

Love in Action

Quarter 12 | Lesson 8 | Character Development

1. **Connecting:** Play a game to understand the value of giving.
2. **Teaching:** Learn about loving others from organizations that help the homeless and from the example of Jesus washing the disciples' feet (John 13:4–17; Hebrews 6:10; Matthew 25:34–40).
3. **Responding:** Choose areas to grow in love and service.

SUPPLIES

- Bibles
- 5 buckets, cooking pots, or plastic bowls
- Small stones (at least 50)
- Optional Supplies:*
 - Memory Verse Poster
 - *The Action Bible*, image of Jesus washing the disciples' feet
 - Pencils
 - Student Pages

Before class, fill the buckets with an equal number of small stones. Set the buckets in a place where the teens can gather and move around the buckets.

Teacher Devotion

*Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least
of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.*
Matthew 25:40

When we think of our love for others, we often think that we are doing what Jesus has called us to do. We treat our family members with kindness, and we help at church. We may take a meal to a sick neighbour or care for a young child whose mother needs to visit the doctor. These are all wonderful acts of service, and they reflect God's love in the lives of those around us. Jesus has called us to serve others as though we are serving Jesus Himself.

Think about the ways you show God's love to those around you. Are you loving and serving others as if they were Jesus? Are you serving the least of your brothers and sisters—and not just the closest or the easiest to love? Ask God to help you to love others as He has called you to do and invite Him to transform your service to bring glory to His great name. You are the hands and feet of a loving God who has called you share His love with the world around you. Allow Him to use your service for His glory—and experience His transforming love in all new ways.

LESSON TIME

1. Connecting: Play a game to understand the value of giving.

Greet the teens as they arrive. Ask them if they were able to do something to bring peace in their families or communities. Allow 2–3 teens to share their stories with the whole class.

When you are ready to begin class, divide the students into 5 groups. Have each group gather around 1 of the buckets.

When I tell you to begin, you will try to put as many of your stones as possible into the buckets of the other teams. Each team member can only have 1 stone in his hands at any time. You can only walk between buckets. As you are taking stones out, other teams will be putting stones into your bucket. The winning team will be the one with the most stones in its bucket after 2 minutes.

Tell the teams to begin. Give them about 2 minutes to put stones into each other's buckets. Then tell the teams to stop. Have each team count the number of stones in their bucket. The team with the most stones wins the game. If you have time, repeat the game. Then gather the class for discussion. Allow 2–3 teens to share their answers to each of the questions.

- In order to win you had to end with as many stones as possible. How did it feel to give your stones away when that was the goal?
- Can you think of other times in your life when it was hard to give something to someone else or do something for someone else?

This game can teach us about loving and serving others. We often think most about meeting our own needs and maybe the needs of our friends and our families. But what if we thought of loving and serving others in a different way? What if we were so focused on loving and serving others that we did not think as much about our own needs? Today we will talk more about why this is important for us and why God has called us to live in this way.

2. Teaching: Learn about loving others from organizations that help the homeless and from the example of Jesus washing the disciples' feet (John 13:4–17; Hebrews 6:10; Matthew 25:34–40).

We often think of love as an emotion, but the Bible teaches us that love is an action too. It is important to care about others, but it is also important to act on that care. This is how we put our love into action.

One way some people show love in action is by helping the homeless. More than 1 in 10 people around the world do not have safe and permanent places to live. In some countries, as many as 5 in 10 lack homes. These people may live in tents, cardboard boxes, or even in shelters made with trash. Some sleep out in the open without any shelter at all. These homeless people often beg or do small jobs to get money for food.

Teacher Tip: Some of your teens may have experienced being homeless at some point or may live in insecure types of housing. Be sensitive to their feelings as you share this part of the lesson. If you feel it is more appropriate, share a different example from your own community of a person or group who loves and serves others in unselfish ways.

While government agencies may provide shelter for those without homes, many Christian and other charitable organizations work to meet the physical and emotional needs of the homeless around the world.

Some organizations provide food and temporary housing for those in need. They may provide basic health care, training, and other resources to help people to get jobs, care for their families in better ways, and find permanent, safe places to live.

Other organizations work to end homelessness by building housing for those without homes. When homeless people are given secure housing, their lives can be changed in important ways. Having a secure place to live often helps people to improve in other areas of their lives. Living in a secure home can have positive effects on a person's life and behaviour. Those who feel secure are more likely to make responsible choices about alcohol and drugs, and they often have better mental health and more positive self-images.

- **What can we learn about love in action from those who help the homeless?**

Allow 2–3 teens to share their ideas. Do not correct their answers. They will learn more about this as part of the lesson.

When we want to learn about loving and serving others, the very best example is Jesus. The Bible is filled with examples of His love and service to those around Him. Let's learn about one of them.

Have a teen read John 13:4–8 aloud from the Bible. If that is not possible, the passage is printed here.

Optional: If possible, share the image from [The Action Bible](#).

So [Jesus] got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

John 13:4–8

- **How did Simon Peter respond when Jesus prepared to wash his feet?**

He said that Jesus could never wash his feet.

