

TEXT Matthew 1:21; 2:1-15; John 16:27

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES 1 Peter 1:8; 1 John 3:8; 4:9,10

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that God gave His best when He sent His only Son, Jesus, to this earth so that we might have eternal life. His love lies at the very heart of Christianity, and is the essential key to the relationship between God and man.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. — John 3:16

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. — 1 John 4:9

ANSWER TITLE: **A Letter from Dad**
SEARCH TITLE: **God’s Love**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

The word *love* comes from the Hebrew *‘ahàvâh*; or Greek, *agápe*. Love is presented in Scripture as the very nature of God (1 John 4:8,16) and the greatest of Christian virtues (1 Corinthians 13:13). It receives definition in Scripture only by the listing of its attributes (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). It lies at the very heart of Christianity, being essential to man’s relationship to God and man (Matthew 22:37-40). Jesus taught that upon love hangs all the Law and the prophets. Love found its supreme expression in the self-sacrifice on Calvary

(1 John 4:10). The God of the Christian is in His very nature and essence pure love; and Christianity is the only religion thus to present the Supreme Being. God not only loves but He is love. All human love, whether Godward or manward, has its source in God. However, if it is not manifested toward both God and one’s fellowman it is dead and worthless. A Christian must love God supremely and his neighbor as himself; he must love his enemy as well as his brother. Love is the bond uniting all Christians as well as all Christian virtues.

YOUR OPENER

God's Love

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SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: 1 Peter 1:8; 1 John 3:8; 4:9,10

KEY VERSE: In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. — 1 John 4:9

God gave His best when He sent His only Son Jesus to this earth so that we might have eternal life. His love lies at the very heart of Christianity and is the essential key to the relationship between God and man. God not only loves but He is love. All human love, whether Godward or manward, has its source in God. However, if it is not manifested toward both God and one's fellowman it is dead and worthless. A Christian must love God supremely and his neighbor as himself; he must love his enemy as well as his brother. Love is the bond uniting all Christians as well as all Christian virtues.

1. Paul the Apostle in 2 Corinthians 9:15 referred to Jesus Christ as God's unspeakable gift. Give a definition of the word *gift*. Using your definition, compare the attributes of a gift in our secular society to Jesus—the great Gift that God gave.

2. There are certain aspects of any gift which affect our regard for it: its usefulness, uniqueness, value, source, and durability. Using these five words, write a brief comment describing how each relates to Jesus—God's Gift to us.

- Usefulness
- Uniqueness
- Value
- Source
- Durability

RESPONSES

1. Your students' definitions will probably bring out that a gift is a voluntary transfer of something from one person to another without compensation. In considering the attributes of a gift, your students should focus on the thought that God freely offered His Son for all mankind, but in order for us to receive the benefit we must accept the Gift.

2. Your students' answers will likely bring out these thoughts:

Usefulness — can't function properly on earth without Him, and can't get to Heaven without Him

Uniqueness — only One of His kind

Value — Heaven's prize, God's only Son, priceless

Source — the Father

Durability — eternal

Discussing these parallels should reinforce the knowledge that Jesus Christ is the greatest Gift mankind could ever receive. Bring out that people usually reserve their best gift for the one they love the most. God gave His best to everyone.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

3. The Wise Men who came to Jerusalem probably had little light on the birth of Christ, the manifestation of God's love. Undoubtedly, they encountered many hardships and problems as they sought to find the newborn King. However, God in His love provided a means of leading the Wise Men to their hearts' desire. What means does God's love provide in our day to bring men to Him?

4. The gifts the Wise Men brought to Jesus had a special significance, perhaps even beyond the comprehension of those who brought them. Gold was representative of deity; frankincense of worship or the priesthood of Christ; and myrrh of suffering. Match the following Scriptures with the appropriate gift:

Isaiah 53:4,5

Luke 1:35

Hebrews 5:6

5. What reason did the angel give to Joseph that the Child's name should be Jesus?

6. The name Jesus was not chosen by Joseph and Mary, but was given to them by the angel Gabriel. The name Jesus is a transliteration of the Hebrew name Joshua meaning, "Jehovah is salvation." Using Philippians 2:9-11 as a reference, what place does the name Jesus hold in the plan of God? What is the meaning of your name?

7. If we consider God's love in sending Jesus to this world, we can see that it encompasses the whole of man's needs. Colossians 2:10 says, "Ye are complete in him" (Jesus Christ). How many titles given to Jesus can you think of which lend credence to this statement?

