



## Unit II

# THE HEART OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

## LEADER'S PEP TALK

The day was October 17th. As my wife and I quietly slipped out of our room, we were praying that we wouldn't make a noise. Across the hallway and into the next room we crept. There he was, having one of the most significant days of his little life and didn't even know it. It was our son Joshua's first birthday. As we sang "Happy Birthday" to him, he looked at us as if we had lost our minds. It was his day, and we were going to go to his favorite place on earth—Disneyland!!! It was time for Joshua to experience his first ride at Disneyland. Joshua is a veteran of the park. He's seen everything and been almost everywhere in the park—but on a ride? Not until today.

As my wife and I entered the park with Joshua, we headed straight for the castle. Joshua's first ride? The Dumbo ride. After we climbed into the airborne elephant, I strapped us in. In moments, we were in the air going up, going down! I had a great time. Unfortunately for Joshua, it was another story. As his few strands of hair blew in the wind, his face became a picture of sheer panic!

That night after we laid Joshua in bed still clutching his Mickey Mouse balloon, my wife and I prayed for Joshua. We prayed that God would look over his little life and guide him. We prayed that God would reveal His love to Joshua and that Joshua would come to know Christ. We prayed that Joshua would know that Mom and Dad love him with all their hearts.

After we quietly crept out of his room, I went downstairs and sat in our living room. I pulled out my journal and began to write. I wrote Joshua a letter telling him how much I love him. I told him what he means to me, how my life will never be the same since God gave him to us as a gift. I told him of my prayers for him and what type of Dad I wanted to be for him. I wrote and I cried. I wrote and I poured my heart out to my son whom I love with all my heart. My prayer is that someday my son will open the pages of my journal and have a glimpse into his father's heart.

You know, in its purest form that's what the Bible is: God's love letter to the world letting us know how much He loves us. It's a glimpse into our Father's heart. The kids we work with need to see it, need to be exposed to it, need to be changed and moved by it. The students that we work with need to listen to their heavenly Father's heart as He pours out His love for them within the pages of His Word. I believe that one of the callings of the youth worker is to bring kids into contact with the living Word of God. It's a message from the Father's heart to ours. As you lead your students through the heart of the New Testament, listen carefully. The heartbeat you hear is your heavenly Father's.



# THE INCREDIBLE, UNCONDITIONAL LOVE OF GOD

## KEY VERSES

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”  
Romans 8:38,39

## BIBLICAL BASIS

Exodus 3:14;  
Psalm 86:5;  
Luke 15:11-24;  
John 3:16,17; 8:1-11;  
Romans 5:5-8; 8:38,39;  
Ephesians 2:4-6;  
1 John 3:1; 4:8-10

## THE BIG IDEA

God has an incredible love for us—for everyone, any time, anywhere. God’s love is not based on what you do but on who you are!

## AIMS OF THIS SESSION

During this session, you will guide students to:

- Examine the amazing love God has for each of us;
- Discover how God’s unconditional love can transform their lives;
- Implement an attitude of gratitude toward God based on a realization of how much He loves them.

## WARM UP

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?—

Students respond to statements about the love of God.

## TEAM EFFORT— JUNIOR HIGH/ MIDDLE SCHOOL

### BRIAN AND THE LOVE OF GOD—

Students discuss how to counsel a friend who questions the love of God.

## TEAM EFFORT— HIGH SCHOOL

### WHAT’S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?—

An activity comparing God’s standards of love and acceptance with the world’s.

## IN THE WORD

### SNAPSHOTS OF LOVE—

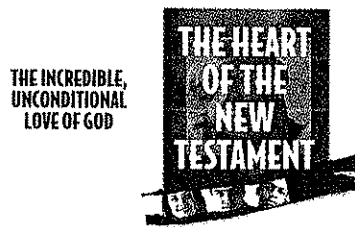
A Bible study on the incredible, never-ending love of God.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT (OPTIONAL)

Questions to get students thinking and talking about how they will respond to the love of God.

## PARENT PAGE

A tool to get the session into the home and allow parents and young people to discuss how to live out God’s love in their family life.



## LEADER'S DEVOTIONAL

### **"For God so loved the world, that he gave" (John 3:16).**

"I love you." Three simple words define the unfathomable nature of God.

What can you, as an adult who has a love for God and a love for teenagers do to put the two together? You can teach, live, exemplify, recite, promise, model, proclaim, reach, pray, find and display the unconditional love of God. What does "I love you" really mean? Simply and profoundly stated: "I love you, period."

