

WEEK 3
LESSON GUIDE

FROM
NOW ON

BIG IDEA

From now on,
trust Jesus loves you.

BIBLE

John 15:9–15; Psalm 36:5–10;
Ephesians 3:17b–19 (NIV)

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Love is a word that gets used over and over, but what does it actually look like to love something or be loved? This week, we'll read some of the words Jesus spoke about how to recognize love in the relationships around us. We'll see how Jesus showed love through his actions, leading us to embrace this idea — **from now on, trust Jesus loves you.**

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

ACTIVITY | What Do You Mean?

- Welcome to the third week of our series, *From Now On*. Each week, we have talked about Jesus openly and honestly. The Bible talks about Jesus honestly, so we thought we could, too.
- We all have different experiences with who we think Jesus is. Jesus might mean something different to you than he would a friend at school or maybe a family member. It's just like how one word might have many different meanings. Let me show you what I mean.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you will need a whiteboard, dry-erase markers, and a prize. To play, ask for two volunteers. Provide them each with a whiteboard and a marker, but face the whiteboards in opposite directions so they cannot see each other's drawings. Give them a word with multiple meanings, and then draw a picture of what the word means. Here are a few words we think would be fun to draw, but you can come up with your own: pitcher, park, clip, fall, letter, wave, and love. Since these words have different meanings, their pictures could differ, but if they match, they win a prize. Ask for another pair of volunteers and play as many rounds as works for your group.*
- Based on our experiences, we may think about Jesus differently. We want to believe true things about Jesus, but with so many different perspectives, how can we know we are talking about the same thing?
- **We also tend to think about Jesus' love differently.**
- **We may think about a husband and a wife. Or how you "love" tacos.**
- **But Jesus doesn't love us like that. So, what type of love does Jesus have for us? How can I trust it, and why does that matter? Let's take a story from the life of Jesus to help us sort through all of these questions.**

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

SCRIPTURE | John 15:9–15

- If there's one thing many of us hear about Jesus, it's that he loves us. Let's look at an account of Jesus' life from one of his followers and closest friends, who had a front-row seat on what Jesus' love means for us.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read John 15:9–15.
- When we first read this, it could cause some to react negatively. Why? At first glance, this could sound like you must keep the rules for Jesus to give you his love.
- Have you ever been in a relationship where you felt like you had to keep the rules, do the right thing, and not disappoint another person to be loved? That kind of love comes with a lot of pressure. Thankfully, this isn't what Jesus is saying. We don't have to earn Jesus' love.
 - Jesus' love is always present, but we experience his love most clearly and personally when we follow his guidance. Jesus' guidance is for our good.
 - It's like when a parent tells their kid to look both ways before crossing the street. The parent isn't trying to steal or control their kid's joy—they are trying to guide and protect them. This is similar to the commands Jesus is talking about here.
- Commands sound pretty harsh, but did you notice the commands Jesus shared? Are those different than the type of rules you usually hear? Jesus wants us to have healthy relationships with God, ourselves, and others because love is the root of healthy relationships.
- Jesus invites us to remain in *his love*. But if I am honest, the first time I read this, I had no idea what that meant. So, one thing that helps me clarify confusing things is to talk about its opposite. So, in this case, the opposite of "remain" is to run away. What would it look like to run away from Jesus' love?
 - It would look like looking for love in temporary things like our image or performance, thinking our value is based on how good we look or perform in school or activities.
 - Or when we look for love in a relationship that isn't healthy or in other people's approval. We believe we'll be loved if we finally hear someone proud of us.
- Remaining in God's love means trusting that everything we need is found in Jesus. When we remain and abide in Jesus, he gives us what our soul craves—love. When we do that, we can share love with others. This sharing of love isn't coming from a place of trying to earn love. We already know we have it, so we can share it without strings attached. We can also tell others they are enough when we know we are enough.

SCRIPTURE | Psalm 36:5–10

- Something as simple as being outside in nature is a way to remain in God's love. Nature helps us understand the majesty of God. Getting out and seeing the mountains, looking at the stars, the ocean, or rushing rivers reminds us of the great depth of the love of God.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Psalm 36:5–10.
- Knowing God created all of this, and God created you, gives us a glimpse into the vastness of God's love. This love is massive ... but it is also specific to you. Here is what I mean.

OBJECT LESSON | The Expansiveness Of God's Love

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this object lesson, you will need a giant beach ball, golf ball, and green pea. As you share comparisons, hold up each item. You can also use an image [like this](#) of the Milk Way Galaxy.
- Beyond this incredible world that God created, some galaxies were created by God, too. And when you think about the size of galaxies and outer space, it might make you wonder, "How do humans fit into this story? How do I fit into this story? Do I matter? Am I lovable enough to matter to a God who created planets and galaxies?"
- Think about this: one million planet Earths can fit into the sun. If the sun were the size of a beach ball, Jupiter would be the size of a golf ball, and the Earth would be the size of a blueberry.
- Where do you and I live? We live on this tiny little vegetable. Well, not really, but you and I would be a microscopic cell on this pea in this illustration. It's easy to feel small.
 - If we seek approval from someone and don't receive the thumbs-up we were hoping for.
 - If we were looking for validation in a relationship but only got rejected.
 - If we gave something 100% effort hoping for someone to tell us, we made them proud, but they don't even notice what we did.