Examples: Wonderful, Counsellor, Good Shepherd, Bread of Life

3. Allow time for your students to mention some of the ways God calls people in our day. Some may hear the call through a sermon, or in a Sunday school class. Others may see true Christianity lived in the life of a friend or neighbor, and feel the call of God's Spirit through that witness. Some may be reached through a verse of the Bible, or Christian literature explaining the way of salvation. The point of this question is that God's love reaches to all mankind. But like the Wise Men, we must determine to persevere until we reach the prize we seek.

4. Isaiah 53:4,5 speaks of suffering, represented by myrrh. Luke 1:35 shows Christ's deity, which is represented by the gold. Hebrews 5:6 brings out the priesthood of Christ, signified by the gift of frankincense. Help your students understand how this question brings out a threefold aspect of Christ: His deity as the Son of God, His suffering as our Sacrifice, and His position as our High Priest and Mediator between God and man.

5. The reason given was, "He shall save his people from their sins." Help the students understand that His birth was according to prophecy, and this prophecy, being the plan of God, includes our salvation from sin.

6. The Name of Jesus is above every name, and will one day command confession by every tongue that He is Lord. Ask your class if any of them know the meaning of their names. Touch briefly on how, in some cultures, much thought is given to the choice of a name with an appropriate meaning. The name selected might refer to a quality or personal characteristic desired for the child or might indicate a position within the family. Using these thoughts as a basis, emphasize the point that God chose this Name to match the office of the Person—our Savior.

7. Allow several minutes to discuss the merits of the names or titles given to Jesus, and how He fills these offices today.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

Can there be any love apart from God? Why or why not?

Since God is love and Jesus was sent to earth as a manifestation of that love, name some of the characteristics God must have looked for in Mary, as the bearer of that love.

Why might God look for these same characteristics in believers today?

God gave His best when He gave Jesus to the world. The Wise Men brought their most precious gifts. Name some ways in which we can show the same unselfish love toward our families, friends, or our fellowman who may be in need.

Name some situations in our daily lives that would be quite different if there were no love in our families, friends, or church.

In our ANSWER story, what was evident in all the memories the father had of previous Christmases with the family?

Why was King Herod troubled when he heard of the Wise Men coming to Jerusalem?

Why did Joseph and Mary name their baby, Jesus? What does the name mean?

Why did Joseph and Mary leave Bethlehem? To what country did they go?

THINGS TO DO

Have a locked box and several keys, one of which fits the lock and is labeled "God's Love." Explain to your students that the lock represents something that would keep them from a relationship with God. Try opening the lock with some of the odd keys. Finally, try "God's Love." When the lock is opened show the children what is in the box (put in before class). This will be pieces of paper on which you have written things that God has for us through His love: Jesus, Holy Spirit, eternal life, wisdom, etc. Ask them to suggest things that they might give to God in return.

Cut a large Christmas tree from green felt. Mount it on a flannelboard. From red, blue, and yellow construction paper cut out the shape of a small gift box for each child.

Decorate each box with a ribbon. Back each gift box with flannel so it will adhere to the tree as a decoration. Pass out the gift boxes to your students and have each of them, in turn, put their gift on the tree as they tell what Jesus—the Gift of God's love—means to them.

Bring to class an egg and a small sauce dish. Break the egg into the dish and then ask if anyone wants to try to put it together again. Let the eggshell represent love, and the yolk and white, us and others. We are supported and protected by that love. It's important that that love not be broken or destroyed.


Show your students a picture of a block or brick building. Ask them how long the building would stand without the mortar. Neither can we build a spiritual house or become a part of the Body of Christ without love.

Answers for ANSWER

Gifts Freely Given

A gift is not something you can earn, it is always free. Look up the verses next to the gift boxes and fill in the blanks.

1 SON
2 HOLY GHOST
3 ETERNAL
LIFE
4 WISDOM
5 ALL
THINGS



God's gifts to you:

1. John 3:16
2. Romans 5:5
3. Romans 6:23
4. James 1:5
5. 1 Timothy 6:17

What can you give God?

Remember gifts must be freely given!

1. Proverbs 23:26
2. Romans 12:1
3. Psalm 105:1
4. Psalm 96:7
5. Psalm 96:7

1 HEART
2 BODIES
3 THANKS
4 STRENGTH
5 GLORY