

# Loving Brothers and Sisters



## Teacher's Guide

### Materials

Bibles; flipchart/chalkboard/whiteboard and appropriate markers; metal trash can, or an equivalent option; matches; a safe location to burn paper, preferably outdoors if possible

### Surveying the Source

Mark 12:28–31; John 14:15; James 2:15, 16; 1 John 3:11–24; 4:7–5:4.

### Plotting the Course

#### The students will:

► Understand that loving both God and others is a natural response and/or behavior that stems from an intimate relationship with Him.

► Not only be able to discuss the “how to” aspect of loving others, but also will

be able to diagnose what is standing in their way of fully living out this commandment.

► Discuss the real-life struggles and obstacles that make it difficult to love others in a consistent manner.

### Preparing to Lead

The commandment to love others that we find in 1 John 3 and 4 has for many people been quoted and superficially discussed so often that the life-changing challenge it presents has been lost. The only way to make this lesson a non-

clichéd discussion is to connect this commandment to something the students can relate to, and to have an honest and open discussion about the difficulties faced by *all* who try to obey it.

### Getting Started

**A.** Discuss a current event and compare/contrast the circumstances and the way the people involved in it are handling the situation in light of the biblical command to love both God and others with all your heart. Do not allow the discussion to be critical of those involved in the event who are not exemplifying desirable behaviors. The point is to simply explore the contrast between command-

ment-behavior and noncommandment-behavior.

**B.** To help the class understand that love is the basis of our faith, discuss how each one of the Ten Commandments is based on love. Another option would be to discuss how love was the motive behind Creation and Christ becoming a human and sacrificing His life for our sins.

### Delving Into the Word

**A.** Divide the class into three or four groups. Give each group one of the following Bible stories to read and study in light of John’s commandment to love others: Abraham and Sodom (Genesis 18); Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37, 42–45); Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1:1–19);

Saul becoming Paul (Acts 9:1–31).

Have each group discuss two factors: (1) how their story defines love for others; (2) how the principles found in their story can be applied to our lives today.

After a sufficient amount of time, have each group share their findings with the

rest of the class. Write their answers to the questions on a flipchart. Discuss any themes that emerge and how these themes are relevant for today.

**B.** Have the class look up the following texts: Deuteronomy 22:1–3; Isaiah 58:6–10; Proverbs 31:9; Zechariah 7:10; Matthew 5:44; 25:31–45; Luke 3:11; Romans 12:20; James 1:27. Discuss each one in

light of the following questions. Have someone write answers on a flipchart: (1) How does this text define love? (2) What specific activities can we do today that are in the spirit of this text?

After each text has been analyzed, discuss any themes that emerge and how these themes are relevant for today.

## Discussing the Ideas

1. What fears naturally well up in you when you honestly consider living up to the commandment of loving others?

2. How has this lesson opened your eyes to a new way of viewing God or His expectations of you?

3. Share a time when someone showed you genuine Christian love. How did it make you feel? What did you do as a result?

4. When might there be a time when too much love in the form of help is

shown?

