

BIG IDEA

Jesus is love.

BIBLE

John 15:9–13; John 10:1–18; Romans 8:38–39

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Silent Telephone: “Who Am I?”

- Welcome to the first week of our new series, *I Am*, where we will explore Jesus’ great love.
- Before we start, let’s find out the answer to a few questions we asked you as you came in today.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you’ll need six pairs of headphones, some way to play music, strips of scrap paper, pens, and two bowls. Before your program, ask students to write two phrases on separate pieces of paper. On the first, have them finish the phrase “I am (adjective)” and “I like to (something they like to do)” on the second. Review the phrases before the game, removing any inappropriate suggestions for your group, putting the usable “I am” phrases in one bowl and the “I like to” phrases in another. To play, ask for seven volunteers, having six put on headphones playing music loud enough to drown out the crowd noise. Have the first student choose a phrase from each bowl, which should make a fun phrase like “I am wild, and I like to take naps,” or “I am artsy, and I like to eat steak.” Have the student say to the first student wearing headphones the phrase they picked out, and then by only reading their lips, have them tell what they think the student said to the next one down the line. The last student has to say what they understood to the crowd, and if they got it right, they win a prize.*
- It’s hard to know someone when you can’t understand their language. Hearing someone’s voice in this game would have helped us know who they are and what they like to do. When distractions drown out communication, it is hard to understand when people try to tell us who they are.

VIDEO | A Clip of a Chladni Plate

- Sound is a physical thing. That’s why if it is loud enough, we can feel it in our bodies. Most of the time, we can’t see sound with our eyes, but in certain situations, we can. Check this out:
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip on Chladni plates [like this one](#) (0:06–1:37). For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*
- This helps us see that our physical environment changes when someone speaks. So when someone tells us who they are, they alter the air and environment around them. Reality changes. Isn’t that cool?
- I think this is another way of emphasizing why listening to people is so important. And also why it can be such a bummer if we don’t listen to what they say about themselves. What they wanted us to know about them actually altered the air; they changed reality around us, and we still can miss it.

POLL | What Are Waves?

- Today, we will look at a few things that don't seem like they go together at first – sound, shepherds, and sheep. It would be totally fair if you are unfamiliar with these things, but let's gauge where you are anyway with a little activity.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this poll, you will need a prize to give the winner. Poll your students' responses to the following questions by asking them to stand up and turn left if the answer is false and right if the answer is true. When you tell them the answer, have everyone who answers correctly stay standing. Anyone who responded incorrectly sits down. The last one standing is the winner! Here are a few ideas to get you started:*
 - *The proper name of a sound wave is a "crescent wave." (False)*
 - *A shepherd is someone who looks after sheep. (True)*
 - *Scientists have recently discovered a new sound wave called a "party wave." (False)*
 - *The sound a sheep makes is called a "burp." (False)*
 - *A group of sheep is called a herd. (False)*
 - *The scientific name for sound waves is called "longitudinal wave" (True)*
 - *A proper term for a shepherd's staff is a "crook." (True)*
 - *Studies show that sheep are even able to recognize human faces and voices. (True)*
 - *If a sheep lies down, it won't get up without the help of a shepherd (False)*
 - *Shepherds often worked with wolves, called sheep wolves, to learn how to make wolf howls. This is so they can help train sheep to hear danger. (False)*
- We don't need a poll to tell us that it's tricky to sort through what is true and what is false in our world. When figuring out what is true, it's important to go to the source.
- The same is true when figuring out what is true about Jesus. What if we let Jesus tell us and show us who he is? Whether you have grown up in church or this is your first time, the place to start understanding Jesus is by allowing him to tell us who he is through the Bible.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion time and save it for small groups! If you have fewer than 15 students, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
 - **Fill in this blank I AM statement: "One thing I love about myself is that I AM _____."**
 - **When you meet someone new, what is something you tell them about yourself?**
 - ★ **On a scale of one to five (five being most reliable), how reliable do you believe the Bible is when telling about Jesus? Why?**

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

SCRIPTURE | John 10:1–18

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read John 10:1–18.*
- The reality is that we all want to be known. Sometimes we spend our lives feeling like nobody knows us. We try, but sometimes it feels like nobody is listening. Even so, we want to be known for the right things. You want to be known for what you care about, what you stand for, and what you love.
- The gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are about Jesus' life. They help us know who he is, what he cared about, what he stood for, and loved. They're the stories of where Jesus lived, what he did, where he visited, his conversations, the miracles he performed, and most importantly – his death and resurrection.

- One of those books in the Bible we find in the New Testament is the Book of John. Its central theme is love. The author, John, was a disciple of Jesus and followed him on a three-year adventure doing ministry. In John 10:1–18, he recounts a parable where Jesus gave us insight into who he is.

