

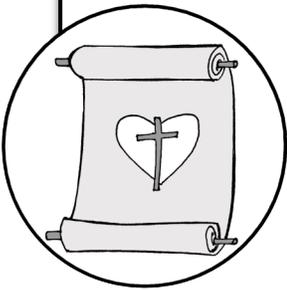
# Living the Word: Teaching Youth God's Story

Narrative Lectionary, Year 2

## The Greatest of These is Love 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Lesson #2-35

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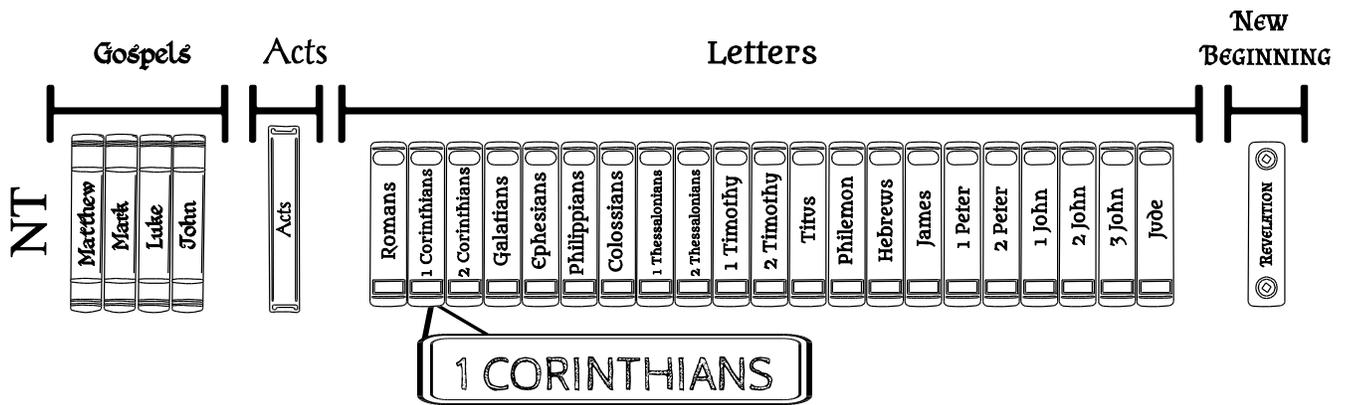
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# The Greatest of These is Love

## 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

*Last week, we were introduced to the Christian church in Corinth. This church, like our church today, had its struggles and challenges. In today's story, we hear a portion of Paul's letter to the Corinthians, specifically calling on them to overcome their divisions and challenges by living lives of love.*

### Making Connections

Paul's poetic description of God's love was written to encourage the young church in Corinth to show God's love to one another. His powerful description encourages them to let go of their squabbles and focus on this vision of the kingdom. God's kingdom is best lived out when God's people love one another.

### Story Summary

#### **The Greatest of These is Love**

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he does more than tell people to love one another. He invites them to be in communion with one another through the Church. Paul tells the Corinthians we are one Body of Christ and we should love God and other people equally, no matter who they are. He says that the greatest of the gifts God has given us is love—and we must share that love with everyone we meet. Paul challenges the Corinthians to look beyond the differences and divisions in their church. He invites them to genuinely love God and their community, as we are commanded to do.

### **Lesson @ A Glance**

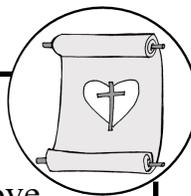
#2-35: The Greatest of These is Love  
1 Corinthians 13:1-13

**The Point:** God's love is the greatest gift we can receive and share.

**Making Connections:** The Power of God's Love

**Spiritual Practice Emphasis:**  
Fellowship

**Bible Nuts & Bolts:** What Are the Epistles?



## The Point

**God's love is the greatest gift we can receive and share.** God's love goes beyond feelings and words that change from day to day. God's perfect love is the way of life in God's kingdom, and it looks beyond the barriers and divisions that separate us. When we share God's love, we live and share the gospel.