5. An old hymn says, “ ‘Tis love that makes us happy,/ ‘Tis love that smooths the way.” How is this so?

6. How does the world view love? How has this view affected the world?

7. How can the biblical view of loving others make this world a better place?

8. What obstacles/character traits get in our way of loving others? What can we do about these obstacles?

## Closing the Activity

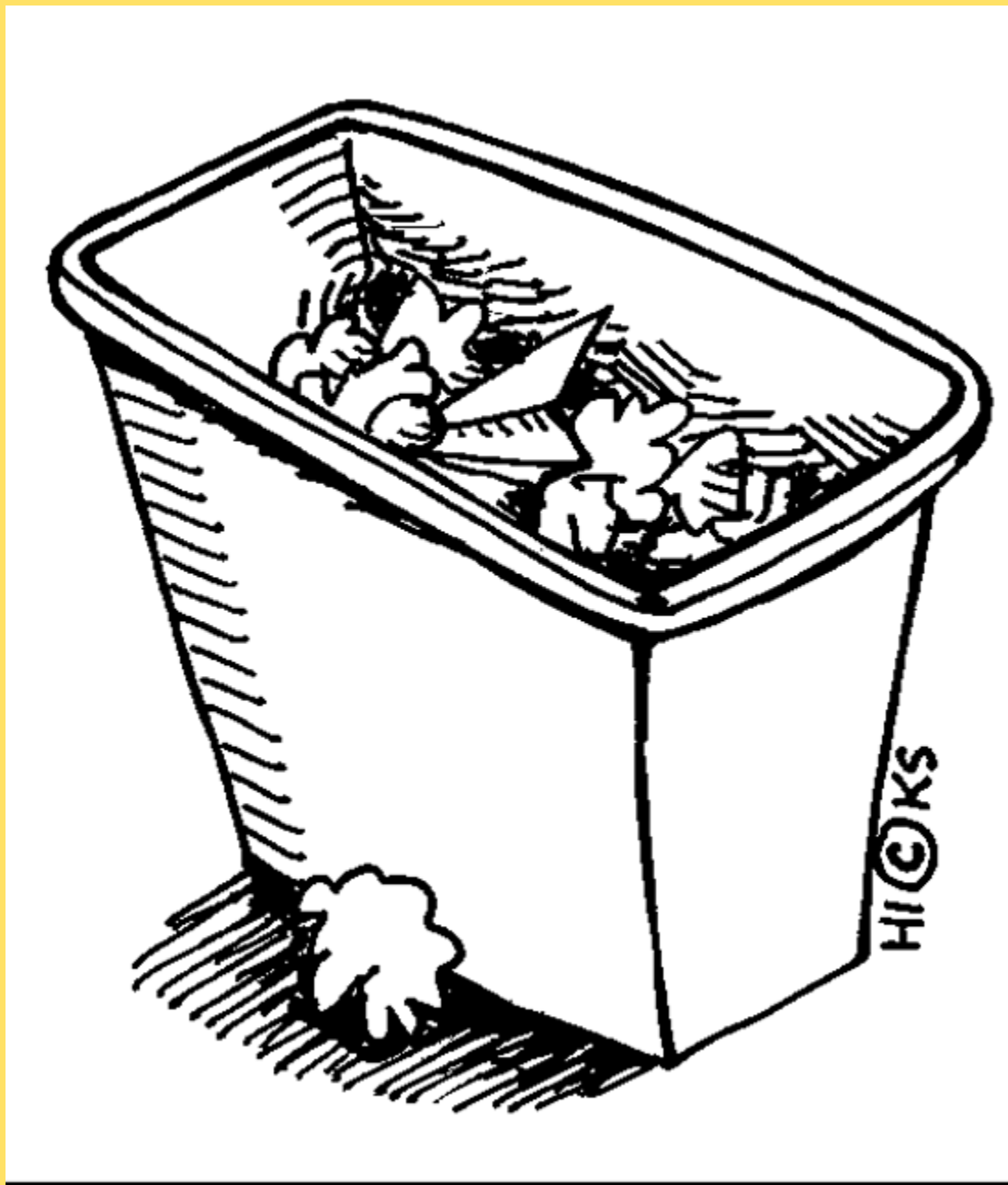
Give each student a copy of the reproducible activity (p. 38). Allow enough time for them to complete it. Then have them fold their papers in half. Offer a prayer in which their concerns are given over entirely to God. Then each student can take his or her paper to the designated

place and burn it, watching the sheet disappear and the smoke rise to God.

The fact that God is now in charge of those concerns should be adequately discussed after all the papers have been burned.

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**Think of specific things that are standing in your way of loving God and others unconditionally. Write these things in, on, or around the wastebasket below.**



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