

Matthew 11:28-30

“God’s Heart (Valentine’s Weekend Lesson)”

Scripture: Matthew 11:28-30, Exodus 34:6-7, Mark 6:34, Matthew 28:19

Memory Verse: Matthew 11:29 *“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*

Lesson Focus: With Valentine’s Day falling on this weekend, the kids will be accustomed to exchanging all sorts of heart-shaped items. We will join in the fun a little bit and deep-dive into the Bible to see God’s “heart”. Who is God really at His core? We will look at a few key texts where God pulls back the veil and lets us peer deep down into the core of Who He is. We hope this lesson will make the Lord irresistible to the kids!

Activities and Crafts: Coloring Picture of Memory Verse, Word Search of different terms from lesson, Bring it Home Discussion for 3rd – 5th.
Craft for 1st and 2nd grade: Jesus Be Mine Valentine

Starter Activity: Hunt for God’s Heart

To introduce today’s lesson with some Valentine’s Day fun, have the kids go on a hunt for God’s heart. We will provide you with three red hearts cut out of construction paper that say “GOD” on them with a number. We will hide them in the classroom for you and tell you where they are beforehand. On the backside of each heart there is a Bible verse that we will refer to in number order during the lesson.

1st-2nd grade: After the kids find the hearts, have them open their Bibles to the verse on Heart #1 and introduce the lesson with some discussion. (See sample Qs below)

3rd-5th grade: Each grade will have one heart to find and we will send each group on their hunt after worship. After each grade has found their heart we will introduce the lesson with some discussion. (See sample Qs below) *

Q: Why do you think we had you hunt for “red hearts” today? A: Valentine’s Day! *

We may exchange cute heart-shaped notes and eat heart-shaped candy on this day, but the Bible actually has A LOT to say about the heart.

Q: What is the Bible talking about when it refers to our hearts? (**Matthew 22:37**)

A: It’s not what is beating inside of us and pumping blood through our body. Rather, it is talking about WHO WE ARE. Who we REALLY are at our core. *

In the Bible, God also tells us about HIS heart, Who He REALLY is at His core. That is what we are going to hunt for and study in the Bible today!

Bible Study:

Teachers: This lesson is structured around the three sections of Scripture on the three hearts that the kids found at the beginning. As you work through the lesson, consider having kids “help” you by referencing the verses on those hearts.

Matthew 11:28: This is Jesus speaking and He is inviting people to come to Him.

Q: What is something that you might receive an invitation to?

A: Birthday party, a church event, or maybe a new attraction in town. *

Jesus is inviting us to something much greater. He is inviting you to be HIS. * Remember that Jesus is God the Son. This is the great King of Kings inviting lowly people like you and me to draw near to Him in relationship. And what will we find? REST for our souls.

This is not an invitation to come and take a nap! This is an invitation to enter REAL “happily ever after”. All of us “labor” and are “heavy-laden” by our sin, fears *, or aimless search for joy in worldly things. It is not until we accept Jesus’s invitation and become HIS that He personally gives us this “happily ever after”. *

Matthew 11:29a: When we become Jesus’s we take His “yoke” and learn from Him.

Q: What in the world is this “yoke” that Jesus wants us to take? (**Teachers:** Consider bringing in a raw egg and asking the kids if they think He is talking about egg “yolk”)

A: In Jesus’s day they would put this yoke contraption on two farm animals (oxen) as they sowed and plowed the fields. * This way the animals “learned” from the farmer. In the same way, we learn from Jesus when we surrender to Him and take His yoke upon us.

I can imagine the farmer getting angry and upset with the farm animals sometimes not following his instructions. But that’s NOT how Jesus describes Himself. Look!

Matthew 11:29b: Jesus says He is gentle, kind, and lowly of heart! This is God’s heart! This is the ONLY place where Jesus directly reveals His heart. And as we peer deep down into the core of Who He is, we see kindness, gentleness, open arms. Wow!

And when we take His gentle and kind yoke upon us, we find rest for our souls.

Matthew 11:30: In contrast to the heavy yoke put upon the farm animals, Jesus is kind and gentle and His yoke is easy and light. I think we could compare it to a life-preserver.