OBJECT LESSON | John 10:1–18 But IRL

- That was a lot to take in. Jesus wanted to give us some vivid imagery to help us understand. So let's try our best to bring his words to life.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this object lesson, you'll need a borrow a cage with a gate [like this](#) (or some cardboard boxes will do), some [sheep headbands](#) (or make some [like this](#)), [wolf ears](#) headbands (or create your own [like this](#)), a costume knife, and a [shepherd's crook](#). Before your program, get a few student or adult volunteers to help you act out the next few scenes. You will need a few people to play sheep, a gatekeeper, a thief, and the Good Shepherd. Encourage them to act out what you are saying as you teach. Melodramatically interject words or phrases for them to say as you teach. While teaching, you could play these [sheep noises](#) from "Urban Farming with Trish." But make sure you have purchased any licenses required to do so. For more information, [read this!](#) When you're teaching, say:*
 - **SCENE 1:** The sheep react differently to the different characters. They've seen the shepherd defend them against other animals with his rod, he has nurtured them because he has been leading them to green pastures, and maybe he's even been singing songs to them to comfort them! When the sheep hear the shepherd's voice, they follow him — recognizing the familiar voice of the person caring for them and wanting them to have a full life.
 - **SCENE 2:** On the other hand, the thief would have to climb a fence probably at night when there's no light and when no one can see him. And as they are trying to steal the sheep, they most likely would run at them and scatter them. When the sheep hear their voice, instead of going where he tells them, they will run out of fright. The sheep didn't recognize the strange voice!
 - **SCENE 3:** Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Why does the good shepherd give his life to protect and guard the sheep? Can't he get other sheep if those get lost or attacked? The good shepherd loves his sheep. They mean everything to him. Sheep usually meant a source of income to shepherds. But not the good shepherd. Jesus distinguishes between an everyday shepherd and himself. He is a good shepherd who loves his sheep.
- This is what Jesus wants us to know about himself. He tells us that he loves his sheep so much he would die for them. He is the good shepherd who wants his sheep to have a full life and is willing to give his life for them to make that possible. Jesus runs after his sheep, and even when they have run away from him, he continues to love them.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion time and save it for small groups! If you have fewer than 15 students, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
 - ✪ **What questions do you have about Jesus being a good shepherd?**
 - **What do you think it means to "have a full life"? How does Jesus fit into that for you?**

SCRIPTURE | John 15:9–14

- Just as the good shepherd protects, guides, and gives his life for his sheep — Jesus gave his life for us at the cross.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read John 15:9–14.*
- When we hear Jesus tells us that he loves us, this sound wave of love changes our reality. We are no longer servants, but friends invited to follow Jesus and become more like him, loving others and ourselves as he does.
- We all want to know we're loved, cared for, and protected by someone, and thankfully, when we let Jesus tell us who he is and what he does, we hear that we are loved and capable of loving each other. Through the cross and resurrection, we see that Jesus laid down everything to ensure that we have the possibility of life and life to the full. All of this is possible only because **Jesus is love.**

NOW WHAT? *What does God want us to do about it?*

STORY | When I Heard Jesus' Voice

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story or invite a volunteer to talk about when you heard that Jesus laid his life down for you, accepted his love, and let it be central to your life. Have you been ignoring the prompts? What was happening in your life that you could hear Jesus, maybe for the first time?*
- What would it mean for you, today, to know you have the good shepherd calling out for you amidst all the voices and noise? If that is where you are, here is how you can respond to that love today:
 - **ACCEPT JESUS' LOVE:** Jesus' love is available to you today. His love is a gift and not dependent on who we are or what we have done. The gift is paid for and given to you. When you come to Jesus, you can experience the transforming power of his unconditional love. This starts with a simple prayer that you can say anytime. It could look like this, "Thank you for loving me, even when I don't deserve it. I want your love to transform my heart. I embrace your love for me."
 - **FOCUS ON JESUS' LOVE:** Spend five minutes every day this week focusing on Jesus' love, allowing it to be the center of your life. Maybe you've been stuck hearing what others think about you, how many likes, follows, or comments you have on your social media, or who was invited to that party you weren't. Maybe you've placed your value on your strengths, talents, mistakes, or weaknesses. But that's not who you are. You can love yourself because you know your importance, who you are, and *whose* you are. In that five minutes, say, "I am a loved child of God. His love for me is unconditional". Follow Jesus and allow his love to be what centers and motivates you.
 - **SHARE ABOUT JESUS' LOVE:** Another way to reflect on Jesus' transforming love is to simply talk about it! Share with others how God's love has impacted your life.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion time and save it for small groups! If you have fewer than 15 students, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
 - **Does Jesus laying down his life help you see that Jesus is love? Why or why not?**
 - **Have you accepted Jesus' love? If you haven't, is there anything holding you back from doing so?**
 - **In your opinion, how would your week look different if you trusted Jesus loves you?**

REFLECTION | Silence: Remain In God's Love

- There is nothing you can do to earn God's love. It is available to you through Jesus' work on the cross. We are inundated with sounds that oftentimes drown out God's voice. What would we hear if we spent time turning down the noise and paying attention to what God was communicating?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this reflection, invite students to sit silently in stillness for a couple of minutes. As they enter into silence, ask them to identify the noise and commotion that begs their attention. Invite them to silence it and remain in the love of Jesus. Have the first words they hear be Scripture by breaking the silence with John 15:9–15.*
- This is just one way it could look like to accept and center your heart on Jesus' love this week. It's simple, and it only takes a few minutes. Imagine how life could change if you simply did this for ten minutes a day.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion time and save it for small groups!*
 - **Read Romans 8:38–39. How does understanding there is nothing you can do to be separated from God's love change or challenge the way you follow Jesus?**
 - **What steps can you take this week to remind yourself that God loves you?**

RESPONSE | Temporary Tattoos

- Jesus loves you, not what you can be, but who you are. The love Jesus offers sees past your sin and fights for you. The true depth and breadth of Jesus' love for us often sit like an unread text on our phones. We see the first part but never click it to see the rest. What if today was like clicking that text and seeing the rest of it? Do you want to leave a love this good unread?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this response, you'll need temporary tattoos in the shape of sound waves [like these](#), bowls, sponges, and towels to wipe up any excess water. Before your program, set up a few temporary tattoo stations with a bowl of water, sponges, and a towel. Have students apply these temporary tattoos to remind them that Jesus is love and loves them deeply. Play some contemplative music as they respond.*
- Love puts itself second to see you succeed. Love willingly gives it all away. Love will risk his life and die to provide you with life. Every time you look at this temporary tattoo this week, let it remind you that Jesus has spoken to you and told you how much he loves you because **Jesus is Love.**