*I* states the personal nature of God's love for us. The personal pronoun *I* identifies God. When you use the word "I", you must be present, delivering the message personally. Let's say I tell you, "I've heard it said 'I love you' is a message God wants to give to you." The communiqué is valuable, but it puts an emphasis on my integrity, intelligence and insights. As much as I'd like to overrate all of the above three qualities in my life, wouldn't you rather hear it straight from the One that spoke the message in the first place? "I am Who I am" (Exodus 3:14) wants to tell you, "I love you."

*Love* is the verb—the action. God's incredible, unconditional love is not just an emotion. It's not a descriptive term. The love of God is an action. Young people need to see to believe. God's personal love is made real through powerful action.

*You* is the object of the statement. The active love of a personal God is given directly to you and to me. Young people are desperately searching for love. They pay to watch other people love each other in movies. They dial in to hear people sing about love in songs and music videos. Deep inside they wonder if they will ever experience exclusive love from someone else. That's why marriage continues to be a trendy institution. What kid doesn't want to be the object of the I-love-you message?

Finally, punctuate the I-love-you message with the period. The punctuation mark of God is the Cross. The death of Christ is the period at the end of God's "I love you." Paul says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). The love of God is finalized in the cross of Jesus Christ. There are no *ifs*, *ands* or *buts* to this message of love. May God's message of His incredible, unconditional, personal, active love be the hallmark of your ministry. Kids are dying to hear it and God died to share it. (Written by Doug Webster)

**"It is another's fault if he be ungrateful; but it is mine if I do not give."  
—Seneca**

**SNAPSHOT TWO: THE UNCONDITIONAL LOVE OF GOD**

Read Luke 15:11-24.

1. What was the younger son's attitude? .....
2. What changed the younger son's attitude? .....
3. How did the father respond to his son coming home? .....
- Was that the expected response? .....
4. How do you think the son felt about coming home? .....
- About the reception he got? .....
5. How does this story reflect the unconditional love of God? .....

**SNAPSHOT THREE: YOU AND THE LOVE OF GOD**

Read John 3:16,17 and Romans 5:5-8.

1. How has God shown His love for you? .....
2. Why do you think God took the initiative in loving us and giving Jesus Christ's life for ours? .....
3. How does knowing the depth of God's love for you impact the way you see yourself and others? .....
4. What does Romans 8:38,39 mean to you? .....

**SO WHAT?**

1. Has there ever been a time when you felt like the woman caught in the act of adultery or the prodigal son and you wondered if God could ever love you after all that you've done? How did you feel? .....
2. In what area of your life do you need to experience more of the incredible, unconditional love of God? .....
- Spend a couple of minutes and write a letter to God, telling Him how you feel about His love, your relationship with Him, and your gratitude and thankfulness to Him.

**THINGS TO THINK ABOUT (OPTIONAL)**

- Use the questions on page 83 after or as a part of "In the Word."
- 1. What makes love that is based on who you are and not what you do so attractive?
- 2. What makes it so difficult to understand or accept the love of God?
- 3. Is there someone you know who needs to hear about the incredible, unconditional love of God? What will you do about it?
- 4. God's radical love for us calls for a response. How can you respond to God's love today?

**PARENT PAGE**

• Distribute page to parents.



# THE INCREDIBLE, UNCONDITIONAL LOVE OF GOD

**KEY VERSES**

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38,39

**BIBLICAL BASIS**

Exodus 3:14; Psalm 86:5; Luke 15:11-24; John 3:16,17; 8:1-11; Romans 5:5-8; 8:38,39; Ephesians 2:4-6; 1 John 3:1; 4:8-10

**THE BIG IDEA**

God has an incredible love for us—for everyone, anytime, anywhere. God's love is not based on what you do but on who you are!

**WARM UP (5-10 MINUTES)**

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

- Hand out three signs to every person in the room—one with the word "Agree" written on it, one with the word "Undecided" and the third with the word "Disagree."
- Option: You could write the letters A, D and U in large block letters on 3x5-inch index cards for students to hold up. Tell them that A means "Agree," D means "Disagree" and U means "Undecided."
- Read the following statements and have the students hold up the sign with their responses.
- Have some from the "Agree" side share their reasons why they agreed and have some from the "Disagree" side share their reasons why they disagree.
- 1. God's love is based on what you do.
- 2. God's love is based purely on who you are.
- 3. God will love you more if you go to church and read the Bible regularly.

4. If you love others, God will love you.
5. God loves Christians more than non-Christians.
6. I have had a time in my life when I felt there was no way that God could still love me.
7. I have a hard time feeling like God loves me.