*And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.*

**1 Corinthians 13:13**

## Bible Nuts & Bolts: What are the Epistles?

The Epistles are a collection of twenty-one books in the New Testament. The first thirteen epistles were written by Paul or one of his associates. An epistle is a letter and many of the epistles were letters written to churches to help solve problems or to encourage them in their ministry. Letters in the Bible have similar parts to letters we write today. In the first chapter of 1 Thessalonians, Paul says that the letter is from Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. He then adds the "to" section, where he names the church to whom the letter is addressed. He goes on to give them a warm greeting "Grace to you."

If you look at the beginning of other New Testament letters, you will see some of these same elements. The letter to the Thessalonians is what is called an "occasional" letter. Letters are called occasional when they address specific situations or occasions.

### For Your Reflection:

What does love look like in your life?

What are some of barriers or divisions that might keep the youth from genuinely loving other people?

What can you encourage the youth to do, perhaps through service, to reach out with God's love to those they normally keep a distance from?

### Spiritual Practice: Fellowship

To whom in your fellowship can you write an encouraging letter, card, or note? Do that today and be sure to mail it.

## Overview, Objectives, and Materials You'll Need

# Core Elements

## +Into the Story

10 min.

- > White board or mural paper
- > Markers

### Love, Love, Love

*Defining "love."*

## Learning the Story

15 min.

- > Bibles
- > Pens or pencils
- > Heart stickers
- > Optional: printed copies of the Bible text

### The Greatest is Love

*Using heart stickers to remember the definition of kingdom love.*

## +Living the Story

15 min.

- > Bibles
- > Paper
- > Pens or pencils
- > Scissors

### True Love

*Considering what it means to love others in the Body of Christ.*

## +Sending the Story

5 min.

- > Small box with the word LOVE written on it
- > Story • Home

Short on time?  
Items marked +  
can be adjusted to be done with  
what you probably already  
have in your pocket or  
classroom.

# Extending the Learning:

<p><b>Hands On</b> L-O-V-E <i>Creating a love collage.</i></p>	15 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Bibles</li> <li>&gt; Magazines</li> <li>&gt; Old photographs</li> <li>&gt; Scissors</li> <li>&gt; Glue</li> <li>&gt; Mural paper</li> </ul>
<p><b>+Mixed Media</b> 1 Corinthians 13 <i>Exploring translations and interpretations of Scripture.</i></p>	10 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Internet-connected device(s)</li> </ul>
<p><b>+The Competitive Edge</b> United in Love <i>Working as teams to complete a group challenge.</i></p>	15 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Hula-hoop(s)</li> </ul>
<p><b>+Simply Serving</b> Surprise! <i>Planning a surprise for a member of the community.</i></p>	15 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Paper</li> <li>&gt; Pens or pencils</li> </ul>
<p><b>+Worship Connection</b> Where We See Love <i>Considering the love seen in worship and liturgy.</i></p>	15 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Hymnals, service books, or other worship resources</li> <li>&gt; Optional: paper, pens or pencils</li> </ul>
<p><b>+Discussion Guide</b> The Greatest of These is Love <i>Discussing today's story.</i></p>	15 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Youth Discussion Guide</li> </ul>

# Into the Story:

## Love, Love, Love (10 minutes)

*Defining “love.”*

### DURING CLASS:

1. **Today we are going to talk a lot about love. What are some images of love you find in the world around you?** *[Answers will vary.]* **When people talk about love in TV shows, music, or other places, what do they talk about?** *[Answers will vary.]*
2. **Share the images you may have seen or heard about love.** As the youth share, make a list on the board.
3. **According to our list, what are some qualities of love?** *[Answers will vary.]* As the youth share these qualities, write them in a separate list.
4. **With a partner, look at these lists of images and qualities, and come up with your own definition of the word “love.”**
5. After allowing time for the partners to come up with their definitions, bring the large group back together and share the definitions.

#### Supplies:

- > White board or mural paper
- > Markers

# Learning the Story:

## The Greatest is Love (15 minutes)

*Using heart stickers to remember the definition of kingdom love.*

### BEFORE CLASS:

1. For youth to get the most out of this lesson and become comfortable using their Bibles, it is recommended that youth have personal Bibles to mark in for this activity. If this is not possible for one or more youth, please provide printed copies of the day's Bible text.

