



Are you old enough to remember the cartoons that started with the words 'Love is...' and then finished with something profound or humorous? They were created by Kim Casali (née Grove) in the 1960s, originating from a series of love notes she wrote to her future husband. Take a look on [www.loveiscartoon.com](http://www.loveiscartoon.com)

I wonder which insights you would write to finish the sentence Love is...? Those of us with faith have experience of God's love in Christ that we want to share with children, young people, young adults and their families. Understanding love and experiencing loving relationships are important foundations to a life of faith, hope and love. We also see people struggling with the concept of love and what it really means, especially when it comes to self-love and wellbeing. And yet, depending on which version you use, love is mentioned well over 300 times in the Bible. We'd like to invite you to explore that theme throughout 2023, as God's family together.

Gathered in this resource pack, you will find a wealth of material to use for your work with children, young people, young adults, and in intergenerational contexts – all centred around the Children and Youth Work (CYW) theme for the year. Be creative. You will find there is plenty that can be adapted, so don't limit yourself to looking only at the section that most obviously fits your context.

By following links to our website, given throughout this publication, you will find further supporting material. Later in the year, a free downloadable Holiday Club resource will also be available. See [www.urc.org.uk/who-we-are/what-we-do/children-youth](http://www.urc.org.uk/who-we-are/what-we-do/children-youth) for details. You can also find a downloadable version of this booklet there.

We'd love to know how you use these resources and how we might improve on them for next year – please do email us at [children.youth@urc.org.uk](mailto:children.youth@urc.org.uk) with your feedback and ideas.

If you don't have any children or young people connected with your church, please do:

- enjoy the colouring pages and use selected prayers and other materials with your adult groups
- pray for those churches nearest to you that do – maybe share some ideas with them
- offer these resources to your nearest uniformed organisation or school.



# For URC babies and toddlers plus

## Loving God – we love God

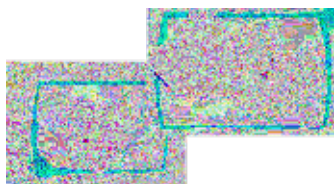
### Curiosity tray

On a tray, place lots of things that reflect love and loving God. Hearts, houses, cats or dogs, play people.



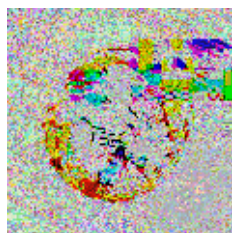
### Sticky hearts

Make a large, felt heart, or create some heart outlines, and cover them with clear film. Match heart shapes onto different hearts to reflect the love we have for God or fill the hearts with smaller hearts.



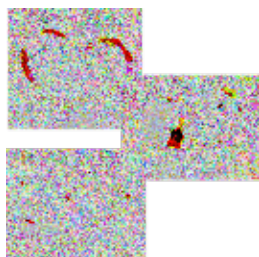
### Story-basket play

Create a story basket, by putting together lots of things that could be used to make up a story (eg scraps of felt, play people, bricks, ribbons). Create some stories about loving God.



### Make a big 'love heart'

Use masking tape, stones or paper to make the outline of a heart on the ground. Have your child come up with ways to use the heart, such as making it a racetrack, a collection area for their soft toys or other favourite objects, or a place to sit while they sing songs.



## Loving others – God is love

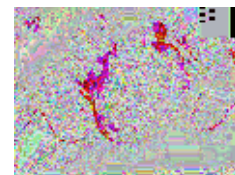
### Heart hands

When we place a hand in paint, we can sometimes find a heart shape in the middle. So, let's make hearts in our hands. Alternatively, put heart shapes on our palms with hand cream and rub them in with love.



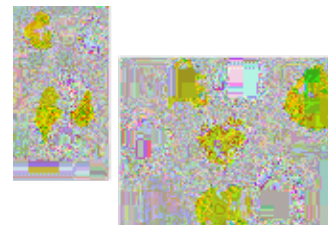
### Heart cushions

On an old cushion or pillowcase, make some footprints in paint to create the 'V' of love.



### Heart pictures

Gather lots of paper or fabric heart shapes, or make them out of heart-shaped cutters and dough. Create lots of pictures using your heart shapes. Talk about how we have all kinds of love to share and that it can look different every time.



### A quiet book on loving others

Make a quiet book with images of things we love that help others, eg making people happy, caring for nature, colours that make us feel loved and cheerful. Use felt or cloth hearts in different colours and sew them together down one side to make a book. Inside, glue on shapes in different textures.



## Loving ourselves – God loves us

### Create a 'love' dance

Love feels so good that we often smile, laugh, sing and dance when we are with those we love. Choose a song your child likes and make up actions or dance moves you can do together. Have a good time and savour the moments spent with someone you love. Being joyful helps us show and accept love.



### A fabric-hearts sensory bin

Cut out heart shapes from a variety of different textured materials. Place them in a box and encourage babies to take them out of the box and feeling the different textures. Love comes in all sorts of ways and this box can enable babies to explore the variety of love, through textures.



## Baby sign-language

This image says 'I love you' in British Sign Language or Makaton or Baby Sign language. Teach your baby this sign or make up an original sign together that your own family can use to tell each other how much you love each other.



## Fingerprint hearts

Make some hearts made from fingerprints. When someone touches your heart, it stays there forever. A fingerprint is special to us, just as God's love is special to each of us.

## Mirror image

Prop up a mirror so children can smile into it. Encourage toddlers to acknowledge themselves and love their image, just as God loves them and created each of them individually. Talk to your toddlers about all the positive aspects that make them unique.

## Modern parables

**God's Great Love for You**  
by Rick Warren

**Guess How Much I Love You**  
by Sam McBratney

**The I Love You Book**  
by Todd Parr

**How Big Is Love?**  
by Emma Dodd

## Prayers

From Diddy-disciples © Sharon Moughtin-Mumby  
(Used with permission)



1. **'My Hands were Made for Love'**  
Tune: 'Hickory Dickory Dock' (traditional)

*Invite the children to sit in a circle for a moment of quiet:*

*'It's time to remember all the things we've done this week. It's time to say 'thank you' to God for all the times when we've been part of showing God's love. Let's start by wiggling our fingers! I wonder when you've shown love with your hands this week?'*

*Wiggle fingers as you sing:*

***My hands were made for love!***  
***My hands were made for love!***  
***Thank you for the love they've shown.***  
***My hands were made for love!***

*'Let's wiggle our feet! I wonder when you've shown love with your feet this week?'*

*Wiggle feet as you sing:*

***My feet were made for love!***  
***My feet were made for love!***  
***Thank you for the love they've shown.***  
***My feet were made for love!***

*'Let's put our hands gently on our neck. Let's sing: 'Ahhh! Ahhhhh!'*

*Can you feel your throat vibrating and dancing? I wonder when you've shown love with your voice this week?'*

*Put fingertips to your throat and feel your voice 'dancing' as you sing:*

***My voice was made for love!***  
***My voice was made for love!***  
***Thank you for the love it's shown.***  
***My voice was made for love!***





## 2. 'Look how much Jesus loves me!'

Tune: 'Here we go Looby Loo' (traditional)

### **Higher than the stars,**

Stretch up on tiptoes and reach high with 'twinkle' hands.

