



INTRO

It's easy to associate God's love for us with the circumstances of our lives. Circumstances are good? God loves us. Circumstances are bad? God loves us not. The thing is, a relationship with God is not a daisy plucking game of "he loves me/loves me not." But how do we know this? This exercise will dig out the answer to that question.

MATERIALS

1. A daisy or daisy-like object you can pluck (you can cut a simple one out of a sheet of paper, a circle with tabs)
2. A bag of "Fun Size" M&M's, so that each student gets a "Fun Size" bag
3. Optional: the ability to project an image of a crown of thorns.

OPEN

After your group has gathered, make a pile of "Fun Size" bags of M&M's in the middle of your group. Then share in your own words:

We're going to play a game of "Eat these, eat these not." I'm going to send this daisy (or daisy-like object) around the group. As it passes by you, pluck a pedal and say the appropriate phrase, "Eat these" or "Eat these not," depending on which phrase is up. The last "pluck" will determine whether we get to eat these M&M's or eat them not.

After the last pedal is plucked, let your group respond appropriately. We'll leave it up to you as to whether you eat the M&M's no matter what how the game ended.

Transition into your Scripture time by saying something like this:

It's easy to get caught in the game "He Loves Me; He Loves Me Not" in our relationship with God. Things go well: He loves me. Things go not so well: He loves me not. In all honesty, it's an innocent and natural reaction to not feel loved by God in times of loss, or heartache, or disappointment. But do those hard times mean God doesn't love us?

DIGGING IN

Share that the passages printed on the student journal pages trace God's love through Scripture. The list culminates with verses from John's gospel and from his letters (John accounts for 30 percent of the New Testament's use of the word "love"). Invite students to journal their thoughts on these questions as they read the verses:

How is God's love described?

How did God show His love?

Exodus 15:13

In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling.

Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.



1 John 3:16

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

1 John 4:9

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

1 John 4:10

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

TAKING IT INWARD

After students have finished exploring the passages, ask:

If you were to use these verses to describe God’s love from scratch, how would you describe it?

These verses use the phrase “this is,” showing us a very intentional picture of God’s love. What aspect of God’s love do these verses most point to?

Then lead your group in this thought exercise:

Picture the game of “He loves me, he loves me not” which we just played a version of with our M&M’s. Except don’t picture the game using a daisy (the traditional “loves me, loves me not” flower), picture playing that game with the plant that was part of the crucifixion, a crown of thorns.

Option: Rather than say “crown of thorns” you may want to simply project an image of a crown of thorns.

What would be going through your mind as you plucked off a thorn? Can you honestly say “He loves me not” when plucking off a thorn?

Close your exercise with this thought:

It’s really hard to pluck off a thorn and say “He loves me not.” Jesus settled His love for us on the cross. In fact, it’s during our loss and heartache that Jesus cuddles us just a bit more like a parent with a sick child.

Invite students to take some time to reflect on Jesus’ act of love. Draw their attention to the exercise “Reflecting on Jesus’ Love” on their student pages and give them a few minutes in solitude.

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

Call for your students’ attention and ask them to express what was impressed on their hearts or minds as they pondered the question, *God, how much do you love me?*

After several have shared, challenge each student to create something over the next couple days that expresses their gratitude for God’s love: Create a dance. Compose a song. Write a poem. Draw a picture. Take a picture. The possibilities of expression are almost as endless as God’s love. So, express away. Ask them to indicate in the space provided on their student page what they’d like to create.

Share the Wow!

Then ask them to share what they’ve created—with each other, on social media. In fact, we’d love to see it! Post it on InWord’s Facebook page at www.facebook.com/InwordResources



DIGGING IN

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How did God show His love?

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TAKING IT INWARD

Reflecting on Jesus' Love

First, use your imagination to take Jesus' sacrifice on the cross as personally as possible.

- Imagine Jesus' eyes.
- Imagine your name rolling across His mind.
- Imagine His sacred blood pooling at the foot of the cross, creating puddles in the footprints made by the soldiers.

Now, ask God this question and linger until something is impressed on your heart or mind.

God, how much do you love me?

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

As an expression of my gratitude for God's love, I will:

- Create a dance.
- Compose a song.
- Write a poem.
- Draw a picture.
- Take a picture.

Share the wow!

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