

date: 8/6/17**Bible Passage: Acts 11:19–30**
(Church in Antioch)

God Is Love, Part 2

REMEMBER VERSE

See what great love the Father has lavished on us,
that we should be called children of God!

1 John 3:1a

Inspire

Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives

When my daughter, Chantel, was five years old, our family took a one-day trip to Mexico with our church. We spent the day with the families from the community, helping to bathe and clothe the children. After all the clothes had been given away and the water tanks had been shut down and put back on the trucks, my five year old noticed that one child had not been given a bath or clothes. Chantel became outraged—right there in the middle of everyone. The idea that this child had gone without was completely unacceptable to her. She began—much like a vigilante and almost disrespectfully—fighting to see that justice was done for this girl. Someone tried to tell her that we were all out of clothes, but my daughter passionately responded, “Then everyone needs to start donating something!”

I looked around in amazement to see several grown men and women following the prompting of a child. They were lugging out the heavy water tanks and bath products as well as scrounging to find clothes—and still Chantel wasn’t finished. She went to our car and took out her brand-new jacket and gave it to the little girl. The Holy Spirit was leading my daughter in her passionate fight, and she was simply responding to the love of God within her.

During our trip home, nothing but cheerful conversation and “remember whens” came from the backseat. She never mentioned her coat as a personal loss. Instead, this day remains one of her favorite childhood memories. I’ve often reflected on the way my daughter ensured a young girl in Mexico would be shown love and respect. She responded with the love of a God who knows no boundaries of culture, language, or circumstance ... His love simply overflows.

Michelle Anthony
Tru Team

Equip

Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage

In the early days following Jesus' ascension, many people were coming to faith. The gathering of believers was growing, and true community was developing. A young man named Stephen was among seven men appointed by the 12 apostles to serve communities with the distribution of food and supplies to needy widows. As he served, Stephen was filled with God's grace and power, performing many miracles in His name. When word of this reached some men of the synagogue, they approached Stephen and began to debate with him. Seeing that Stephen would not back down, the leaders seized Stephen and stoned him to death.

Stephen's death was the first of a great wave of persecution that swept over the church in Jerusalem, and followers of "The Way" scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. These followers preached the Word of God to the Jews. However, some believers went to the city of Antioch and preached the good news of Jesus to the Gentiles. "The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord" (Acts 11:21).

Antioch enjoyed a prosperous economy due to its strategic location at the crossroads for trade routes south to Palestine and Egypt, east to Persia, and west to the Asia Minor Peninsula. Antioch was ranked the third-greatest city in the Roman Empire, after Rome and Alexandria, with a population of more than 500,000. It was a blend of many cultures, beliefs, and practices. The city, referred to as "Queen of the East," was also known for its extravagant, wasteful, and reckless behavior.

When the Jerusalem church heard of the growing number of believers in Antioch, they sent Barnabas—a godly and faith-filled man—to visit. During his first stay, Barnabas witnessed the blessing of God upon these believers; many turned and put their faith in the Lord. Barnabas left Antioch long enough to return with Paul—who had once persecuted and killed followers of The Way—and they stayed for a year teaching the Word of God.

It's from this time of God's Spirit moving in Antioch that we see the beginning of the Gentile movement: the first Gentile church, the first missionaries, and the first act of generous financial giving for another local church community. It's here in Antioch that believers were first named Christians (*christianous* or "little Christs"). What citizens of the city may have intended as a coining in jest, the followers of The Way embraced as a fitting title to describe their new identity.

Leader Tip

Although the same man is referred to in Scripture as both Paul and Saul, to reduce confusion and provide consistency in Wonder, unless it is a direct quote he will be referred to as Paul.

Support

Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word

How do you feel when you witness great change in someone's life? Have you ever watched any kind of makeover show on television? You know, the type of show with the compelling story of someone who is in great need, and as a result of the work of those involved with the show, their life is completely turned around? Or how about the people who wait so patiently outside the grocery store collecting money for various philanthropic organizations—have you seen them? Going to a deeper level, have you ever heard a story of great life change in a sermon at church? When you do, what's your gut reaction? Is it just your heartstrings being tugged on or is the Holy Spirit calling you to action? What's your response?

This week, when you find yourself in a situation where you're having your "heartstrings" tugged, or you experience that fiery feeling in the core of your body after hearing or seeing something, stop and pause for a moment. Is this just emotion or is God saying something to you specifically? What is His love calling you to? How will you answer?

EXPLORE:: 10 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day's portion of The Big God Story.

Who Needs What?

In this part of The Big God Story, the church in Antioch responded to God's love by meeting the needs of a sister church. This activity begins to address the idea that all things have needs that must be met in order to function.

SUPPLIES (per small group)

- [Matching cards \(see Resources\)](#)
- Card stock
- Scissors

PREPARE AHEAD

Print the Matching cards onto card stock and cut them out.

SET UP

Place the cards on the table facedown.

