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Team Mission 1: Love Extravagantly

LUKE 6:27–36



GOAL

After hearing Jesus' challenge to return hate with love, children explore how people *receive*, not *earn*, God's love.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

Lord, have mercy as I help your children wrestle with your challenging call to love. Remove the planks in my eye that I may, with clarity and conviction, receive, share, and model your love.

THIS SESSION

God loves people extravagantly—even the naughty ones. This is good news for those of us who have ever behaved badly. But the same good news gives us pause when we realize God wants us to do likewise and love people extravagantly—even the ones who behave badly or are difficult to love. Through this unit, children will imagine themselves as a superhero team whose mission is to spread God's love.

THE BIBLE STORY

In Luke 6:27–36, Jesus challenges conventional wisdom: Love your enemies. Bless those who curse you. Turn the other cheek. Regardless of how people treat us, love is given, not earned. Embedded in Jesus' sermon is the Golden Rule: do to others as you would have them do to you. We are not to treat people based on how they treat us. We are not to love as the world loves. Instead, we love as God loves.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Children understand an “eye for an eye,” bumping someone back if bumped into, even by accident. Yet children also have an incredible capacity to love generously without holding grudges. While Jesus' countercultural aspects of loving one's enemies will challenge children, they may have an easier time than many adults in comprehending and modeling God's unconditional love. Children experience an imbalance of power, however, in many of their relationships. There is a difference between not fighting back as a choice versus not speaking up if there is abuse. Children need to know that God fiercely loves them and never condones harm.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “Superhero Capes” (p. 8): Obtain light, non-patterned cotton fabric or pillow cases, permanent ink fabric markers, and 24” shoelaces or ribbon. Cut fabric pieces 12” x 24”. Fold the fabric about an inch from one of the short edges. Make ¼” snips every 2 inches (at 2”, 4”, 6”, 8”, and 10”) along the fold. Make a few extra capes for children in future sessions.

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Do Unto Otters” (p. 10): Obtain *Do Unto Otters: A Book about Manners* by Laurie Keller (Square Fish, 2009) or use the YouTube video “Do unto Otters Read Aloud” (bit.ly/FMOtters, 11:00).
- “Love Letters” (p. 10): Obtain *The Love Letter* by Anika Adamuy-Denise (Harper Collins, 2019) or use the YouTube video “The Love Letter Read Aloud” (bit.ly/FMLoveLetter, 7:09).
- “Golden Rule Sticks” (p. 11): Paint jumbo craft sticks with gold paint.



GETTING STARTED

- Prepared fabric piece for each child
- 24" shoelace or ribbon for each child
- Fabric markers

SUPERHERO CAPES



As children enter, welcome them to the superhero team. Provide prepared pieces of fabric and fabric markers. Invite the children to decorate their cape. Encourage them to think about spreading God's love to people and the world. Suggest the following pictures, but let children decorate as they wish: heart, people, the world, happy faces, animals and nature, singing and music. Invite them each to think of a superhero name for themselves as they decorate their capes. Have them write their superhero name somewhere on their cape. Assist with writing as needed.

When the children have finished decorating their capes, give each child a shoelace or piece of ribbon. Demonstrate how to use the end of the shoelace or ribbon to sew by going up in one hole, down in the next, and repeating till the end. Tie a double knot in each end of the shoelace or ribbon so that they won't slip back through the holes. Tie the capes on the children.

SUPERHERO ROLL CALL AND CREED



Throughout this unit, sessions will open with the superhero roll call followed by the superhero creed, a four-line, responsive litany. The leader will say the non-bolded lines. The children will respond in unison with the words in bold text.

Introduce the superhero creed and have the children practice their responses using their best superhero voices and poses. For this session, explain that *extravagantly* means "a lot" or "over the top." Comment that the last two lines become our prayer when the response changes slightly from "**when** we love extravagantly" to "**may** we love extravagantly." Invite the children to respond as you lead the superhero creed.

Superhero Roll Call:

Superheroes assemble!