### **Deeper than the sea,**

Crouch down and reach low, rippling fingers like water.

### **Wider than the sky,**

Stand and stretch arms out.

### **Look how much Jesus loves me!**

Big shape using your whole body.

'Jesus doesn't just love us when we're calm and well behaved. Jesus loves us all the time!'

Now either invite the children to choose which feelings they'd like to explore:

'How are you feeling today?' or: 'Let's all be cross! Can you show me cross?'

Lead the children in singing along with their chosen facial expression and action.

(Example):

**When I'm feeling cross!** Cross action and face.

**When I'm feeling cross!** Cross action and face.

**When I'm feeling cross!** Cross action and face.

### **Look how much Jesus loves me!**

Big shape.

Repeat for different feelings, inviting the children to explore a range of positive and negative emotions.

For instance: When I'm feeling... happy, sad, surprised, scared, excited, lonely, poorly.

You may like to end with:

'So many different feelings!'

Yawn.

'I'm feeling tired after all that. Are you? Can you show me tired? Let's sing quietly. This time at the end we won't make our big shape. Let's fall fast asleep instead':

**When I'm feeling tired,**

**When I'm feeling tired,**

**When I'm feeling tired,**

### **Look how much Jesus loves me!**

Yawn.

## A playgroup session

Start the session by sitting the children in a circle, with you sitting at their level.

### Talk



### Kind hands

1. Draw around children's hands onto paper or card. Decorate them (we used marble rolling).
2. Cut out the hands (adult help needed).
3. Write words and cut them out too.
4. Use a glue stick to create your picture.

### A box of love

1. Cut out lots of hearts.
2. Have everyone decorate their hearts in the same way or individually.
3. Now, wrap an open box with  
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## What is love?

### Talk

What do you think love is? How can you tell if someone loves you? Are there different kinds of love? We celebrate love on Valentine's Day but does everyone enjoy that? Are there other times we celebrate love?

### Make

Make a 'hug' using paper and ribbon – something that you can send to someone you love but who you can't currently hug. Maybe this is a grandparent who lives far away or a friend who's in hospital. Alternatively, squeeze the end of a cardboard tube (perhaps from inside a roll of kitchen towel) into a heart shape and use it with paint to stamp a heart pattern and make a card.

### Do

Think about the people who love you and care for you, or who are kind to you. Send a card to say 'Thank you for loving me' or to tell them what you're thankful for.

### Play

Love is contagious. Use heart-shaped stickers or pegs with heart-shapes on them. Give each person five stickers or pegs. While music is playing, run around and try to stick/peg a heart onto someone else's clothing. If you run out, use some of the hearts that have been put onto you. You can also re-use any that have been stuck/pegged on you. At the end of the music, who has the fewest pegs?

### Pray

Pass a teddy around the group. As each person receives the teddy, they can either name someone who loves them (eg 'Thank you, God, for Sophie' or 'Thank you, God, for my brother') or just say 'Thank you, God, for the people who love me'. Some people might choose to give the teddy a cuddle as they pray!

## Love of God

### Talk

The Bible tells us 'God is Love'. What do you think that means? Can you think of things God has done that show love?

### Make

The book of Psalms contains songs written about how the singer loves God in all different states and times of life: happy, worried, sad, ashamed or excited. Make a musical instrument – elastic bands over a



## Love of self

### Talk

Why is it important to love yourself and what do you think that means?

### Make

Make a healthy snack.

Option 1:

1. Heat the oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 4 and line two baking trays.
2. In a bowl, mash two bananas and mix with 150g porridge oats, two tbsp almonds, 1/2 tsp cinnamon and a pinch of salt to make a sticky dough.
3. Gently stir in 100g raspberries, trying not to break them up.
4. Use a tablespoon to scoop up the mixture and roll it into balls, place on a baking tray and fatten slightly.
5. Bake for about 15 minutes, then leave to cool.

Option 2:

1. Take a wooden skewer and thread different coloured pieces of fruit onto it to make a rainbow fruit-kebab.

### Do

Make a 'treat jar'. Put strips of paper or lollypop sticks in a jar with activities and ideas written on them that are little treats for yourself. When you feel in need, pull one out and do it. For example, read a book,

## **Play**

Go on a treasure hunt in your local area. How many different birds can you see, how many different insects, how many



## **Discussion starter activity**

Draw three huge hearts or write the word 'love' three times in bubble writing. Fill with phrases and pictures of what each of the three types of love look like – Love of God (faith), Loving others (action) and Love of self. This can start out as a group or an individual activity, enabling a discussion.

## **Love for God (faith)**

### **Exploring the Bible**

*“My children, our love should not be only words and talk. Our love must be true love. And we should show that love by what we do.” (1 John 3:18)*

*“Jesus said, ‘I give you a new command: Love each other. You must love each other as I have loved you. All people will know that you are my followers if you love each other.’” (John 13:34-35)*

Read the two passages and explore them through discussion; What does it look like to love others? Why is love proof that we are followers of Jesus? How did Jesus love his disciples and what can it teach us about loving others? Use the activity ideas below to explore this further and lead to action.

## **Love for others (action)**

### **Passing it on**

Create some 'love batons'. Each time you do something that is love in action, give the person a love baton. It simply bears the words 'You have been loved. Go and pass it on'.

### **Give it away and get more back**

This is a tabletop talk activity. Each person has a piece of A4 paper (it works better if they each have a different coloured paper). Explain that this paper represents God's love for you. We are not meant to keep it to ourselves, we are meant to give it away.

b ä lainoved.

### **Jammy noses game**

This is a team relay race: just a bit of fun to think about how love is the 'glue' that keeps us together. Position a chair at one end of the room and another at the opposite end. On the chair furthest from you, place a plate which has on it a pile of jam and a pile of cotton wool balls.

On the other chair, place an empty plate. Team members must take it in turns to run and dip their nose into the jam before using their jammy nose to pick up a cotton wool ball. They then run back to the empty plate, shake their head to release the cotton wool ball and 'tag' the next runner. Keep going until all the cotton wool balls have been transferred.

### **Social action is making love tangible**

How can we show the people in our communities and world that they are loved? Below are some suggestions for how your group could show God's love for people in your community:

- Go on a prayer walk around your community, asking God to show you where there is a need and what you can do to help.
- Give love away – make some gifts to give away to people in the community. You could make cards with some special verses in them from, for example, Isaiah 54:10, Psalm 86:15, Ephesians 3:18-19, Psalm 136, John 3:16 or Romans 8:38-39. You could also make up some messages to put on the back of the cards.