RELATE

Welcome the children and invite them to gather around the table. **We're going to play a memory matching game with the cards on the table. But instead of finding identical matches, you'll find pairs of cards that complete one another, or go together.** For example, if a child flips over a picture of a baby, you can say: **Now we need to find another picture of something the baby needs to live (or function).**

As children look for the pairs, encourage them to think whether the cards they pick (even if they don't match) are what is needed to complete the pair. For example: **Does a baby need a gas pump?** Children respond. **Hmmm ... I wonder what might need a gas pump.** Play the game until all pairs are found.

DISCOVER:: 25 min.

Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.

Ponder Point

God Is Love

Chloe's Rules

Host/Worship Leader

SUPPLIES

- [Chloe's Rules videos](#)
- Worship music (suggestions: "I May Be Small" and "Sincerely Yours," TruWorship *Sincerely Yours*)

RELATE

Welcome children as they're entering the large group meeting area. *Tech: Cue Chloe's Rules video.* The theme song will play as the Worship Leader/Host enters and makes his way up front, welcoming and greeting children along the way. This should be a high-energy entrance. *Tech: Cue preschool program theme song.* Choose and play two upbeat worship songs of your choice from a worship album that complements the theme and focus of the lesson.

Mail Time

Host/Worship Leader

SUPPLIES

- [Remember Verse image \(see Resources\)](#)
- Envelope (large)
- Bibles (your personal and large children's)
- Mailbox

PREPARE AHEAD

Print or copy the Mail Time envelope art and attach to a large envelope. Print or copy one Remember Verse card and put it inside the envelope.

RELATE

Choose one volunteer to hide the mail and another to find the mail. Have the "Seeker" close her eyes while the "Hider" finds a good place to hide the Remember Verse. Once the mail has been hidden, the Seeker will begin to look for the mail while children give clues to its whereabouts by calling out "hot" and "cold."

Once the Seeker finds the mail, the Host invites her to pull out the enclosed Remember Verse. Next, the Host should find the Remember Verse in his Bible and read the words aloud. Talk about the meaning of the verse while interacting with children.

Lead children in reciting the Remember Verse several times together using a variety of engaging methods. Hand motions, different voices, various speeds, and character integration are all great ways to help commit the Scripture to memory. For longer verses, approach the verse one section at a time, increasing what the children repeat back each week.

REMEMBER VERSE

See what great love the Father has lavished on us,
that we should be called children of God!

1 John 3:1a

REMEMBER VERSE DEFINITIONS

Lavished: given lots and lots

REMEMBER VERSE MOTIONS

See what great: Hold both hands open with palms facing away, in front of body, then push out and upward.

love the Father: Draw both arms to cross over in front of chest.

has lavished on us: Extend both arms above head. With fingers spread, keep arms straight as if pushing toward the ground until hands swing down to meet hips.

that we should be called: Cup right hand into C shape. Start at chin and move out away from face.

children: Using right hand with palm down, repeat patting gesture at right side of body.

of God: With right hand open toward left, move upward and then down the center of the face with fingers facing up.

Wardrobe of Wonder

Storyteller/Host/Worship Leader

SUPPLIES

- [What's!t: The Church](#) (see optional image in Resources)
- Wardrobe of Wonder
- Small stools or chairs (2)

What's!t: The Church

The church in Antioch was the first church established for Gentiles. The Spirit of God was moving in powerful ways and getting the message of the good news to all who would hear and receive. The growth of the church was marked by the number of people who were coming to faith. It's *people* who make up the church, and not the buildings in which we meet and gather.

Leader Tip

During the large group portion of your kids' worship service last week, it was suggested that you take a picture of the children. This picture can be used as your What's!t for this lesson.

RELATE

Invite a child volunteer to "spy" on the What's!t by peeking into the wardrobe. Each time the wardrobe door opens, *cue the Wardrobe of Wonder sound effect*. Have him whisper the identity of the What's!t in your ear to ensure he knows what it is.

Invite your assistant to sit on the stools with you. Then lead the group in asking the assistant yes-or-no questions about the What's!t. Once the children have guessed correctly, ask your assistant to retrieve the What's!t from the wardrobe and bring it to you. Thank your volunteer and encourage him to sit with his small group.

ASK

What is this we've found in the Wardrobe of Wonder today? Interact with kids' answers. **Yes, it's a picture of a group of people. In this case, we call this special group of people "the church." Does that sound kind of funny? Have you always thought of the church as just a building you go to? You're right—that building *is* called a**

church. But when we call a group of *people* the church, it means they're people gathered together who love and believe in Jesus. Guess what? *We're* the church! What does it look like these people are doing? Children answer. I wonder where we're going to hear more about the church in The Big God Story. Are you ready to find out? Children answer. *Me too!* Do you know what time it is?