Q: What is a life-preserver for? A: To rescue someone who is drowning. *

Q: Is putting on a life-preserver heavy or light? A: It is light and it will SAVE you.

We are like the drowning man. We are drowning in our sin and in our aimless search for happiness apart from God. Jesus invites everyone to grab His life-preserver “yoke”, be saved, and learn from Him.

So, we have one verse in the New Testament where Jesus reveals His heart. What about the Old Testament? **Teachers:** At this point have someone read the verse on Heart #2.

Exodus 34:6: In this verse God is revealing Himself to Moses and tells Him Who He is at His core: merciful, gracious, patient, abounding in goodness and truth!

Q: What are the first two words out of God's mouth describing Who He is?

A: Merciful and gracious! * His deepest delight, his heart, is to show gentle mercy and grace. Sound familiar? It should! Sounds just like the gentle and gracious Jesus we were just talking about. Cover-to-cover the Bible is about the one and only God who is gentle, merciful, and gracious in heart.

Exodus 34:7: This verse reminds us that as kind and gentle as God is, He still must and will punish sin (and we read about His punishment in the Bible too). But His heart is to show mercy. His heart is to forgive. His heart is to be gracious.

If we do not grab hold of the life-preserver that He offers, we will only drown in our sin and suffer His punishment in hell. But once we take that life-preserver and surrender to Him, his love and mercy GUSHES forth upon us. *

So, we have seen who God is at His core and that He is the same throughout the whole Bible, gentle, kind, and rich in mercy. But is this Who He is in action? **Teachers:** At this point have someone read the verse on Heart #3.

Mark 6:34: Jesus is God in human flesh. And we see His heart was one that deeply CARED for people. *

This is exactly what we see of Jesus throughout the Bible. We see Him healing the sick, feeding the hungry, teaching those who were eager to learn from Him. We see Him throwing out that life-preserver to those who were "weary and heavy-laden". We see His kind and gentle heart actively flowing out in love to people ready to receive it.

Boys and Girls: This is Who God is! Gentle, kind, merciful, and welcoming. How can you resist surrendering to Him! Have you accepted His invitation? If not, come to Him in faith and trust right now and become His!

Key Point: But I suspect most of you are already His. We will look at one more verse which is His heart FOR YOU!

Matthew 28:19a: Jesus tells His followers to GO and make other followers. He wants us to tell others about the life-preserver that He offers. * But first we must CARE!

Do you care about lost and hurting people around you? If not, ask Jesus to help you care more and more for others. Ask Jesus to make your heart more and more like His heart! And then GO and show God's great heart to those around you! **Teachers:** See some of the discussion Qs in the "Bring It Home" to discuss ways in which to apply the lesson.

Bring It Home

(Devotional for the Family)

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Teachers/Parents: In class we went on a hunt for God’s “heart” to see what the Scriptures tell us about Who He really is at His core. What comes to your mind first when you think of God and who He is or what He is like? Was it always that way? Compare those thoughts to what Jesus actually says about Himself in our memory verse above and discuss.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Our church’s mission statement is “BE, MAKE, SEND.” First BE a disciple, then MAKE disciples, and SEND them. What do you think it looks like to BE a disciple or follower of Jesus Christ? (Hint: Read **John 13:34-35**)
- 2) Read **Mark 6:34**. This shows us that Jesus cared for others. Before we can truly MAKE disciples, we must truly CARE about the needs of others, just like Jesus did. Who is someone you CARE about and how do you show them you CARE?
- 3) Read **Matthew 28:19**. In class we talked about how God’s heart for us as His followers is to GO and MAKE disciples. Does this seem frightening to you? Why or why not?
- 4) As we read through the gospels and observe Jesus, we see Him spending time with lots and lots of people. In fact, the people that He was drawn to the most were the one’s least respected in society, the “sinners”. Read **Luke 5:29-32**. Who was Jesus spending time with? Why do you think He was friends with those people?
- 5) Are there any people in your school or neighborhood that you can go and make friends with just like Jesus did? That is the best place to start if you want to MAKE disciples!
- 6) Do you know any missionaries that have been SENT? Pray for them right now as a family. If not, consider picking up one of our missionary cards next to the Kids Ministry Info Desk and “adopt” a missionary that you can pray for and support.