## TEAM EFFORT—JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL (15-20 MINUTES)

### BRIAN AND THE LOVE OF GOD

- Divide students into groups of three or four.
  - Give each group a copy of "Brian and the Love of God" on pages 78-79 or display a copy using an overhead projector.
  - Have the groups read the story and discuss the questions at the end of the story.
- The bell rings just as you slip into your chair. As you pull your homework out of your bag, you lean over to talk to Brian, one of your friends since fifth grade. He tells you that he needs to talk to you after class and that it's really important. As you lean back into your chair, you notice the expression on Brian's face—one of anger and frustration, yet one of being lost.

You and Brian have done everything together: vacations, church events, everything. Brian pretty much gets along with his parents. He has told you "They're okay. We get into fights every once in a while, but for the most part we get along okay." But lately you've seen some changes. Brian's parents have been fighting more and more lately. In fact, Brian said they were yelling, fighting and throwing stuff a few weeks ago.

The bell rings and you head out of class with Brian close behind. As the two of you round the building going out toward the field, Brian opens up, "My parents are getting a divorce!"

"What!!! You've got to be kidding!" you exclaim.

"They told me before school today."

As you lean against the building, Brian starts to cry and says, "It's all I've thought about all day long. How could this have happened? I thought my parents loved each other and now they're getting a divorce! Don't they even care about how I feel? Doesn't anyone care about how I feel? How could God let this happen? Doesn't He love us anymore? I pray for my parents, but why isn't God helping? Can't my parents see how much I hurt? Can't God see? Where is He when I need Him? Where is this God who supposedly loves me?"

1. What would you say to Brian?
2. How would you explain God's love to Brian?
3. Has there ever been a time when you felt that God didn't love you because of something that happened to you or that He couldn't possibly love you because of something you've done wrong? Explain.
4. What does Romans 8:38,39 say about God's love? How does this verse apply to Brian's situation?

## TEAM EFFORT—HIGH SCHOOL (15-20 MINUTES)

### WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

- Before your meeting, prepare four grocery-size paper bags with the following titles written in permanent markers on the outside of the bags:

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|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| Bag One   | Beauty (looks, etc.)                  |
| Bag Two   | Brains (intelligence, position, etc.) |
| Bag Three | Bucks (affluence, materialism, etc.)  |
| Bag Four  | Brawn (ability, performance, etc.)    |

- Fill each bag with objects that would represent those areas of our lives. (Be creative.) Below are some examples:

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|--------|---|
| Beauty | mirror, make-up, clothes, weights, magazine covers                              |
| Brains | diploma, grades, business card, <i>Wall Street Journal</i>                      |
| Bucks  | money, toy car, credit cards, jewelry, vacation guides, pictures of possessions |
| Brawn  | sports equipment, trophies, awards, pictures of athletes and performers         |

- Divide your group into four fairly equal groups and give each group one of the bags. Explain that each bag represents an area that people use to gain value, acceptance and love. Explain that inside each bag are items that physically represent those areas. Write the following questions on the board or display them using an overhead projector and have each group go through the bag and answer them:
  1. How does the world attach value to this particular area of life?
  2. How does each item in your bag physically represent this area of life and the search for love and acceptance?
  3. How and why do people seek after love and acceptance in these areas?
  4. How does the world define love and acceptance?
  5. How is God's love different from this world's version of love?
- When groups have finished, have them come back together and share a few of their items and their answers.

## IN THE WORD (25-30 MINUTES)

### SNAPSHOTS OF LOVE

- Divide students into groups of three or four.
  - Give each student a copy of "Snapshots of Love" on pages 80-82 and a pen or pencil, or display a copy on an overhead projector.
  - Have students complete the Bible study.
- God has an incredible, never-ending love for each of us. No matter who you are, where you've been or what you've done, one fact remains: God loves you! The following are three snapshots of God's love:

### SNAPSHOT ONE: THE INCREDIBLE LOVE OF GOD

Read John 8:1-11.

1. Why was the woman brought to Jesus?

2. How did Jesus respond to those who brought her?

3. Jesus had every right to condemn the woman. How did Jesus respond to the woman?

- (Tell students: Jesus treated her with respect and honor. The word "woman" is a word of respect and honor. It's the same word He used to address His mother while hanging on the cross.)
4. How do verses 10, 11 reflect God's love?



THE INCREDIBLE,  
UNCONDITIONAL  
LOVE OF GOD

**WARM UP**

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

1. God's love is based on what you do.

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2. God's love is based purely on who you are.

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3. God will love you more if you go to church and read the Bible regularly.

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4. If you love others, God will love you.

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5. God loves Christians more than non-Christians.

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6. I have had a time in my life when I felt there was no way that God could still love me.

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7. I have a hard time feeling like God loves me.