The Big God Story

Acts 11:19–30

God Is Love

Storytelling Technique: Map and Figurines

SUPPLIES

- What's/it: The Church (see optional image in Resources)
- Map of Jerusalem and Antioch (see Resources)
- Barnabas and Paul cutouts (see Resource Files)
- Optional: Storytelling video (see Resources)
- Bible
- Scissors
- Easel with paper or dry-erase board
- Markers (regular or dry-erase)

PREPARE AHEAD

Set up the dry-erase board or an easel with paper. Print the map and cutouts and cut out Paul and Barnabas. Position the map on the easel and have the cutouts accessible for storytelling at the beginning. Be sure the map and cutouts are easily removable so the easel can be used for listing the responses of the children at the end of The Big God Story.

RELATE

Hello, friends! It's so good to see you! Before we jump into The Big God Story, let's stop and ask God to teach us. Let's quiet our voices and rest our hands and feet as we close our eyes and talk to God. Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

Today in The Big God Story, we get to hear about God's big love. God *is* love. His love grew in people's hearts until they were so full of His love that they had to do something about it. Open Bible and begin to storytell. After Jesus went back up to heaven, His very special disciples—called the apostles—were busy teaching the people of Jerusalem all about Him. Jerusalem was the city they all lived in. Point to Jerusalem on map. Each time they taught about God's love and His forgiveness, many people decided to trust in Jesus and follow God. When those people who decided to believe in Jesus moved out of Jerusalem, they told all the people they met about Jesus. More and more people believed in Him. The power of God, the Holy Spirit, was with those who believed in Jesus. The good news about His love was reaching people in many different cities.

There was a city that was one of the very first to hear about God's love. That city was Antioch. Point to Antioch on map. Can you say that with me? *AN-tee-ock*. Good job! You see, there were so many people choosing to follow Jesus in Antioch that the followers of Jesus who made up the church in Jerusalem were hearing about it. *Tech: Cue Wardrobe of Wonder sound effect.* What did we find in the wardrobe today? A picture of people, or the church! That's right. Let's keep listening. The church in Jerusalem wanted to know about the things God was doing in the lives of those people far away. So, they sent a man named Barnabas to go see. Can you say his name with me? *BAR-na-bus*. That's right. Barnabas was a good man who trusted God and loved Him very much. When Barnabas arrived in Antioch, he saw how much God had blessed the new church. Barnabas was excited and filled with so much joy he just couldn't help but tell even more people about Jesus.

The church—those who loved Jesus—continued to grow and grow. One day, Barnabas left Antioch because he wanted to bring his friend Paul back to the city with him. Demonstrate on map using cutouts. Both Paul and Barnabas stayed with the church in Antioch for a whole year, teaching God’s Word to large crowds of people. While Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch, prophets came to visit the church. They told the people that there was going to be a famine soon. What’s a famine? Give children a moment to answer. You’re right; it’s a time when there isn’t enough food for everyone. Often there isn’t any rain, so food can’t grow. A famine would mean that many people wouldn’t have the food and the other things they needed. So the people from the church in Antioch all gave as much money as they could. They took up a huge offering. They asked Paul and Barnabas to take what they gathered to the church in Jerusalem to help care for the people there and in nearby towns. Demonstrate on map using figures. Why do you think the church in Antioch gave money to the church in Jerusalem? Children respond. With the famine, the people were going to need things like food and clothes, yes, that’s right. The church in Antioch was filled with God’s love. And because God had given them so much, they wanted to show that God is love by sharing and giving to others.

God is love, and we can be filled with His love too, and show others His love. What are some ways we can show others that God is love? Pause and allow children to answer. Interact with their responses by listing their answers on the easel. Consider drawing a picture of each suggestion and writing the word underneath. **Great thinking!** These are all ways we can show that God is love. He has given us so much love. Now we can share that love with others!

RESPOND:: 20 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond through creative activities and games.

Wonder Questions

Small Group Enhancements, coloring pages, and discussion questions help your group go deeper into today’s portion of The Big God Story.

SUPPLIES (per small group)

- [Wonder Questions coloring pages](#) (see Resources)
- Crayons

RELATE

Today in The Big God Story, we saw that God is love. We also heard about the church in Antioch and how God’s love helped them to share His love with others.

- I wonder ... When have I felt really loved by someone?
- I wonder ... How does it feel to be loved?
- I wonder ... How can I share God’s love with a friend?
- I wonder ... What is a way God wants me to give love to my family?

BLESS:: 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be a prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES (per small group)

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)

RELATE

Today, send your little ones out with a blessing by praying Scripture over them. This is an opportunity for children to practice another physical posture of worship. Encourage children to place their hands out in front of themselves, palms up as if cupping them together to hold water. This is a posture that demonstrates our willingness to receive what God has for each of us.

Children, Jesus tells us in His Word: “Love one another. Just like I love you, you love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are My disciples—when they see the love you have for each other” (John 13:34–35, paraphrase).

Invite children to pair up and say to one another: **We are the church! We are God’s light to others!**

Finish with a blessing:

May you know that God is love and show His love to others this week.