

Lesson
44

“God Is Love”

1, 2, and 3 John

Purpose

To help class members understand how the Father and the Son show their love for us and how we should show our love for them.

Preparation

1. Read, ponder, and pray about the following scriptures:
 - a. 1 John 2:28–29; 3:1–2; 4:7–19; 5:1, 11–15. John teaches that Heavenly Father shows his love for us by providing a way for us to become like him and inherit eternal life.
 - b. 1 John 1:7–9; 2:1–2; 3:5–8, 16; 5:11–13. John teaches that Jesus showed his love for us through his atoning sacrifice, which enables us to become like our Father in Heaven.
 - c. 1 John 2:3–17; 3:9–24; 4:4–21; 5:1–10; 2 John; 3 John. John teaches that we show our love for Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ by our obedience and our love for one another.
2. Additional reading: Moroni 7:48; Doctrine and Covenants 45:3–5.
3. If you use the attention activity, bring a family photograph or one of the following pictures: A Family Working Together (62313); Family Fun (62384); or Family Togetherness (Gospel Art Picture Kit 616).
4. Suggestion for teaching: “Love, caring, devotion to duty, selflessness, scripture study, and prayer give your teaching a spiritual foundation. Combining these elements as you prepare lessons will help you create the lessons spiritually in your mind and heart before you teach them to your class members” (*Teaching—No Greater Call*, iii).

Suggested Lesson Development

Attention Activity

As appropriate, use the following activity or one of your own to begin the lesson.

Show a picture of a family.

- What are some of the ways that parents show love for their children? How do children show love for their parents, brothers, and sisters?
- In what way are we all members of the same family?

Remind class members that in addition to belonging to an earthly family, each of us is a spirit son or daughter of our Heavenly Father, who loves us and desires to bless us. In his epistles, John repeatedly emphasizes how the Father and the Son show their love for us and how we can show our love for them.

and Application

As you teach the following scripture passages, discuss how they apply to daily life. Encourage class members to share experiences that relate to the scriptural principles.

1. Manifestations of Heavenly Father's love for us

Discuss the verses listed below. You may want to summarize the discussion on the chalkboard by listing the manifestations of God's love.

- If you were to use one word to describe Heavenly Father, what would it be? What word did John use to describe Heavenly Father in 1 John 4:8, 16? Why is this an appropriate word?
- Read 1 John 3:1–2. What manifestation of God's love did John mention in these verses? (God will call us his sons and make us like Christ—glorified, exalted, and joint-heirs with him; see also Romans 8:14–17.) What must we do to be called the sons of God? (See 1 John 2:28–29; 4:7; 5:1; Galatians 3:26–27; Mosiah 5:5–9; Moroni 7:48. Explain that while all of us are spirit children of God, the use of the words “sons of God” in 1 John 3:1–2 refers to those who take upon themselves the name of Christ through baptism and honor his name through faith and righteousness.)
- Read 1 John 4:9–10. What manifestation of God's love did John mention in these verses? (See also John 3:16; 1 John 5:11; 2 Nephi 9:10. Explain that the word *propitiation* in 1 John 4:10 refers to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.) How does sending his Son to atone for our sins manifest Heavenly Father's love for us?
- Read 1 John 4:13. What manifestation of God's love did John mention in this verse? How has the Spirit been an important gift in your life?
- John taught that Heavenly Father will answer our prayers if we ask according to His will (1 John 5:14–15). How has prayer helped you feel Heavenly Father's love? Why is prayer essential for us to become like our Father in Heaven?
- John taught that “we love [God], because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). What are some of the ways God has shown his love for you? How do you feel when you consider the ways God has shown his love for you?

President Thomas S. Monson said: “Our Heavenly Father's plan contains the ultimate expressions of true love. All that we hold dear—even our families, our friends, our joy, our knowledge, our testimonies—would vanish were it not for our Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . The world has witnessed no greater gift, nor has it known more lasting love” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 77; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 62–63).

2. Manifestations of the Savior's love for us

Discuss the verses listed below.