- When we look for love like this, it is like trying to find all the love we need from another small cell on this tiny blueberry ... all the while, the love God offers to us in Jesus is bigger than all of these things combined.
- It's easy to feel insignificant and wonder if we matter to others or God. But the God who created everything intentionally made and loves you. You were created purposefully and are known, seen, valued, and loved by the God of all creation. The expansiveness of God's love is hard to comprehend, but it's an unchangeable reality. God adores you. **From now on, trust Jesus loves you.**

NOW WHAT? *What does God want us to do about it?*

STORY | When I Experienced God's Love

- Maybe you hear an idea like, **from now on, trust Jesus loves you**, and you put up a barrier. Perhaps this happened because someone you trusted and loved hurt you or is no longer around. It's normal to put up walls when hurt to protect ourselves. But what can be frustrating is when that barrier builds over time, and we have a hard time experiencing and connecting with God's love even when we want to.
- In these moments, it may help to try connecting with God's love in a new way. So, here are a few people who connect with God's love in ways you may have never thought of before.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Get a panel of three to four adult volunteers and have them tell a story about how they experienced the love of Jesus. Find people who connect with God's love in the ways highlighted by the takeaway points below. How did they discover this is how they connect with God? What was it like before they learned to connect with God's love in this way? What has it been like since?*
- We all have different ways of connecting to the love of Jesus. Here are a few things we just heard from our panel that you could do this week to experience and trust Jesus loves you.
 - **LOOK FOR PEOPLE WHO CARE:** Jesus shows up and loves you by putting people around you who care for you. This week, spend time with friends who can help you connect and remember God's love.
 - **LOOK FOR GOD IN CREATION:** Jesus can show you he loves you through the beauty of nature. Learning to look for Jesus' love and care for us even when our lives shift and change takes time. But that's why leaning into our surroundings can be such a helpful practice—nature is always there! From now on, when you see the sunrise, hear a bird chirping, or feel something lovely in the world around you, think of God's love.
 - **LOOK AT HOW JESUS LOVES PEOPLE:** Jesus shows up and loves you. He never gives up on you, even when you feel ready to give up on yourself. Maybe you feel like you've tried to find the love only Jesus can give from temporary things. Read the book of John a few times this week and look for stories of how Jesus never gave up on people. As you read, it will start to build trust that Jesus' love is there for you.

REFLECTION | Different Types Of Love

- The word "love" is big and can have many meanings. You can love Red Bulls, but you also love your closest relative. And if you loved Red Bulls the same way you loved your closest relative, I bet they would be pretty upset. Those are different types of love. So, let's define love a bit more clearly. The Bible was written in ancient Greek, and it has four words for love.
 - **STORGE**, which means affection. This can be like the affection between a mother and a kid, but it can also be the affection you may have for puppies, Zelda, or golf.
 - **PHILIA** is the type of love found in friendships. This is why Philadelphia is called the "city of brotherly love."
 - **EROS**, or romantic love. I know this one may cause you to blush a little, but God created eros love, too. This is the type of love we often see in romantic movies, but it is also the type of love we experience when we feel close to and know another person.
 - **AGAPE**, which is unconditional love. This is best displayed through Jesus. The love of Jesus was so evident when Jesus died on the cross for us. Jesus died for us even when we were actively pushing him away. Jesus' love is without condition. There is nothing we can do to earn or lose his love.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this reflection, you will need enough handouts included in [this week's series materials](#) and something to write with. Have the group reflect and write about the different types of love, where those appear in their lives, and what that tells them about who God is. Consider playing some contemplative music as they reflect.*
- What's amazing is that because God is the author of love, you can catch glimpses of how big God's love is when you look at examples of these types of love in your own life. While other kinds of love don't perfectly portray God's love, they can help us understand what God's love for us looks like.
- Jesus' love never runs out. It's so vast, deep, and immense that it's like a well that will never run out of water. **From now on, trust Jesus loves you.**

Optional Small Group Activity | From Now On, Bracelet Or Keychain

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this reflection, you need some bracelet cords in [multiple colors](#) and a [bead](#) with a heart on it. Before your program, be sure your adult volunteers know how to tie a sliding knot like [this one](#). These bracelets will be added to every week, which means they will need to be untied, so make sure the knots aren't super tight. Before you begin the response, pass out a bracelet and corresponding bead to each teen. As you talk, invite them to start making their bracelets. If someone would rather not make a bracelet, the string can be turned into a keychain by ordering [these](#). Have the those who missed weeks one and two add the "Cross" and "Peace" beads.*
- Today, we've learned that from now on, Jesus loves you. We don't have to fight for approval or earn his love. We receive it as a gift. Today, we add another bead to this bracelet as a reminder. As you put this bracelet together, think about how you can see Jesus' love in your life. Why does that matter to you? Why does Jesus' love give you hope?