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THE INCREDIBLE,  
UNCONDITIONAL  
LOVE OF GOD



## TEAM EFFORT

### BRIAN AND THE LOVE OF GOD

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"What!!! You've got to be kidding!" you exclaim.

"They told me before school today."

As you lean against the building, Brian starts to cry and says, "It's all I've thought about all day long. How could this have happened? I thought my parents loved each other and now they're getting a divorce! Don't they even care about how I feel? Doesn't anyone care about how I feel? How could God let this happen? Doesn't He love us anymore? I pray for my parents, but why isn't God helping? Can't my parents see how much I hurt? Can't God see? Where is He when I need Him? Where is this God who supposedly loves me?"

1. What would you say to Brian?

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2. How would you explain God's love to Brian?

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3. Has there ever been a time when you felt that God didn't love you because of something that happened to you or that He couldn't possibly love you because of something you've done wrong? Explain.

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THE INCREDIBLE,  
UNCONDITIONAL  
LOVE OF GOD

4. What does Romans 8:38,39 say about God's love?

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How does this verse apply to Brian's situation?

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THE INCREDIBLE,  
UNCONDITIONAL  
LOVE OF GOD



**1** IN THE WORD

**SNAPSHOTS OF LOVE**

God has an incredible, never-ending love for each of us. No matter who you are—no matter where you’ve been or what you’ve done one fact remains: God loves you! The following are three snapshots of God’s love:

**Snapshot One: The Incredible Love of God**

Read John 8:1-11.

1. Why was the woman brought to Jesus?

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2. How did Jesus respond to those who brought her?

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3. Jesus had every right to condemn the woman. How did Jesus respond to the woman?

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4. How do verses 10 and 11 reflect God’s love?

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**Snapshot Two: The Unconditional Love of God**

Read Luke 15:11-24.

1. What was the younger son’s attitude?

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THE INCREDIBLE,  
UNCONDITIONAL  
LOVE OF GOD

2. What changed the younger son's attitude?

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3. How did the father respond to his son coming home?

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Was that the expected response?

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4. How do you think the son felt about coming home?

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About the reception he got?

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5. How does this story reflect the unconditional love of God?

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**Snapshot Three: You and the Love of God**

Read John 3:16,17 and Romans 5:5-8.

1. How has God shown His love for you?

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THE INCREDIBLE,  
UNCONDITIONAL  
LOVE OF GOD



2. Why do you think God took the initiative in loving us and giving Jesus Christ's life for ours?

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3. How does knowing the depth of God's love for you impact the way you see yourself and others?

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4. What does Romans 8:38,39 mean to you?

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**So What?**

1. Has there ever been a time when you felt like the woman caught in the act of adultery or the prodigal son and you wondered if God could ever love you after all that you've done? How did you feel?

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2. In what area of your life do you need to experience more of the incredible, unconditional love of God?

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Spend a couple of minutes and write a letter to God, telling Him how you feel about His love, your relationship with Him and your gratitude and thankfulness to Him.

Dear God,

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Love Always,



THE INCREDIBLE,  
UNCONDITIONAL  
LOVE OF GOD

## **T**HINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. What makes a love that is based on who you are and not what you do so attractive?

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2. What makes it so difficult to understand or accept the love of God?

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3. Is there someone you know who needs to know about the incredible, unconditional love of God? What will you do about it?

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4. God's radical love for us calls for a response. How can you respond to God's love today?

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THE INCREDIBLE,  
UNCONDITIONAL  
LOVE OF GOD



**P**ARENT PAGE

**Love Is:**

God has an incredible, unconditional love for every one of us. No matter who you are, where you've been or what you've done, God is ready with His arms open wide to welcome you home. Yet understanding and accepting God's love can be one of the toughest things to do. Below are some passages about the incredible love God has for you. Read the passages and complete the statements.

Psalm 86:5

God's love is:

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John 3:16,17

God's love is:

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Romans 5:5-8

God's love is:

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Romans 8:38,39

God's love is:

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Ephesians 2:4-6

God's love is:

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1 John 3:1

God's love is:

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1 John 4:8-10

God's love is:

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THE INCREDIBLE,  
UNCONDITIONAL  
LOVE OF GOD

1. How can our family better live out God's love to each other?

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2. How can our family be a light for the love of God:

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In our extended family?

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In our work and/or school?

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In our community?

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In our church?

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In \_\_\_\_\_?

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Spend some time in prayer as a family, thanking God for His love and the characteristics of the love that He has for you and your family. Spend part of your time completing the following statement:

"I thank You, God, for Your love because..."



Session 5: "The Incredible, Unconditional Love of God" Date \_\_\_\_\_