*Take a deep breath, and then...*  
*Move your attention to your left foot.*

Same instructions as for the right foot.  
Move slowly up and around the body, squeezing one body part at a time to create tension, immediately followed by the release and ease. Follow each part with a deep, cleansing breath or two. Here's a sample progression you can follow:  
Right foot; left foot.  
Right knee and calf; left knee and calf.  
Right thigh; left thigh.  
All feet and legs.  
Hips and bottom.  
Belly.  
Entire lower body, from tummy down.  
Chest, lungs and heart.  
Right arm; left arm.  
Right hand; left hand.  
Shoulders and neck.  
Face.  
Whole body at once – twice.



*Finally, lie perfectly still. Repeat the deep breathing from the start, for three breaths.*  
*When you are ready, open your eyes and sit up slowly.*

Time for a drink and discussion

- How did you find the experience?
- How did it help you to be aware of each part of the body?
- How does it make you feel to be made and loved by God?

### **Father's love letter**

This is a children's version of a love letter from God to us:  
Read through it together.

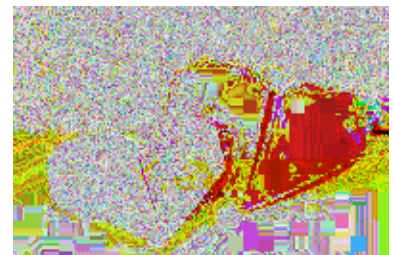
Are there any parts (scriptures) that you connect with? Are there any that you struggle with? If so, perhaps put that phrase somewhere you can see it every day to help you begin to accept it for yourself.

### **Get creative**

- Take some of your favourite verses and have a go at Bible-journaling with them.
- Take some of your favourite verses and put them inside an origami heart for you to keep reading. Or take some verses, put them in the heart and give the heart to someone else.
- 

How to make origami hearts:

- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohkqMv9I0fc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohkqMv9I0fc) – Origami heart
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CJOZKBr1Qg&t=187s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CJOZKBr1Qg&t=187s) – Origami heart with pocket (advanced). (Only need first four minutes of video).



## Thinking about types of love

### Seven types of love

There are seven types of love in the Bible. Let's explore these types of love together. I wonder which ones





LOVE CAN BE....

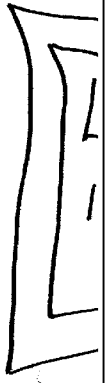


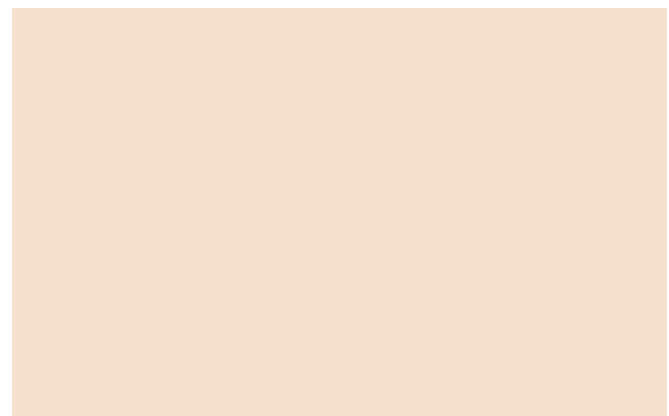
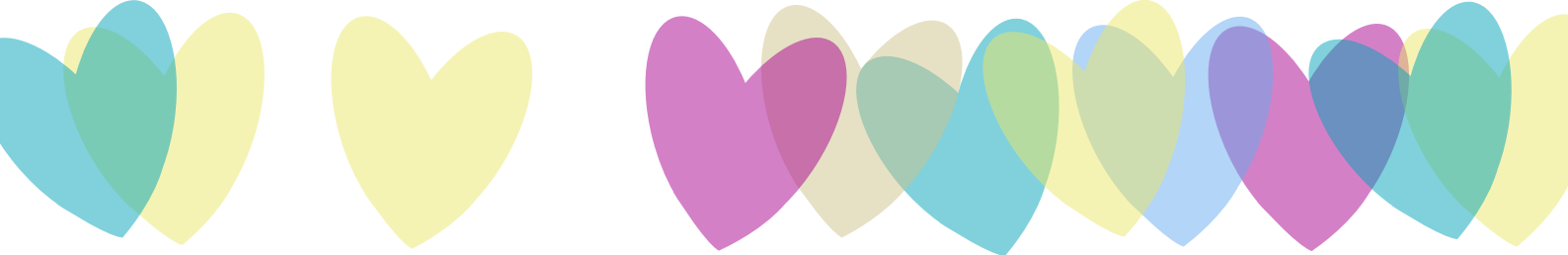
NICE  
CUP OF  
TEA

THANK  
YOU



LOVE IS....









# Love is... inclusive

When exploring the theme with children and young people with disabilities or additional needs, it is important to remember that each is an individual and to adapt the activity to fit individual levels of understanding and differences. Each child has their own individual needs and abilities. As a result, it is important to



Amen means 'I agree', so encourage the group to do an AMEN whenever you say 'I love God and God loves me.'

Show your love for God's world by fom M



# Worshipping intergenerationally

In worship, we seek to enable the whole family of God – all people, of all ages – to encounter God. The joy and challenge is in how we lead worship with all ages in mind without making things more onerous, without turning worship into a stage production or a children's performance or making worship childish. It is about using multi-age worship concepts (multi-age, multi-ability, multi-sensory, multi- intelligence) that help to deepen connections between at least two different generations. Don't get so caught up in creativity that people are distracted from God.

- In planning intergenerational worship, as with any type of worship planning, consider the congregation, the setting, the type of service (traditional, contemporary, something else), how much time there is, and the theme.

In planning the worship, consider incorporating variety:

- 



The final prayer can be a prayer response and intercessions. Maybe use a prayer activity that reflects on how much we love God, such as placing hearts with our prayers written on them on a long measuring tape, down the length of the room. End with an active blessing or the Messy Grace [www.messychurch.org.uk/messygrace](http://www.messychurch.org.uk/messygrace)

## Love of others







Love is... a life lived to the full!

**From the Boys Brigade**





- Think about how God loves us and how we can show our love for others (passing that love forward).
- Pass the parcel (version 1). Have a game of pass the parcel. In between each layer, place a paper saying 'Love is ...'. When a layer is removed, everyone can give an example of an experience of the 'Love is...' phrase (it doesn't need to have happened to them).
- Pass the parcel (version 2). Have a small bag of sweets between each layer. When a child 'wins' they have the choice of giving the sweets to someone else and staying in the game or keeping them and bowing out of the game.

### **Pray about it**

Pray with paper chain prayers. Everyone should have a few paper chain strips and a pencil. Think and talk about how God loves us. Younger children could draw their ideas. Think about asking God to help you help others. Make the individual paper prayer link or chain and join all the chains together. As you gather for worship, place the chain in the centre of everyone and say a few words bringing the prayers to God. Everyone says Amen.