[Name] (Leader calls each child by name.)

Present!

And what is your superhero name?

[**Superhero Name**]

Superhero Creed:

We love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind
when we love extravagantly.

We love our neighbor as ourself

when we love extravagantly.

We love our enemies

when we love extravagantly.

Lord, in your mercy,

may we love extravagantly.



While some children love the spotlight, some feel anxiety with attention. As an alternative, have all the children stand up when you shout, "Superheroes assemble!" Then call out all the children's names as one list, inviting them to yell in unison "present!" Follow up by asking the alternative question "And who are you?" Children then respond in unison with an agreed-upon superhero team name, "We are [team name]."



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

SUPERVILLAIN SAYS

AM G

If you have a villain costume accessory, put it on now. Tell the children that, since they are superheroes, you think they can play a game like “Simon Says” but called “Supervillain Says,” and do your best villain laugh. Explain the rules of the game. Instead of Simon, the leader is the Supervillain. When the Supervillain says to do something, the children should do the *opposite*. But the leader must begin the command with “Supervillain says.” If the leader does not begin the command with the phrase “Supervillain says,” then the children should not respond. If they do, then they move to the side and are out of the game for that round.

Invite the children to spread out from one another. Stand in front of the children and have them practice responding to a few directions. For example, if you call out “Supervillain says, ‘Spin around very slowly,’” the children might spin around very fast or they might stand still. If you call out, “Supervillain says, ‘Stretch your arms high up to the sky,’” the children might crouch down low or touch their hands to the ground. Affirm the children for the different ways they may interpret the same command. Consider the physical abilities of your children and adapt your commands accordingly. If there is time, children can remove their cape, put on the supervillain accessory, and take turns being the supervillain.

After the game, comment that this game was about doing opposite things. Wonder what the opposite of a few actions are, such as *walk*, *go to sleep*, *breathe in*. Then ask the children what the opposite of *love* is. Most likely they will respond *hate*. Tell the children that Jesus had a lot to say about love and how we treat others.

- Villain costume accessory, such as a hat, sunglasses, or mask (optional)



Simplify the game if children struggle with both doing an opposite action and only following the commands that begin with “Supervillain says.” To modify, start every command with “Supervillain says.” In this version no one gets out in the game. Instead, game play continues for a pre-determined period of time.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

SUPERHERO CREST

A C

Set the scene for the Bible story. Tell the children that Jesus was kind of a superhero leader and teacher. Many people followed him to learn about God. One time, many people gathered in a big field to hear Jesus, and he talked about how we love others.

Read aloud the adapted Bible story from Luke 6:27–36 on Resource Page 1. Wonder together, using the following questions or some of your own.

- What are some opposites in this story?
- Do you think it’s easier to follow the actions of the people in this story or to follow Jesus’ instructions? Why?
- Why do you think God loves you?
- Do you think God would love a supervillain? Why or why not?
- When talking about love in this Bible story, why do you think Jesus talked a lot about our actions and not our feelings?
- Think to yourself about someone who has been mean to you or hurt your feelings. What is something you can do to show God’s love to that person?

- Poster board
- Resource Page 1
- Copies of Resource Page 2
- Crayons or markers
- Scissors
- Tape or glue



In each session of this unit, the children will work on a new poster or add to a banner. At the end of the unit, all six posters can be displayed together, forming the group’s superhero crest.



If you have more than four or five children, have them alternate between drawing their pictures on the poster board and making their superhero mission badges.

After the discussion, invite the children to draw pictures of what “Love Extravagantly” means to them on the poster board. Provide copies of Resource Page 2 and have children color the pair of “Love Extravagantly” superhero mission badges. Then have them cut out the badges and write their initials on each one. Assist with cutting and writing as needed.

Invite the children to tape or glue one of their badges near their drawing on the poster. Tell the children that they will take the second badge home to remind them of this session’s superhero power, loving extravagantly, or a lot. Set aside the second badges for “Golden Rule Sticks” (p. 11) or “Let Us Love” (p. 12).