#### Supplies:

- › Bibles
- › Pens or pencils
- › Heart stickers
- › Optional: printed copies of the Bible text

### DURING CLASS:

1. **Today's story comes from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. In this letter, Paul challenges the people in the Corinthian church to love each other. Please open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.**
2. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.
3. **In these first three verses, Paul gives us some interesting images. How do these images illustrate love as a powerful and important part of our lives?** *[Answers will vary, but may include that life is meaningless without love; love lasts forever; and love is a central part of our lives.]*
4. Invite a second volunteer to read aloud 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. **What are some adjectives that Paul uses to describe love?** *[Answers will vary, but may include patient, kind, helpful, etc.]* **How does your experience of love fit, or not fit, these descriptions?** *[Answers will vary.]*
5. Invite a volunteer to read aloud 1 Corinthians 13:8-13. **Reflecting on this passage, what are some adjectives that you would use to describe the qualities of love?** *[Answers will vary.]*
6. Hand out heart stickers and pens or pencils. **In a moment, we are going to read the passage a second time. As we do, focus on some of the words or adjectives that describe love, according to Paul.**
7. Read aloud the text of 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 again, giving the youth time to observe the text.
8. **Place heart stickers in the margins of your Bible, next to the parts of the story that stand out to you the most.**

# Living the Story:

## True Love (15 minutes)

*Considering what it means to love others in the Body of Christ.*

### DURING CLASS:

1. **How does our culture define “love?”**
2. **How does Paul define love?**
3. **How are these definitions similar, and different?**
4. **What examples can you give of people showing love in the Body of Christ?**
5. **What challenges prevent us from loving other people?**
6. **Describe a time when you loved another person through an act of service? What happened?**
7. **Draw a heart and write the words of 1 Corinthians 13:13 on it. Cut out the heart and place it in your locker, pocket, or another place where you will see it every day. Try to memorize the verse during the week. As part of the Body of Christ, we fellowship with others by loving them with the type of love in 1 Corinthians 13.**

#### Supplies:

- > Bibles
- > Paper
- > Pens or pencils
- > Scissors

# Hands On:

## L-O-V-E (15 minutes)

*Creating a love collage.*

### BEFORE CLASS:

1. Find a location in the church or the community to hang the collage.

### DURING CLASS:

1. Read 1 Corinthians 13:13 to the youth.
2. **Take a moment to think about the meaning of love, as illustrated in this verse. What does love look like in the Body of Christ?**
3. Give the youth a moment to think before making available magazines and old photographs.
4. **Let's work together to show others in our community what love in the Body of Christ looks like. Look through the magazines and photographs to find visual representations of the meaning of love in today's story. Once you have your ideas, paste them to the banner of paper. Write the Bible verse somewhere on the collage.**
4. When the collage is complete, hang it for others to see.

#### Supplies:

- › Bibles
- › Magazines
- › Old photographs
- › Scissors
- › Glue
- › Mural paper

# Mixed Media:

## 1 Corinthians 13 (15 minutes)

*Exploring translations and interpretations of Scripture.*

### BEFORE CLASS:

1. Search the Internet to find different Bible apps and translations of Scripture. Some examples of Bible translations other than the translation you may use in your congregation are: The Message, King James Version, New Living Translation, NIV, etc.

#### Supplies

- > Internet-connected device(s)

### DURING CLASS:

1. **People have translated the Bible in many different ways. Let's look up a verse from today's passage in different translations to see how people have interpreted Paul's words about love.**
2. Ask the youth to work in pairs. Invite them to use phones or other Internet-connected devices to look up 1 Corinthians 13:13 in different Bible translations. Assist if needed.
3. Invite the youth to read aloud the different translations of 1 Corinthians 13:13.
4. **What differences did you find in these translations? What similarities did you find?**  
*[Answers will vary.]*
5. **Why do you think Scriptures are translated in these different ways?** *[Answers will vary.]*
6. **Regardless of the translation's wording, God's love is the greatest gift we can receive and share.**

# The Competitive Edge:

## United in Love (15 minutes)

*Working as teams to complete a group challenge.*

### BEFORE CLASS:

1. If you have a large group, divide the youth into smaller groups in order to complete this activity. Each group should have their own hula hoop. Youth should be able to fit comfortably around a hula-hoop without getting in each other's way.