### **DIY**

Prepare pages with the six 'Love is ...' phrases from 1 Corinthians on them, typed in large print. Encourage





Encourage the group to come up with their ideas.

Local charities such as:

- Animal sanctuaries
- Refugees
- Homelessness
- Local Food Bank
- Christian Aid
- The Church.

Write these thoughts on post-it notes.

### **Read the Word**

Jesus feeds the 5,000: Matthew 14:13-21.

It is almost impossible for us to imagine loving the whole world, but as Christians that's what we are called to do. Jesus was concerned for the physical needs of the people. He wanted them to be fed, something that seemed an almost impossible task.

Having read the story of the feeding of the 5,000, interpret it through drama, music, Lego or some other way – a cartoon strip perhaps? Maybe today, Jesus would have taken the crowds to McDonalds or another fast-food place. Jesus performed the miracle, but he needed someone who had the food to want to share.

**MyGFP**



- 'Love, it will not betray you, dismay or enslave you. It will set you free' ('Sigh No More', Mumford and Sons).

Thinking back to session one, would young people think that this is true?

- Do we overuse the word 'love' – on radio phone-ins, at the end of phone calls, and in messages, people say 'Love you' or send emojis of heart, etc. Do they mean actual love?
- How powerful a word is it?
- Is it easy or hard to tell someone you love them?
- Who loves us? Whom do we love? Make a list.
- How are we loved? How do we love?
- What is the difference between loving someone and being in love with someone?
- How can we love ourselves? Connect that with how we take care of ourselves, which might include mental well-being.

### Ideas and resources

Compass games are available on the Pilots website: [www.urcpilots.org.uk](http://www.urcpilots.org.uk)

- 'Love your neighbour' (Compass pg 99)
- 'Cross tag' (Compass pg 88)
- 'Getting to know you' (Compass pg 94)
- 'Nursery rhyme game' (Compass pg 102)
- 'The king says' (Compass pg 111).

### Suggestion for Pilots led-worship

An opportunity to share with the church how Pilots have been exploring the latest URC Children's and Youth Work's worship resource and an opportunity to widen discussions you may have had with Pilots and hear adult views.

#### All Aboard!/Call to worship

God is love and where true love is God himself is there

#### Hymn/song

#### Prayer and Pilots prayer

#### Lord's Prayer

#### Introduction

Use the introduction to this worship material

#### God's love and our love

Use material produced by the Pilots as the congregation for their comments/thoughts

#### Readings

Deuteronomy 6:51 Corinthians 13 4-8a/John 13:34-35

#### Hymn/song

#### Living love

#### Reading

1 John 4:19/Matthew 14:13-21 – Jesus feeds the 5,000

Involve the congregation in discovering:

- What are we doing?
- What is our church doing?
- What more could we do?

#### Intercessions

#### Hymn/song

#### All Ashore!/blessing





# Love is... participation

Love is getting together and connecting. Love is hearing the voices of others and enjoying working together to make something bigger and better.

## What is participation?

Participation is when people unite to do something worthwhile, and everyone has a meaningful part to play. At the very least, participation makes a difference to the individual; at most, it also helps change the world around them; and sometimes it does both.

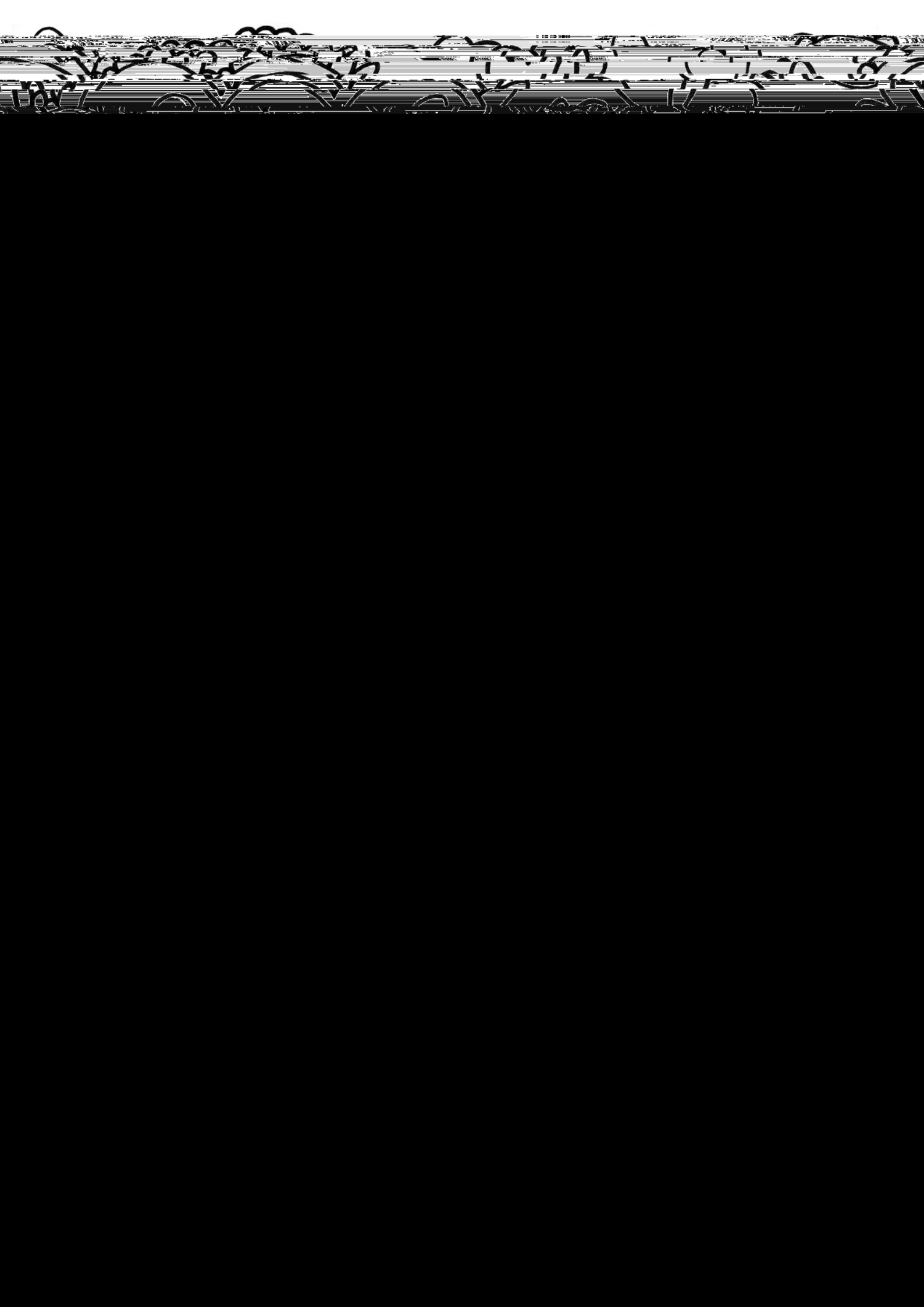
Five top tips:

1. Be clear about why you want people to participate.
2. Start with participative processes from the design and planning stage.
3. If the children and young people are involved from the start it will usually work better.
4. Monitor and reflect as the project develops.
5. Review together.

