# Desiring God Lesson 4: Christian Love

## **LESSON OBJECTIVES**

## **Goals**

1.To help the students be able to recognize truth and goodness.
2. To help the students love one another.
3. To help the students understand that they are loved by God.

## **Topics**

Love, Truth, False Teaching

## **Scripture Memorization**

Matthew 7:17

## **OPENING PRAYER (5 to 10 minutes)**

## **GROUP BUILDING (10 minutes)**

Have everyone stand in a big circle and then grab the hands of two different people, but not the people standing on either side of them.

Once everyone is holding onto the hands of two other people the aim is to work together to untangle the circle without letting go of any hands.

Depending on how many people you have this can take a long time or can be completed very quickly.

## **GETTING STARTED (10 minutes)**

**Read Hebrews 11:1-3, 29-30, and 32-40**

Hebrews is, essentially, a list of reasons why you should trust and believe in Jesus. The author is unknown, though it is suspected that it was written by either Paul or Barnabas. The book is known for demonstrating Jesus’ supremacy.

**General discussion:**
• What is your first impression of this passage? (Allow students to share.)
• What do you think the author’s view was on faith? (That it is essential, that it is action based, that is universal, that it is hard, that it costs us something, etc.)
• How faithful have you been to God in the past? (Allow students to share.)
• What are other things that you can believe in without seeing them? (Gravity, love, etc.)

As we delve into our study today, try to identify similarities between the verses in He-brews 11 and 1 John 4. As you read through the passage, think of questions that you can ask your leader about the passage, or things to pray on and think about during your quite time with God.

## **DIGGING IN (30 minutes)**

Have each student read 1 John 4 on their own, making note of what you’ve just mentioned: questions, prayer points, etc.

Now gather the entire youth group and read the passage aloud again.

**Discussion Questions:**
1. Having read this chapter a couple times now, what was your first impression of the passage? (It talks about God’s love, it talks about how we show love to God, etc.)
2. What is a question you still have? (There could have any number of questions — just appreciate and validate each one, noting that you’ll likely tackle most of them as you progress through the study.)
3. What are some evident similarities between Hebrews 11 and 1 John 4? (Both talk about how we demonstrate love; both talk of faithfulness — ours and God’s, etc.)

Now we will go through the passage again, breaking it apart and looking further into its meaning.

 **Read 1 John 4:1-6**

**Discussion Questions:**
1. What are some examples of ‘false prophets’ that have “gone out into the world”? (People who teach false things about Jesus, those who use religion to abuse people, etc.)
2. How can you recognize the spirit of God? (Verse 2 states, "They will always acknowledge that Jesus came in the flesh.")
3. How would you define the spirit of the antichrist? (They deny that Jesus was a man in the flesh among us.)
4. Who is “the one who is in the world”? (This appears to be talking about the devil, the antichrist, anyone who denies that Jesus is the Son of God.)
5. What is something that you have recognized as “the Spirit of truth”? (Allow students to share.)
6. What is something you have recognized as “the Spirit of falsehood”? (Someone who lies, abuses, denies God, etc.)

**Read 1 John 4:7-18**

**Discussion Questions:**
1. How did God show His love among us? (By sending Jesus to die on the cross for our sins.)
2. Why do you think loving each other is so important? (Loving others is a way we demonstrate we have been born of God.)
3. How can we know God lives in us? (If we acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God.)
4. Why do you think we might need confidence on “the day of judgement”? (There is a fear that comes from judgement, from distance from God, from separation.)
5. What do love, and fear have in common? How do they affect us? (They are both powerful, they are both motivators, they are both strong, they normally both inspire action.)

**Read 1 John 4:19-21**

**Discussion Questions:**
1. Do you agree with verse 20? Why or why not? (Allow students to share their opinion, free of judgment…but encourage them to consider how we can’t claim to love God and hate a brother or sister in Christ.)
2. How have you followed out the command in verse 21 so far? (By loving a friend, by being generous with someone, by serving others, etc.)
3. What are things that you can do to continue/start to love your brother and sister in Christ? (Allow students to share.)

1 John 4 is a chapter about believing in God, loving each other, and preparing ourselves for the time when Jesus returns to Earth. We should believe in God because we are from Him, and He lives in us, but we must be careful of who we trust. Many false spirits will deceive us and attempt to lead us astray, but we must devote ourselves to the one true God.

We must love each other because God has so loved all of us. We cannot be part of God’s kingdom if we do not love Him and love each other!

We must prepare ourselves for Jesus’ return by trusting that He lives in us as we live in Him. We must love those that we can see, otherwise how can we love God, whom we cannot see?

## **MAKING IT REAL (10 minutes)**

**General Discussion:**
• How has your impression/interpretation of the passage changed since you looked further into the chapter? (Love is a big deal! We can’t say we love God but not love other believers. There are some who claim to be of God who are not.)
• How do you think it relates to Hebrews 11? (The connection seems to be that love always inspires action, as does faith. It seems that faith and love are linked not only in these two passages, but in much of the Bible.)

Let’s look at another passage that expounds on this theme, and prompts us to make a choice on how we choose to live:

**Read Matthew 7:15-23**

**Discussion Questions:**
1. How does this passage relate to 1 John 4:1-6? (It speaks to the reality that some will appear to be following Jesus but are not…there are false spirits and false disciples and those who will deceive and distract.)
2. How does it compare/contrast with Hebrews 11? (A true follower — like in Hebrews 11 — shows that faith produces faithful action. A false believer — like Matthew 7 warns of — does not produce “good fruit” or faithful action.)
3. What are your thoughts on “the antichrist”? (It’s kind of a scary thought/idea, you may wonder if they’ll be easy to spot, is it a person or a movement/ideal?)

If right action and good fruit are the markers of someone who is really pursuing Jesus, then we would do well to spend 5-10 minutes talking about our next steps. Get together into small groups or discuss together as a youth group ways that you can:

1. Love your brothers and sisters more often
2. Grow closer to God
3. Gain a better understanding of who God is and how we can be a part of His kingdom

Challenge the students to accept one of these tasks and work on it, whether with fellow students or on their own. Encourage them to focus on improving their relationships with God and their brothers and sisters in Christ. Suggest resources such as journals to record their thoughts, leaders that they can confide in, and questions that they can ask God, as well as things to pray about.

## **CLOSING PRAYER (2 minutes)**