#### Supplies:

› Hula-hoop(s)

### DURING CLASS:

1. Invite the youth to stand in a circle. Tell everyone to hold their hands out toward the middle of the circle, with their pointer finger pointing to the middle.
2. Explain the rules of the game: **I am going to place a hula-hoop on top of your fingers. As a team, you must work together to lower the hula-hoop all the way to the ground. The hoop can only rest on your fingers. You may not hold or grasp it with your fingers or your hand. Everyone must have one finger from each hand touching the hoop at all times. If someone's finger leaves the hoop, then the whole group must start the process over.**
3. When the group is ready, lower the hula-hoop onto their fingers. Invite them to begin lowering the hoop. If you see someone's finger leave the hoop, stop the group and have them begin the process over again.
4. See if the group can complete the challenge. If they do, try the activity again.
5. **As a group, what difficulties did you face as you tried to complete this challenge? How did you overcome these difficulties?** *[Answers will vary.]*
6. **There are different interpretations of today's Bible passage. One of them is that Paul is challenging the Corinthian church to love each other and live in unity. What things might divide a church and prevent it from living in unity? How might we work together to overcome these things?** *[Answers will vary.]* **How might we work together to demonstrate that God's love is the greatest gift we can receive and share?** *[Answers will vary.]*

# Simply Serving:

## Surprise! (15 minutes)

*Planning a surprise for a member of the community.*

### BEFORE CLASS:

1. Identify members of your congregation who may benefit from a surprise service project. You may wish to consult your church's clergy or other leaders to identify these people.

#### Supplies

- > Paper
- > Pens or pencils

### DURING CLASS:

1. **As Christians, we know that God loves us. God's love is the greatest gift we can receive and share. We show God's love to others, many times through service. As a group, we are going to find a way to surprise someone and show them God's love.**
2. Work together to choose a person to surprise with an act of service. Use paper and pens to plan the service project for this person. Some ideas of projects could include to cook a meal, do some yard work, collect and donate some needed food or clothes, etc.
3. Arrange to have the youth complete their project.

# Worship Connection:

## Where We See Love (15 minutes)

*Considering the love seen in worship and liturgy.*

### BEFORE CLASS:

1. Find hymnals, service books, or other worship resources to use during this activity.
2. Talk to a clergy member or worship leader and arrange for the youth to lead the congregation in a liturgy they create.

### Supplies

- › Hymnals, service books, or other worship resources
- › Optional: paper, pens or pencils

### DURING CLASS:

1. **The language of love is everywhere in our worship. Let's look at some of our worship services and see where the language of love comes up.**
2. Hand out hymnals, service books, or other worship resources. Invite the youth to share where they find love, or the language of love, in different services or liturgy.
3. Invite the youth to create their own liturgy or prayers reflecting the language of love in 1 Corinthians 13.
4. Make plans to share these prayers or liturgies with the rest of the congregation during a worship service.

# Sending the Story (5 minutes)

## BEFORE CLASS:

1. Make or find a small box with the word LOVE on it.

### Supplies

- › Small box with the word LOVE written on it
- › Story @ Home

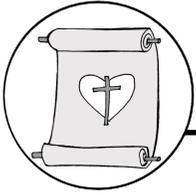
## **Review:**

**God’s love is the greatest gift we can receive and share. What are three characteristics of love, according to Paul?**

## **Prayer:**

Pass around a small box with the word LOVE on it. As it is passed, say “God’s love is the greatest gift we can receive and share.” Finish with a hearty Amen.

Remember to send “The Story @ Home” take home sheet with the youth before dismissing them.



# The Greatest of These is Love

## Unit 11: The Power of God's Love

### Youth Discussion Guide

If you break into small groups (or are a small group), use the following questions to discuss the day's Bible passage and how it relates to your lives. Make a copy of this sheet for each member of the group and provide pencils or pens. Encourage each other to take a moment to write your response in words or doodles before discussing out loud.

Start your time by going around your group and asking each member (adults included) to share a high point and a low point from the past week.

#### Opening Prayer

God, help us to understand and know your love enough to willingly receive and eagerly share it. Amen.

#### Understand

- ❓ What are some differences between the love we hear about in the media and the love Paul wrote of in his letter to the Corinthians?
- ❓ What characteristics of love God's way seem contradictory to love the world's way?