## Asking questions

It is important, if you are consulting children, to use open questions that explore what they are thinking rather than guiding their responses. Asking open questions allows a more detailed answer; the person questioned may feel free, though sometimes a little exposed.

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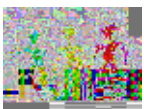


How many challenges can you do? Colour the box with a heart as you complete each challenge. Each box focuses on one of the four

Love God (and God's world)

Love others

Love self



## Build a parable

As a group, use Lego to build one of the following parables together:

- The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)
- The Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1-7)
- The Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32).

Read the story together and identify what characters and items you will need to create to tell the story. Is there anything not mentioned in the story that might need building?



When you have finished building, invite your participants to consider the results. Identify one of the characters the group has built and ask, 'I wonder how this person is feeling?' Think about some of the following questions:

- I wonder, where in the story do you see love being expressed?
- I wonder, where in the story do you think love is most needed?
- I wonder, if you were to change anything about the story, what it would be?
- I wonder, where are you in the story?
- I wonder, have you discovered anything new about the story by building it?

If possible, put your story on display, so that the group has a visual reminder of the things they discovered together.



## Prayer hearts

Read the following passages:

Jesus said: *"The most important commandment is this: 'Love the Lord your*

*God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'*

*The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."*

*(adapted from Mark 12:29-31)*

Jesus said *"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy'. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.*

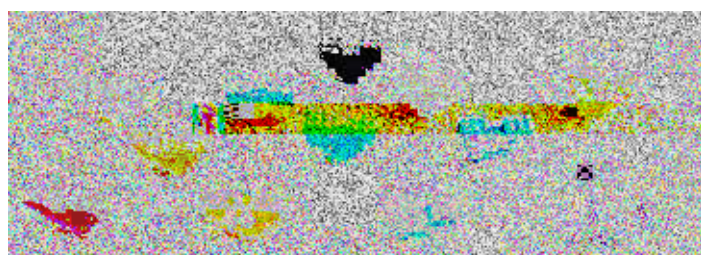
*He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."*

*(Matthew 5:43-45)*

Invite participants to build love hearts as prayer objects that they can hold in their hands. These could be simple red, pink or purple hearts, or you could create exciting patterns using different colours and shapes of brick. The important thing is the overall shape. Alternatively, invite participants to choose three colours of bricks. The first colour stands for the people who are closest to you: your neighbours, friends and family. Build a small heart from this colour of brick. The second colour stands for anyone who could be considered your enemy: the people who give you a hard time, who you would rather not be around. Use this colour to build a second layer to the heart, around the first.

The last colour stands for God. This will be the top layer of the Lego heart, encompassing the first two.

When the hearts are complete, invite participants to hold their Lego hearts and close their eyes.





**How to Train Your Dragon (PG)**

Hiccup is a teenager from the island of Berk, where fighting dragons are a way of life. His views and weird sense of humour make him an outcast, even though his father is chief of the clan. When he befriends an injured dragon, who he names Toothless, he has the chance to plot a new course for his people's future.

**Onward (U)**

Teenage elf-brothers Ian and Barley embark on a magical quest to spend one more day with their late father. Their journey is filled with cryptic maps, impossible obstacles, and unimaginable discoveries. But when dear Mom finds out her sons are missing, she teams up with the legendary manticore to bring her beloved boys home.

**Turning Red (PG)**

A thirteen-year-old girl is torn between remaining her mother's dutiful daughter and the changes of adolescence. And as if this were not enough, whenever she gets overly excited she transforms into a giant red panda.

**A Beautiful Day in the Neighbourhood (PG)**

An investigative journalist receives an assignment to profile Fred Rogers, aka Mr Rogers. He approaches the interview with scepticism, as he finds it hard to believe anyone can have such a good nature. But Rogers' empathy, kindness and decency chip away at Vogel's jaded outlook on life, forcing the reporter to reconcile with his own painful past.

**Spider-Man: No Way Home (12)**

With Spider-Man's identity now revealed, our friendly neighbourhood web-slinger is unmasked and no longer able to separate his normal life as Peter Parker from the high-stakes of being a superhero. When Peter asks for help from Doctor Strange, the stakes become even more dangerous, as he discovers what it truly means to be Spider-Man.

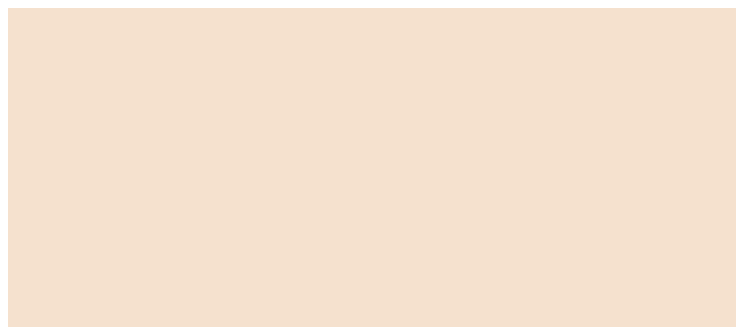
**A Quiet Place (15)**

A family must live in silence to avoid alien creatures that hunt by sound. Knowing that even the slightest whisper or footstep can bring death, Evelyn and Lee are determined to find a way to protect their children, while desperately searching for a way to fight back.

**Everything, Everywhere, All at Once (15)**

When an interdimensional rupture unravels reality, an unlikely hero must channel her newfound

**Crafty love**



A music lover's version of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7:

*Love is patient - with downloads*  
*Love is kind - with volume in public spaces*  
*Love does not want what belongs to others –*  
*no piracy*  
*Love does not brag – about its collection*  
*Love is not proud – of its selection*  
*Love does not dishonour other people –*  
*or their taste in music*  
*Love does not look out for its own interests –*  
*no exclusive headphones*  
*Love does not easily become angry –*  
*with blocked access*  
*Love does not keep track of other people's*  
*wrongs – or dud tracks*  
*Love is not happy with evil –*  
*appreciating guidance ratings*  
*Love is full of joy when the truth is spoken –*  
*and sung!*  
*Love always protects – the sound quality*  
*Love always trusts – the beat*  
*Love always hopes – for great remixes*  
*Love never gives up – the music goes on.*

A classic-car nut's version of 1 Corinthians  
13:4-8, 13:

*Love is patient – with rusty nuts and bolts*  
*Love is kind – salt is unkind*  
*It does not envy – the other person's car*  
*It does not boast – about the beautiful condition*  
*It is not proud – of all the hours spent restoring*  
*It is not rude – when others are rude*  
*It is not self-seeking – unlike that*  
*top-of-the-range stereo*  
*It is not easily angered – by all the things that*  
*go wrong*  
*It keeps no record of wrongs – but keeps*  
*details of all expenditure and service history*  
*Love does not delight in evil – and hates to*

Use this game as a stepping stone to exploring what the young people would like from a relationship, what is important to them and how this reflects in their faith journey.