Title the poster “Love Extravagantly” and display it in the room.



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

- Do Unto Otters: A Book about Manners* by Laurie Keller (Square Fish, 2009) or internet-connected device

DO UNTO OTTERS



Recall that Jesus talked about how we should treat others. Ask the children what Jesus said. Explain, if necessary, that he said we should treat others the way we would like to be treated. Tell the children that they are going to hear a story about a rabbit and some otters, emphasizing *otters* and how it sounds like *others*.

Read aloud *Do Unto Otters: A Book about Manners* by Laurie Keller or show the YouTube video “Do unto Otters Read Aloud” (bit.ly/FMOtters, 11:00). Debrief the story together by pondering these questions or some of your own:

- How does the rabbit feel when he first meets his new neighbors, the otters?
- What advice does owl give rabbit when he worries, “I don’t know anything about otters. What if we don’t get along?”
- What are some of the ideas the rabbit has for how he’d like the otters to treat him and others?
- Do you think owl’s advice is good advice? Why or why not?

- The Love Letter* by Anika Adamuy-Denise (Harper Collins, 2019) or internet-connected device

- Newsprint
- Paper
- Markers and crayons
- Envelopes

LOVE LETTERS



Wonder what it’s like to be loved. Ask the children to describe that feeling using their different senses: what it looks like, what it sounds like, what it smells like, what it tastes like, and what it feels like. Remind the children of Jesus’ words that we should treat others as we would like to be treated. Tell the children that they will hear a story about a love letter.

Read aloud *The Love Letter* by Anika Adamuy-Denise or show the YouTube video “The Love Letter Read Aloud” (bit.ly/FMLoveLetter, 7:09). Debrief the story together by pondering these questions or some of your own:

- Why did Hedgehog, Bunny, and Squirrel begin acting differently after they read the love letter?
- Is it possible people would act differently if they knew they were loved?
- How does it feel to know God loves you no matter what?
- Does knowing God loves you help you be kind to others, even if those people are not kind to you? Why or why not?
- What can we do to remind people around us that we love them?

Invite the children to make love letters. Provide paper, markers, and crayons. Have the children write or draw pictures on the paper. Discuss who are the people in their lives they can give a love letter to this week. Wonder what messages they might want to say or pictures they might want to draw in a letter. Write suggestions on a sheet of newsprint for children to refer to as they are making their love letters. Assist with writing as necessary. Provide envelopes and have them write the name of the person they will deliver their letter to on the envelope.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

GOLDEN RULE STICKS

A G

Ask the children to share examples of how they want people to treat them. Write each suggestion on a gold craft stick with a permanent marker. Encourage the group to come up with enough examples for the number of children present.

Tell the children that they will play a game like Charades, acting out something without using any words. Place craft sticks into a bag or bowl. Ask a child to pull one craft stick out of the bag or bowl. Step aside and whisper what is written on the craft stick to the child. Have them act out the suggestion without using words. Invite the rest of the group to guess what is being acted. Continue by having the children take turns pulling a stick from the bag or bowl and acting out what is written on their craft stick.

At the end of the game, provide the children with the craft stick they acted out, their superhero badge from “Superhero Crest” (p. 9), and glue sticks. Have the children glue their badge onto the back side of their craft stick and take it home as a reminder to practice the Golden Rule and love extravagantly.

- Prepared jumbo craft sticks painted gold
- Black permanent marker
- Bag or large bowl
- Glue sticks
- Superhero badges from “Superhero Crest” (p. 9)

TREATING OTHERS AS YOU WANT TO BE TREATED

A

Wonder together what it means to treat others the way you want to be treated. Suggest that, as superheroes on a mission to love extravagantly, treating others in this way would be part of their mission. Provide copies of Resource Page 3. Read the words at the top of the page and invite the children to color them. When they have finished coloring, point out the boxes on the bottom of the page. Distribute copies of Resource Page 4 and talk together about the pictures, asking the children to describe what is happening in each picture. Wonder which pictures show ways that the children would want to be treated, and therefore treat others the same, and which pictures do not show this. Invite the children to color and cut out three of the pictures they want to add to their artwork on Resource Page 3. Encourage the children to take their pictures home as a reminder to treat others the way they want to be treated.

