



TEACH IT MIDDLE SCHOOL SESSION 9

1. Materials

For this session each student will need—

- the Session 9 Scripture sheet
- the student journal page for Session 9
- his or her own Bible, a pen, and a notebook

You'll also need—

- a whiteboard and markers
- a pack of colored pencils (at least two colors per student)
- optional: Search a video-sharing Web site with key words such as “howling dog” and “I love you.” You’re sure to find a clip of a dog howling the phrase, “I love you.”
- optional: one candy bar or granola bar for each student
- optional: buckets or basins, towels, and plenty of warm water (See the Optional Close in Wrapping It Up.)

2. Session Intro

GOALS OF SESSION 9

As students experience this session, they will—

- gain an understanding of Jesus’ command to sacrificially love one another.
- examine their hearts for any deficiencies in showing sacrificial love.
- discuss practical ways to live out this kind of love.

PRAYER

After your students have gathered, ask the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth—to guide them into truth. Pray that this session won’t be “just another Bible study,” but rather, an opportunity for Jesus to show himself to your group.

OPEN

Ruh-Roh Love Language

Open with a video clip of a dog howling out the phrase, “I love you.” (See materials for search terms.)

How do you let someone know you love him or her?

How do you know when someone loves you?


Without steering your students toward a “right” answer, give them a few minutes to share. List their ideas on the whiteboard—and after you’ve written several down, explain that in John 13, they’ll see how Jesus answered these questions.

Share that you’re picking up the action near the end of Jesus’ ministry. He had just entered Jerusalem days before his trial and crucifixion. Before the events of his trial were set in motion, Jesus had a long, intimate conversation with his disciples. That’s why red-letter editions of the Bible (where Jesus’ words are printed in red) have several pages of red ink in John 13–17.

3. Digging In

Read the Red

Explain that as part of this intimate red-letter conversation in John 13, Jesus set the stage for his departure by delivering a historic command and illustrating it with a first-of-its-kind act. Ask the students to read John 13:1-17 using their Scripture sheets. As they read, have them—

1. Draw a clock  over any phrases about time or God’s “divine clock.”
2. Use colored pencils to underline anything Jesus did.
3. Use a different color to circle anything Jesus said about what he was doing (i.e., any explanation, teaching, or instruction).

After a few minutes, ask the following questions:

Why do you think John provides so much detail about what Jesus did?

Point out that this is an unusual amount of info as compared to other acts of Jesus described in the Gospels. Perhaps John captures the detail because this was such an important, unique act—for the Master Teacher to wash his disciples’ feet. The effect is much like a movie director using slow motion to convey the drama of a significant scene. Share that in Jesus’ day, a rabbi could ask his disciples to do almost anything for him, but not wash his feet. With the main mode of transportation being sandaled feet on dusty, muddy roads, feet got pretty gross. This task was reserved for slaves.

How does John describe this event in 13:1? What does this tell you about Jesus’ act of washing his disciples’ feet?

Jesus showed them the “full extent of his love.” This description is huge, considering the fact that Jesus’ love has no limits!

Now ask the students to look at what they circled on their Scripture sheets and to jot on their journal pages the promises or instructions they found. Then work as a group to get all of these promises and instructions on the whiteboard under a heading such as **WHAT JESUS SAID**.

With Jesus’ sayings in view, ask—

What do you think Jesus was trying to tell his disciples?

Serving each other is an essential part of being his disciple.

Knowing that this was one of Jesus’ final acts, what does this say about being his disciple?

Loving one another by serving each other is one of the most important—maybe the most important—activities for those who want to be Jesus’ disciples.

4. Digging Deeper

Show and Tell

Share that shortly after Jesus showed his disciples the “full extent of his love,” he taught them about love. Ask them to read John 13:31-35 using their Scripture sheets. As they read, have them look for the answers to the questions under Digging Deeper on their journal pages. (We’ve printed these questions below for your reference.) When they find an answer in Scripture, they should underline it before writing it in the space provided.

What did Jesus command?

Love one another (v. 34).

How are we supposed to love one another? To what degree (how much)?

2

Love one another as Jesus has loved us (v. 34).

What will happen if we obey this command?

All will know that we are Jesus' disciples (v. 35).

5. Taking It Inward

The Love Connection

Help the group process these truths by asking these questions:

Whom did Jesus tell the disciples to love?

He told them to love one another.

Can you think of any “others” we’re told to love in the Bible?

We’re told to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44), God (Matthew 22:37), our neighbor (Matthew 22:39), and those who don’t love us back (Luke 6:32-35).