Would you rather:

- someone gave you flowers or that flowers were never given to you?
- be in a relationship with someone who loves God or doesn't love God?
- meet the love of your life when you are young or when you are older?
- be in a relationship with someone who said nice things to you or gave you nice things?
- marry someone who is funny but poor or someone who is boring but rich?
- have one true love or lots of lovers?
- settle for an easier, less satisfying relationship or work a little harder for a more satisfying relationship?
- be with someone safe and secure or someone impulsive and daring?
- be with someone who always tries to please you or someone who wants to be pleased?
- be with someone who is patient or is kind?
-

Read through 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIVRV) and make a list of what it tells you the qualities of love are. Can you find an example of each of these qualities in your group, your church community or wider community?

Create a collage using words cut from magazines etc for the text and photos/logos/drawings of the different groups and people – highlighting different aspects of love shown in different ways by everyone in your church community. You don't need to keep repeating 'love' – just focus on the qualities shown.

God is love – so re-read the whole 1 Corinthians passage substituting 'God' for 'love'.

What strikes you? Does your experience of God  
confr A                      M                      M







# Self-love pamper evening

*“Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself.’”*

## Bible study one

*“God’s love for us is amazing! God looks on us as sons and daughters. People don’t recognise the relationship because they don’t recognise God.*

*Dear friends, we are children of God already” (1 John 3:1, from Good as New: A Radical Retelling of the Scriptures by John Henson)*

Questions:

1. In some versions of John’s verse it uses the word ‘lavish’. What do you think that means in this context? Use your Bibles to look at different translations of the verse.
2. In this third chapter of a letter from John, he focuses mostly on the concept of love: because of God’s love for us we are not only called children of God, we are actually made children of God. How do you feel about this?
3. John also talks about how sin, including hate, is never the result of a proper relationship with God. What do you think this means? Does this mean hate as injustice or division?
4. ‘People don’t recognise the relationship because they don’t recognise God.’ Does this mean that God will never accept them as a child of God?
5. How can we enable people to have a relationship with God and experience the ‘lavish’ love of God?

## Prayer



Thank you, Jesus, that you have given us a job to do.

You want us to share your love.

**Wow, God, your love has no limits.**

Thank you, Jesus, that you care about each one of us.

We are special to you.

**Wow, God, your love has no limits.**

Thank you, Jesus, that that you care about those we love – our families and friends.

**Wow, God, your love has no limits**

Thank you, Jesus, that you care about the people we meet occasionally on the streets or see around the place we live.

**Wow, God, your love has no limits.**

Thank you, Jesus, that you also care about the people who live far away and who look and sound different to us.

**Wow, God, your love has no limits.**

Thank you, Jesus, that you love even those who do not like us or who we find difficult to like.

**Wow, God, your love has no limits.**

Thank you, Jesus, that you care for and love everyone, everywhere.

**Wow, God, your love has no limits.**

Amen



Give each person a piece of A6 card and ask everyone to write their name on their card. Pass the card around the room and ask everyone else to write one thing that they love about the named person that they might not necessarily know about themselves. Pop the cards in an envelope to hand back out at the end of the session. At that point, we will pray about what has been written.

## Bible study two

*“Jesus said, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence. This is the most important, the first on any list. But there is a second to set alongside it: Love others as well as you love yourself.’” Matthew 22:37-39 (The Message)*

Questions:

1. Often we don't see ourselves the way that we see others. How can we truly love others when we have a blurred vision of ourselves?
2. Loving God with all our heart is a challenging thing to do. How do we use our love of God in our life and actions?
3. If the soul defines our personhood and who we are, then loving God with all our soul is to love someone with all we are. How can we do this if we don't love and appreciate ourselves?
4. It's important that we love God with our whole minds. This requires us to read and study our Bibles, talk about God's word and challenge those issues that arise in the world that go against God's word. What do you do to take time to enrich your mind with God's love?

### Prayer



Hand out the affirmation cards to each person and give time for people to silently read through the things that other people appreciate about them.

Invite everyone to join in this prayer, repeating each line after you:

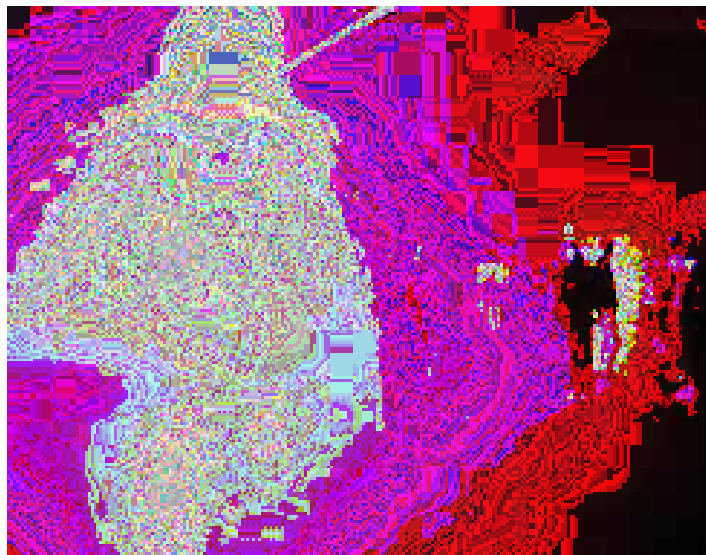
Each person holding a pebble, and with calm music in the background, take five minutes to pray about the people around you and the words of affirmations that you have written about them – thank God for everyone here.

Dear God,  
help me to know  
that I am held  
by you.  
Thank you  
for all the people  
that encourage me  
and support me.  
Amen

### Prayer



Creator God,  
We pray that the fruitful conversations we have shared today enable us as young people of the URC and followers of Jesus, to be your people.  
We pray that people would know we are Christians by our love.  
We pray that together we might create a world of equality and love among all.  
Lord, hear our prayer.  
Amen



(From the Chaplain to the Youth Moderator).

This year, the URC Youth Assembly is exploring what Love is. Love is many things: kind, patient, humble, selfless and much more. This is an introduction to self-love and why we need to love ourselves to allow us to love others effectively.