- Copies of Resource Pages 3 and 4
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils
- Scissors
- Glue sticks



FOLLOWING JESUS

- ☐ Internet-connected device
- ☐ Rhythm instruments (optional)
- ☐ Superhero badges from “Superhero Crest” (p. 9) or Golden Rule sticks from “Golden Rule Sticks” (p. 11)

LET US LOVE



Each session in this unit closes with a song sung to the tune of a popular children’s song, “Baby Shark.” The first verse is the same throughout the unit. The second verse changes to reflect the team mission highlighted in that session. The children will give a response to a question you will ask, which will become their second verse. When singing, do not get too stuck on making the children’s responses fit perfectly into a three-syllable line. Four syllables can work by singing the last two syllables quickly together. What’s more important is encouraging children to apply what they are learning as they come up with their own lyrics.

Tell the children that, as a closing song in each session of this unit, they will sing a song to the tune of “Baby Shark.” Many children may be familiar with this song and tune. Practice the first verse and play the YouTube video “Baby Shark—Pinkfong (Instrumental)” (bit.ly/FMBabySharkTune, 1:43, starting at 0:24 and ending at 0:32) to hear the tune if needed. You can keep playing it to repeat singing the same verse, to add the second verse, or to alternate verses.

Let Us Love

(verse 1)

Let us love. Doo doo doo-doo doo-doo

Let us love. Doo doo doo-doo doo-doo

Let us love. Doo doo doo-doo doo-doo

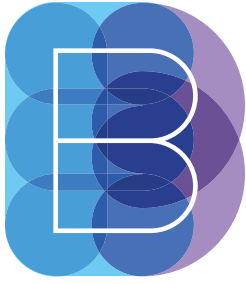
Let us love.

Ask the children how Jesus wants us to love others and who Jesus wants us to love. Listen to the children’s answers and distill them into a three- or four-syllable line. Some suggestions may be: love a lot, over the top, everyone, even the mean, and so forth. Sing the song again with both verses, repeating or alternating as many times as you wish. Hand out rhythm instruments and invite the children to play along as they sing, or encourage the children to create body motions that accompany the song’s lyrics.

Collect the children’s superhero capes before they leave and tell them that they will use them in each session of this unit.



Keep the superhero capes for use in sessions 2–6.



BIBLE STORY

BASED ON LUKE 6:27–36

Jesus was a very popular teacher. Crowds of people would travel great distances to hear him speak. One day, Jesus decided to have an outdoor story time. He stopped at a large, flat piece of land and began telling love stories, but not the type of love stories the people were expecting. Jesus had some surprising things to say about love. He said:

You have come all this way to listen to my stories; listen up as I talk about love. Love the people who are mean to you. Choose to be nice to them even though they are not nice to you. If a person hurts you, you might hope that bad things will happen to that person. But instead, you should pray for that person. If someone hits you or takes something from you without your permission, do not hit them back. Do not demand they give you back your stuff. Instead, surprise them by showing them a better way to live. How would you like people to treat you? That is how you should treat others.

Why should you get a trophy for loving people who already love you? Why should you get an award for doing nice things to people who already do nice things to you? Why should you get a medal for giving away your stuff to people only after they promise they will eventually give everything back to you? These are all things that anyone can do without much thought and effort, including people who normally do not choose to do the kind and right thing.

Be different. Love everyone, not just the people who love you, but the people who are mean to you and people who are hard to love. Do the right thing and be generous, not because you want special attention, but because it is the right thing to do. Do not copy the actions of other people; instead copy God's actions. God is kind to people who do not appreciate it. God is kind to people even when they are naughty and make bad choices. Choose kind, just as God is kind.



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Three large empty rectangular boxes for drawing or writing.

