flashcards
- ☐ Timer

Instructions

Print enough flashcards for each team to have a set. Mix up the flashcards in each set. Divide students into teams

and pass sets of flashcards to each team facedown. Set the timer for an appropriate time. Tell the groups to begin. Each group should work together to put their flashcards in order. Check the order by reciting the books of the Bible together using the poster.

You may play this with each team working on the same set, or you may choose to give each team different sets to work on. Check the order of all the teams' flashcards by reciting each set out loud.

Flashcard Take Away

Start with all of the flashcards—but wait! Can students still say them in order when some are taken away?

Materials

- ☐ Books of the Bible Flashcards
- ☐ Tape or poster putty

Instructions

Print one set of flashcards. Attach them in order on the wall as you recite them together. Choose a student to remove one card. Recite the books again. Continue to choose students to remove flashcards one at a time, reciting the whole list of books between each one. When all of the flashcards are gone, see if they can say the whole set together!

I Have You Have

Students will respond to each other with the name of the book on their flashcard in the correct order.

Materials

- ☐ Books of the Bible Flashcards

Instructions

Print one set of flashcards. Have students sit around a table or in a circle. Pass the flashcards out to the students. The person with the first book will say the name of the book on his card and the next person in order will respond, for example, “I have Genesis, who has Exodus?” The person with the next card in order will respond with, “I have Exodus, who

has Leviticus?” You could play a variation of this by having the whole class ask the question. For example, the student says, “I have Genesis.” Then the whole class can ask, “Who has Exodus?” Continue through the set.

Each student will respond and repeat until everyone has repeated their card. Play with any set of 10 flashcards for an easy amount to remember. But if you have a larger class, add enough flashcards so every student has one or divide into groups.

Memory Verse Games

Allow students to refer to the Flip Chart Memory Verse Page during the games.

You may want to cover it up after a few weeks for more of a challenge.

Echo! Echo!

Do what I do—say what I say! Groups will echo each other as they recite the memory verse together.

Materials

- ☐ Flip Chart Memory Verse Page

Instructions

Divide the class into two groups. You will say a word or phrase of the memory verse while doing some sort of action—sit down, stand up, spin in a circle, touch your toes, etc. The groups will take turns “echoing” what you say and do as you recite the verse. Repeat several times. You can whisper, shout, squeak, etc. Switch around and let older students take turns leading.

Egg Hunt

Hunt for all the parts of the memory verse hidden in the eggs! This game can be played all year round. The plastic eggs just happen to be great little containers that can be hidden easily.

Materials

- ☐ Flip Chart Memory Verse Page
- ☐ Strips of paper
- ☐ Plastic Easter eggs

Instructions

Write the memory verse on strips of paper with one or two words on each strip. Put one strip inside of each plastic Easter egg. Hide all the eggs around the room.

Have the students search for the eggs and bring them back to the table. They will open the eggs and work together to put the verse in the proper order.

For a larger class, prepare more than one set of eggs (sorted by colors for different teams). Students can work in teams to collect and construct the verse.

Follow the Leader

Follow the leader around the room. Say the verse and do the motion before moving on.

Materials

- ☐ Flip Chart Memory Verse Page
- ☐ Follow the Leader Cards
- ☐ Tape

Instructions

Print and cut out the Follow the Leader Cards. Tape each one to a chair or table and randomly place them around the room. You will lead the students around the room and stop at each card. Read the card and lead the children to do what the card says while reciting the memory verse. Then move around to the next one. You may want to repeat this activity or have students take turns leading.

Freeze!

Stomp like a dinosaur or spin in circles, but when it's time to freeze, get ready to say the memory verse.

Materials

- ☐ Flip Chart Memory Verse Page

Instructions

Students will move around the room in a specified action you give, such as crawling, skipping, turning in circles, galloping, walking in giant steps, etc. Then when you say, "Freeze!" the students will stop and freeze in position. Recite the memory verse, then begin again with a different action. You may need to show them how to freeze and hold a position.

Funny Voices

Recite the memory verse together using different voices. Be squeaky like a mouse or whisper as quietly as you can. How many voices can you do?

Materials

- ☐ Flip Chart Memory Verse Page
- ☐ Funny Voice Strips
- ☐ Container

Instructions

Print and cut out one set of the Funny Voice Strips and put them into a container. Choose a student to draw out a strip and lead the whole class in reciting the memory verse using that kind of voice. Have fun with it and repeat several times choosing a new voice each time!

Sneaky Stickies

Students will try to be sneaky as they cover up the words and pictures of the memory verse!

Materials

- ☐ Flip Chart Memory Verse Page
- ☐ Sticky notes

Instructions

Open the Flip Chart to the Memory Verse Page. Recite the verse together then choose a student to place a sticky note over one word, phrase, or picture on the Flip Chart. Recite the verse again, including the part that is covered up. Continue to choose students to place stickies, one at a time, reciting the whole verse between each turn—including the words/pictures that are covered. When all of the words/pictures are covered up, try to say the whole verse together!