- Read 1 John 3:16. What manifestation of the Savior's love did John mention in this verse? What blessings can we receive because of the Savior's atoning sacrifice? (See 1 John 1:7–9; 5:11–13; 2 Nephi 9:11–13; Alma 11:40–44. You may want to list class members' responses on the chalkboard as you discuss these verses.)
- Read 1 John 2:1–2. What manifestation of the Savior's love did John mention in these verses? What is an advocate? (One who pleads the cause of another.) What does Jesus, as our advocate, do for us? (See D&C 45:3–5.)
- John taught that the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). How do the Savior's life and teachings destroy the devil's works?

3. Showing our love for Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and others

Discuss the verses listed below. You may want to summarize the discussion on the chalkboard by listing the ways we can show love for Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

- Read 1 John 2:3–6. What can we learn from these verses about how to show our love for God? (See also John 14:15; 1 John 3:24; 5:3; 2 John 1:6.) How does obedience show our love for God?
- Read 2 John 1:4 and 3 John 1:4. How can our faithfulness bring joy to our Heavenly Father?
- Read 1 John 2:15–17. What can we learn from these verses about how to show our love for God? How do we sometimes show love for the world rather than love for God? How are we affected when we show love for the world? How can we overcome a love for worldly things?
- Read 1 John 4:7–8, 11. What can we learn from these verses about how to show our love for God? (See also 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:21.) How did John describe those who claim to love God but do not “love one another”? (See 1 John 2:9, 11; 3:14–15, 17; 4:20.) Why is our love for others a measure of our love of God? How can we come to feel and demonstrate greater love for each other? How have you been blessed by another person’s love for you?

If you used the attention activity, display the picture of the family again and ask the following questions:

- What are the blessings of living in a family whose members love each other and love God? How can we help others enjoy those same blessings as part of the family of God?

Conclusion

Testify of the great love that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ have for us. Encourage class members to remember John’s teachings as they strive to show their love for Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and for other people.

Additional Teaching Ideas

The following material supplements the suggested lesson outline. You may want to use one or more of these ideas as part of the lesson.

1. “Walk in the light” (1 John 1:7)

Read 1 John 1:6–7.

- What does it mean to “walk in darkness”? What does it mean to “walk in the light”? (As part of your discussion of these questions, you may want to have class members sing “Teach Me to Walk in the Light.” See *Hymns*, no. 304, or *Children’s Songbook*, 177.)

2. John cautions against the spirit of anti-Christ

- In his epistles, John repeatedly warned the Saints to avoid anti-Christ. What did John say anti-Christ try to do? (See 1 John 2:22–23; 4:1–3; 2 John 1:7.) Why do you think the adversary tries to destroy our testimonies of the Savior? What can we do to keep our testimonies strong?

Elder M. Russell Ballard taught: “Individual, personal testimony of gospel truth, particularly of the divine life and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, is essential to our eternal life. . . . Life eternal is predicated upon our own individual, personal knowledge of our Father in Heaven and His Holy Son. Simply knowing about them is not enough. We must have personal, spiritual experiences to anchor us. These come through seeking them in the same intense, single-minded way that a hungry person seeks food” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 111; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 80).

3. “No man hath seen God at any time” (1 John 4:12)

If class members wonder whether 1 John 4:12 means that man cannot see God, refer them to the corresponding verse in the Joseph Smith Translation, which reads, “No man hath seen God at any time, except them who believe” (1 John 4:12, footnote 12*a*). Point out that many prophets have seen God. See Exodus 33:9–11; John 6:46; Acts 7:55–56; Doctrine and Covenants 67:10–12; Moses 1:1–2; Abraham 3:11; Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17.

4. Youth discussion

Follow up on the attention activity with a more detailed discussion of how youth can show more love for their parents. Encourage class members to follow through with their ideas, and ask them to be ready to share their experiences next week.

5. Hymns about love

Choose a hymn about love (see under “Love” in the “Topics” listing of the hymnbook). Arrange to have a small group of class members sing the hymn, or sing the hymn as a class, read its words, or play a recording of it.