Whom does Jesus specifically mean in this verse when he says “one another”?

Here, Jesus is emphasizing that Christians should love other Christians.

When Jesus told his disciples to love one another as he had loved them, what do you think he meant by “as I have loved you”?

People often think Jesus meant that we’re supposed to be willing to die for each other—and in a sense, he did mean that, in that we must die to ourselves in order to serve others. But Jesus hadn’t yet died on the cross when he said these words. Elicit from the group that he must have been referring to something else—perhaps the example he had just given of washing their feet. Jesus was showing us that we must humbly serve one another in order to love as he loved.

Do you think it’s really possible to love as Jesus loved? Why or why not?

Some people dismiss Jesus’ command to love as he did since we aren’t able to die for anyone’s sin. They say this commandment is unattainable. But by focusing on Jesus’ example in John 13, your group should be able to come up with several practical, attainable ways to love one another as Jesus loved.

Why do you think Jesus made such a strong connection between loving one another and the world being able to tell we are his disciples?

At this point you may want to share the Insight from Prep It on the Greek words for love and disciple. The purpose of being a disciple was to imitate the teacher in order to become like him. Jesus is love. Since love is his defining characteristic, Jesus’ true disciples will exhibit that trait as well.

6. Cross-Checking



The Look of Love

Since our loving one another is hugely important to God, it’s time to get a handle on what Jesus is asking us to do. Explain that the students will do the next exercise as a personal retreat with God—a time when they can draw close to God and listen to him. Tell your students—

- 1. Find a space where you can do the next exercise in solitude.**
- 2. You’ll need to take your Bibles, journal pages, and pens.**
- 3. You’ll be reading the passages and completing the chart under Cross-Checking. (As a heads-up, you won’t find answers for each question in every verse.) Then respond to the questions that follow the chart.**



We've printed the chart with possible answers below for your reference.

	What commands to love do you see?	To what degree (how much) are we supposed to love?	What can happen when we love this way?
1 Thessalonians 4:9-12	<i>We've been taught by God to love each other (v. 9).</i>	<i>We're to do so more and more (v. 10).</i>	<i>Our daily lives will win the respect of outsiders (v. 12).</i>
1 John 4:10-16	<i>Love one another since God loved us (v. 11).</i>		<i>No one has ever seen God, but people can see God in us. If we love, God lives in us, and his love is made complete in us (v. 12).</i>

7. Wrapping It Up

The Lock of Love

When most have finished the exercise, call the group back together. Spend a few minutes processing the following questions as a group. You may want to appoint a "scribe" to record the observations on a piece of paper.

What are the chances that the world can look at how we love each other and say, "Those people must be followers of Jesus"?

What are some things we can do personally to love people as Jesus did?

What can we do as a group to show this kind of love?

Give each student a candy bar or granola bar. The hitch is, they can't keep it. They must wait at least 24 hours—and then they have to give it to another student in your youth ministry before it meets again. Ask them to write a plan of action in the space on their journal pages, as well as any other act of love that could go along with the giving of the candy or granola bar. Encourage them to keep each other accountable to following through on the action. Set up a plan to text or e-mail your students this week to remind them about their acts of love.

OPTIONAL CLOSE

Before closing in prayer, your group may want to experience something much like what the disciples and Jesus experienced in John 13. If so, make preparations to have the group members wash each other's feet. Church traditions differ on whether Jesus was speaking literally or figuratively when he told the disciples to "do as I have done to you." The point here isn't to debate that issue, but to personally experience Jesus' humility toward our brothers and sisters in Christ.

A few ideas...

- You could have the supplies ready and wait for a student to suggest washing each other's feet.
- If no one mentions the idea, you could suggest the activity yourself.
- If time is short, you could schedule a special time when the group could gather for this purpose. It could also be a time of worship and/or prayer.

Suggestions for Washing Feet

If you choose to do this activity, here are some ways to help it go smoothly:

- If practical, have guys wash guys' feet and girls wash girls' feet.
- Use buckets or basins. (You can often find basins at church-supply stores.) The floor may get wet, so choose an appropriate location.
- It's good to have a sink nearby; keep the water in the basins warm by changing it frequently.
- Have a fresh towel for every two people.
- To make sure everyone's feet get washed, sit in a circle. Have students pair up, or go around the circle, each student washing the feet of the person on the left. The last student should wash the feet of the first student.
- Communicate that students can opt out of the activity. Make sure they feel welcome to simply observe, or they may want to help with the towels and water basins.