## **Bible readings**

Matthew 22:34-40, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

## **Listening to God through the Bible**

This is a simple way of reading the Bible prayerfully as a group:

1. When we read or listen to the Bible, we pray that God's Holy Spirit will speak to us through it. We might hear God speaking, we might hear a particular word or phrase that stands out for us, or we might be struck by what someone else thinks is important. God can speak to us in all these ways.
2. The first time you hear this reading, try just to listen. You might close your eyes, sit comfortably and ask God to speak to you.
3. Don't worry if you get distracted and other thoughts come into your head. When you notice this happening, just bring your attention back to the reading. Don't worry if you have missed something.
4. After hearing the reading, think: Were there any words or phrases that stood out for me? How did this reading make me feel? (Bored, confused, curious, excited?).
- 5.





**ALEX:** *(Thinking hard and then seems to have an idea)*



**ALEX:** OK Happy! I get it! Yes, they make me happy and the things you're saying make me happy too, so I'm guessing that's your name.

**ACCEPTANCE:** Happy is important, but that's not my name. But don't worry about it, it's ok that you got it wrong. It was a good guess.

**ALEX:** Hmm... this one is a bit more tricky. If you are not Happy then perhaps you are Contentment?

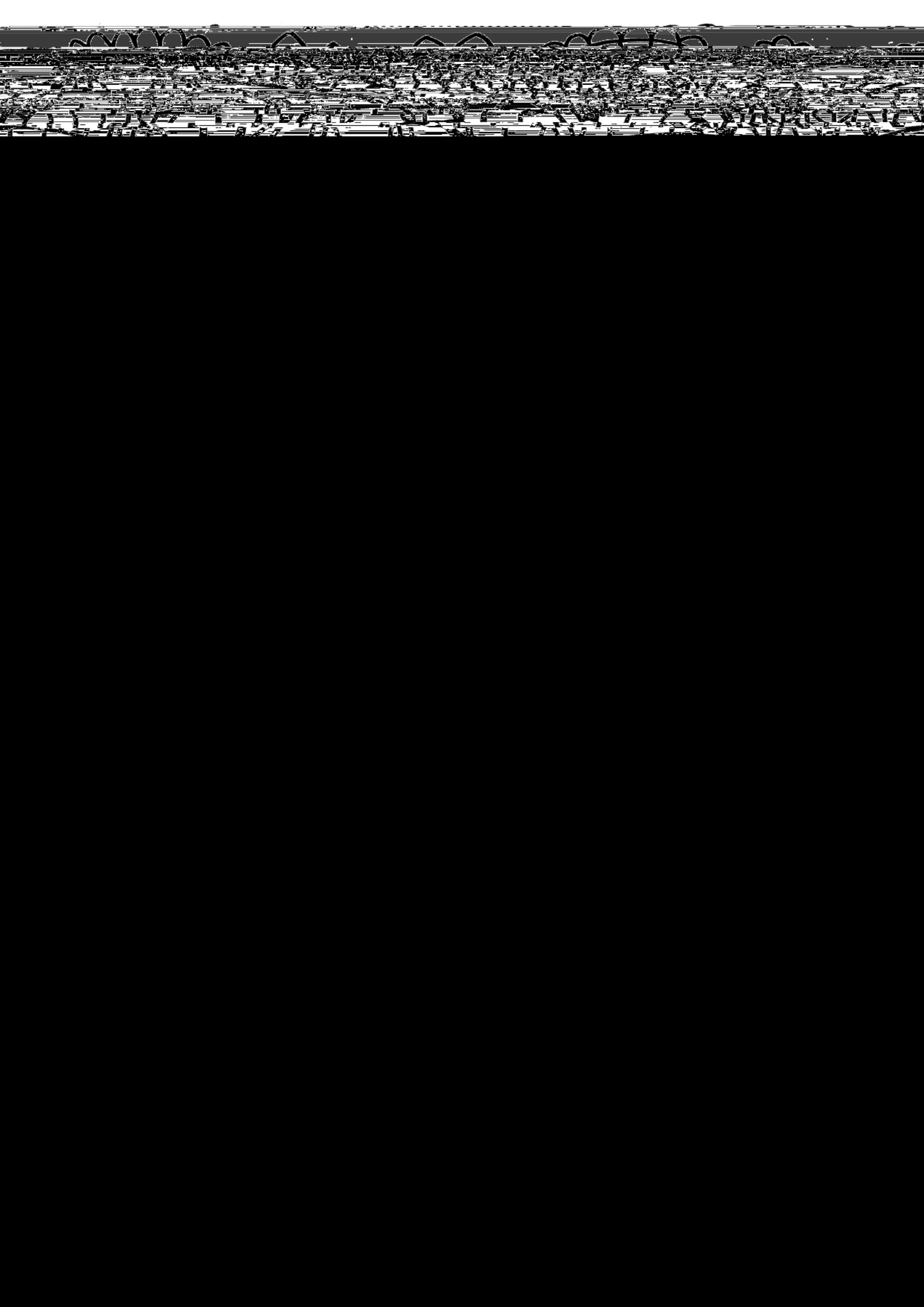
**ACCEPTANCE:** Not quite, I'll tell you, shall I?

**ALEX:** No, I've been taking lessons from Patience. I'll keep guessing for a while. But I wouldn't say no to another clue!

**ACCEPTANCE:**







**A love letter from God**  
**Lectio Divina**



## A love letter from Jesus



## What's love got to do with it?

This is a set of starting points for discussing the theme of love with your youth or young adults' group. You may wish to look at some of these together, or to develop a Bible study around one or two of these.

### Where do we see love in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament?

Together, look at each of these stories – maybe try to retell the story as Remembered Bible before you look it up. Think about what each of these stories tells you about love and whether it has any message for us today. Some may be more challenging than others. What surprises you in the story and what questions might that prompt?

- Jacob and Joseph
- Moses, his birth mother, his foster mother
- Ruth and Naomi
- Abraham and Isaac
- David and Bathsheba.

### Where do we see love in the media?

Using a TV guide, or a magazine such as Hello!, as a prompt, talk to á

achieving others. M ries en



Why do you think Jesus did this? How do you think Peter felt about being asked that question?  
What do you think Jesus meant when he said 'feed my sheep'?

Do you ever have times when you're afraid to speak openly about your faith, no matter how small?  
Do you feel that you could answer the question 'Do you love me?' and how might Jesus react to your response? If you're not yet ready to say 'Lord, you know that I love you,' what might be holding you back?

### **Love your enemy**

Perhaps one of the hardest things that Jesus asks of us is to love our enemy (Matthew 5:44) and to pray for those that persecute us. It's easy to love those people we get on well with, but this is something else. What do you think it means? Do you have to like someone to love them? What might that love look like? And how might you set about it? Does anything in 1 Corinthians 13 help?

### **Different kinds of love**

How many different kinds of love can you think of? The Ancient Greek philosophers identified eight different kinds of love. Discuss what you think each means and what they might look like:

- Agape – Unconditional love
- Eros – Romantic love, including sexual/physical love
- Philia – Affectionate love
- Philautia – Self-love (not self sh or self-centred love, but taking care of oneself)
- Storge – Familial love (the love
- M
- fM
- 
- 





## 5. Physical touch

Some people long for physical touch. This can be done in a safe and non-sexualised way. A simple arm around the shoulder when sitting side-by-side can mean the world to many people.

### I wonder

*How can you show this love language in a safe consensual way? Why may someone find physical touch difficult? What kind of feeling/reaction might physical touch evoke in a person? If someone finds physical touch difficult, is there another way of meeting this need that would be appropriate for all?*

Think about the five love languages. How might these translate into a wider understanding of love, rather than just relationships? What about love of God? How might we show God our love in different ways that might be meaningful to us? And how do we experience God's love – does that cover all five love languages too?

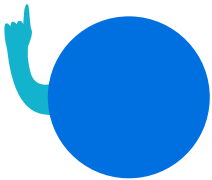
## Spiritual styles

In a similar way to different love languages being meaningful to different people, people also have different spiritual styles. You can read some examples here:

- [www.rootsontheweb.com/media/19319/roots\\_spiritual\\_styles\\_meet\\_the\\_styles.pdf](http://www.rootsontheweb.com/media/19319/roots_spiritual_styles_meet_the_styles.pdf)
- [www.rootsontheweb.com/media/19318/roots\\_spiritual\\_styles\\_introduutory\\_article.pdf](http://www.rootsontheweb.com/media/19318/roots_spiritual_styles_introduutory_article.pdf)

Can you create a quiz that helps people identify their spiritual style?

When we create an act of worship, it is good to think about these different spiritual styles and include action, emotion, symbol and word. Next time you are in an act of worship with others, see if you can spot examples of these being used. How do spiritual styles equate to love languages (if at all)?



Get your children and 11-14 year olds interested in social justice with our annual two-fold resource, *Go with Greta* and *#Connect2* which is produced with URC Commitment for Life. Each resource includes factual information and activities for five sessions and an intergenerational celebration, all based around a child or young person's life in a region supported by Commitment for Life and Christian Aid. [www.urc.org.uk/go-with-greta-and-connect](http://www.urc.org.uk/go-with-greta-and-connect).

Friends on Faith Adventures provides a two-year programme for a children's group centred on the Bible. Find the session plans and all the paperwork you need on [www.urc.org.uk/friends-on-faith-adventures](http://www.urc.org.uk/friends-on-faith-adventures).

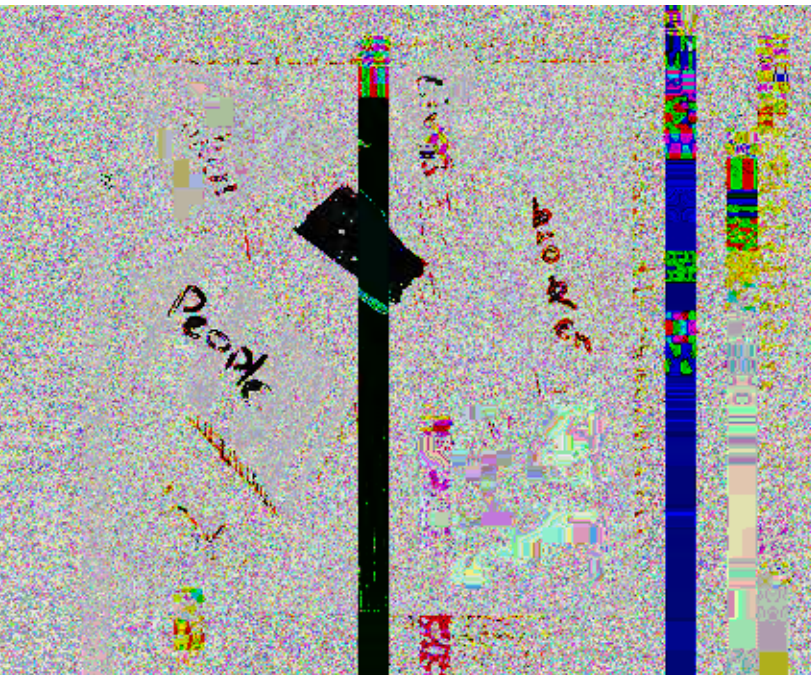






What does it mean to help those in prison, for example? Surely we can't just go and visit everyone there. Some of this feels impossible!

- 





**'Without Love'** by Karen Campbell (Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries) Written for Racial Justice Sunday 2021

Without love, I can live,  
But I will not thrive.  
I will not reach my full potential.  
I will not feel safe,  
Or valued,  
Or know the security  
Of true belonging.  
I will not be at ease –  
In this place or that –  
Or in my own skin.  
Without love, I can live,  
But restless, wandering –  
Where being me is not enough,  
And I am coerced to become  
Someone else.  
But who?  
Without love, I can live,  
But I cannot just 'be';  
I cannot fully appreciate nor take  
My place  
In the give and take  
And wonder of life.  
Then, I am robbed of myself –  
And so is the world.  
Without love, I can live,  
But how can I know  
How to love...  
Love life  
Love others  
Or love myself?  
I can live without love.  
But what kind of life?

© Karen Campbell

[www.urc.org.uk/without-love-a-poem-by-karen-campbell](http://www.urc.org.uk/without-love-a-poem-by-karen-campbell)



## Quotes

What Mother Teresa says about love:

*“True love is love that causes us pain, that hurts and yet brings us joy. That is why we must pray to God and ask him to give us the courage to love.”*

*“I’m a little pencil in the hand of a writing God, who is sending a love letter to the world.”*

Archbishop Desmond Tutu spoke to the very nature of love when he shared that:

*“We are each made for goodness, love and compassion. Our lives are transformed as much as the world is when we live with these truths.”*

## Poems/prayers

‘Children Learn What They Live’ by Dorothy Law Nolte

If children live with criticism,  
They learn to condemn.  
If children live with hostility,  
They learn to fight.  
If children live with ridicule,  
They learn to be shy.  
If children live with shame,  
They learn to feel guilty.  
If children live with encouragement,  
They learn confidence.  
If children live with tolerance,  
They learn to be patient.  
If children live with praise,  
They learn to appreciate.  
If children live with acceptance,  
They learn to love.  
If children live with approval,  
They learn to like themselves.  
If children live with honesty,  
They learn truthfulness.  
If children live with security,  
They learn to have faith in themselves and others.  
If children live with friendliness,  
They learn the world is a nice place in which to live.

(Copyright © 1972/1975 by Dorothy Law Nolte)



## Key

RS – Rejoice and Sing  
StF – Singing the Faith  
CG – Common Ground  
CMP – Complete Mission Praise  
JP – Junior Praise  
SHKP – Spring Harvest Kids Praise

**Love is....  
hard work.  
– Sam**





## Word search

Can you find the highlighted words from this passage about love below?

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (International Children's Bible)

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, and it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> Love is not rude, is not selfish, and does not become angry. lo(