#### Wrestle

- ❓ Is it even possible to love the way 1 Corinthians 13 defines love? Why or why not?
- ❓ When can you know that a person is loving you with God's love?
- ❓ What do you need to do in order to love the way that Paul describes?

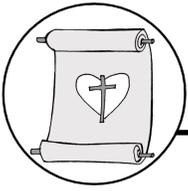
#### Share

- ❓ Share, write, or draw about what life would be like if everyone gave and received love the way that Paul describes it.

#### Apply

- ❓ What one change can you make this week that will allow you to give the love that is defined in 1 Corinthians 13?





# The Greatest of These is Love

## Unit 11: The Power of God's Love

### LAST WEEK

The church in Corinth was encouraged to be united in the face of conflict (Acts 18:1-4; 1 Corinthians 1:10-18).

### THIS WEEK

Paul writes of the greatest gift of all: God's love (1 Corinthians 13).

### Story Summary

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he does more than tell people to love one another. He invites them to be in communion with one another through the Church. Paul tells the Corinthians we are one Body of Christ and we should love God and other people equally, no matter who they are. He says that the greatest of the gifts God has given us is love—and we must share that love with everyone we meet. Paul challenges the Corinthians to look beyond the differences and divisions in their church. He invites them to genuinely love God and their community, as we are commanded to do.

### Practice Fellowship

To whom in your fellowship can you write an encouraging letter, card, or note? Do that today and be sure to mail it.

### The Point

God's love is the greatest gift we can receive and share.

### Bible Nuts & Bolts:

#### *What Are the Epistles?*

The Epistles are a collection of twenty-one books in the New Testament. The first thirteen epistles were written by Paul or one of his associates. An epistle is a letter and many of the epistles were letters written to churches to help solve problems or to encourage them in their ministry. Letters in the Bible have similar parts to letters we write today. In the first chapter of 1 Thessalonians, Paul says that the letter is from Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. He then adds the "to" section, where he names the church to whom the letter is addressed. He goes on to give them a warm greeting "Grace to you." If you look at the beginning of other New Testament letters, you will see some of these same elements. The letter to the Thessalonians is what is called an "occasional" letter. Letters are called occasional when they address specific situations or occasions.

### NEXT WEEK

Paul focuses his teaching on clarifying the concept of resurrection, stating that it is not just a matter of raising from the dead but of new life in God's kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:1-26, 51-57).

## Going Deeper

As you hear and study these stories each week, consider what God has to say to you and your family. What is God's message to us? Consider the following basic pattern as a way of forming family devotions:

- ✦ Light a candle to help you focus this time as "God time." Pray a simple prayer together.
- ✦ Take a moment to check in with each other; what are each person's "highs" and "lows" today?
- ✦ Read aloud from the Daily Bible Readings from below. Discuss the questions following each.
- ✦ End with a blessing, by simply tracing a cross on each other's forehead. The Lord's Prayer is a good way to end your devotion time. If you used a candle, extinguish it as a sign of the end of the devotions.

*Note: This is only a suggested pattern. It will vary with your household's context and patterns. What works best for you? First thing in the morning? Over breakfast? Bed time? Be creative and flexible with how you practice and keep your devotions!*

## Daily Bible Readings

### Sunday—Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Paul writes that about love.

- What is the hardest part about loving the way Paul describes?
- When have you received this kind of love?

### Monday—Read 1 Corinthians 14:26-33

Paul builds up the Body of Christ.

- Describe confusion.
- Describe peace.

### Tuesday—Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Paul proclaims the resurrection.

- What does Paul say about the grace of God?
- How has the grace of God made you what you are?

### Wednesday—

#### Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

The significance of Christ's resurrection.

- What would Christianity be if Jesus had not been raised from the dead?
- In what way has the resurrection given you new life?

### Thursday—Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-26

Christ is God's first fruits.

- What enemies of God do you look forward to being put under Jesus' feet?
- How does one belong to Christ?

### Friday—Read 1 Corinthians 15:30-41

There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies.

- How does what you do on earth affect the kingdom of God?
- How do you glorify God in your earthly body?

### Saturday—Read 1 Corinthians 15:42-50

There are physical and spiritual bodies.

- Describe your physical body and its abilities.
- Describe the condition of your spirit.