- **Why do you think Simon Peter responded in this way?**

He felt that Jesus was too important to serve him.

- **How did Jesus respond to Simon Peter's concern?**

Jesus explained that His service was important for those who wanted to have a relationship with Him.

In Jesus' time, washing a person's feet was something that a servant would do. A person who was worthy of honour, such as a teacher like Jesus, would have had His feet washed by others. He would not have washed the feet of those who were His followers.

Jesus had more to share with His disciples. Listen to what happened next.

When [Jesus] had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?"

he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

John 13:12–17

- **What instruction did Jesus give to His disciples?**

He told them to wash each other's feet.

- **Why do you think Jesus wanted the disciples to serve each other?**

Allow 2–3 teens to share their thoughts.

- **What do you think that means for those who follow Jesus today?**

Allow 2–3 teens to share their thoughts.

Jesus loved His disciples. His love was not just a feeling. He acted on His love. When Jesus was on earth, He loved and served others in ways that they could see and hear and feel. He loves us, and He makes that love known to us in ways that we can see and hear and feel, often through the loving actions of other believers.

Sometimes it can be hard to love others in unselfish ways, and it can be even harder to act on that love. But living a life of love and service helps us to understand what God did for us. Listen to a Bible verse about loving and serving others.

If you are using the Memory Verse Poster, show it to the students.

The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

Matthew 25:40

- **What do you think this verse means?**

God will remember our efforts to love and serve others.

- **Why do you think that this verse says that serving others shows love to God?**

Allow 2–3 teens to share their ideas.

Listen to another passage to help us to understand this. This is a part of a parable about how Jesus will recognize the righteous people who love and obey him.

Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,

I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."
Matthew 25:34–40

- **How does Jesus recognize those who love and obey Him?**

He recognizes them by the way they love and serve others.

- **What does this teach us about the way we should love and serve others?**

When we love and serve others, we are loving and serving God.

- **What are some ideas you have for loving and serving others in your family, this church, or our community?**

Allow 4–5 teens to share their ideas.

Those are great ideas! Here are some things to think about that will help you to show your love for others in practical ways:

Follow God's guidance as He leads you to opportunities to show His love to others.

Be patient and kind, even with people who are difficult or disagreeable.

Be trustworthy, even when it is hard.

Forgive others, and do not judge them. Encourage and pray for others.

Be generous with your time, your talents, and your other resources.

Give the glory to God so your love and service draw others closer to God!

All of the ideas we have learned about courage, mercy, peacemaking, and love in action are important. But as we have learned, doing the right things does not change our hearts—only God can do that. Often the first step in that heart change is for us to choose to obey. When we obey God, He changes our hearts so that we want to do the things He would have us do. As a result, we experience joy, peace, and contentment.

3. Responding: Choose areas to grow in love and service.

Place the buckets in different parts of the room. Make sure there are pebbles in each of the buckets, and make sure there is enough space for the teens to gather around the buckets.

We learned some ways to love and serve others. They are:

Follow God's guidance as He leads you to opportunities to show His love to others.

Be patient and kind, even with people who are difficult or disagreeable.

Be trustworthy, even when it is hard.

Forgive others and do not judge them. Encourage and pray for others.

Be generous with your time, your talents, and your other resources.

As you say each idea, point to 1 of the buckets. Point to a different bucket for each idea.

Now think about these questions. You do not need to answer out loud.

- Which of these ideas do you think is most important for you today?
- In which area would you like to allow God to work in your heart to help you to grow?

If you would like to grow in the area of following God's guidance, go and stand by this bucket.

Point to the correct bucket.

If you would like to grow in the area of being patient and kind, even with people who are difficult or disagreeable, go and stand by this bucket. Point to the correct bucket.

If you would like to grow in the area of being trustworthy, even when it is hard, go and stand by this bucket. Point to the correct bucket.

If you would like to grow in the area of encouraging and praying for others, go and stand by this bucket. Point to the correct bucket.

If you would like to grow in the area of being generous with your time, your talents, and your other resources, go and stand by this bucket. Point to the correct bucket.

Once all of the students have gathered by 1 of the buckets, give them the following instructions.

Pray and think about how God might be encouraging you to grow in this area. As you feel God's leading, reach down and take a pebble from the bucket. Ask God to help you to love and serve others. You may pick up more than 1 pebble if you feel there is more than 1 way you can grow in this area.

Optional: If you are using the Student Pages, the teens can draw some ways to love and serve others on their pages.

Give the teens a few minutes to respond. Invite them to pray for one another in their groups or with partners. Then close with a blessing based on Hebrews 6:10:

Blessing: May you love and serve God by loving and serving others. May you put your love into action by helping others. And may you know that God will not forget your love and obedience to Him.

Family Connection: Encourage the teens to ask their family members, "What is 1 way you show your love to others?" Then can then work together to think of ways to love and serve others in their family or in the community.

Lead the students in singing this quarter's song, if possible. "Mighty God" by Elevation Worship:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAhkYoWYxAY>