

Introduction to God is

Introduction

For the first week of our new Scripture Course, the girls will recap last year's course and be reminded of the characteristics of God they learnt about. If you missed the 'God is' Part One Course please do not worry, this course has been written so that you can begin on Part Two. We have also provided you with a PowerPoint that you can share with your girls that gives an overview of last year's course and what they learnt. This will also be a great introduction for those who are just beginning to think about who God is and what He is like.

Use this week to introduce the girls to the 'God is' Part Two Scripture Course where you will explain to them that they will be continuing to learn more characteristics of God, however this time they will learn how they too can reflect Him by displaying these characteristics in their own lives.

Pray as the girls begin this new course that they will continue to be blown away by how amazing God is.

Please note that the lesson plans provided in these notes are guidelines only.

We have a wide range of girls at different stages in their journey of faith to cater for within GBNI and we pray that God will help guide you as leaders to prayerfully discern what you will need to include, in order to challenge and stretch each individual girl. To that end, we actively encourage you to adapt the material as you see fit, to meet the needs of your girls who you know well, and your individual company.

For all the lessons, particularly this year, we strongly recommend you work through them over two weeks to ensure that the girls are getting the best out of all the material. Please don't worry if it takes three weeks to finish a lesson, be guided by your girls and what they would like to discuss. Embrace any questions they have and use your Bible study time to show the girls how God's Word is relevant to them today and how they can apply it to their lives.

As you prepare

When you think of God, what characteristics do you think of? How does knowing that He knows everything, is present everywhere, is all powerful, is sovereign and holy etc. change you and your prayer life? If you completed the course last year, was there any attribute that stood out to you the most?

Imagine if each time you approached the throne room of Heaven to offer your prayers to God you remembered

these truths! Would you pray bigger prayers? Would your prayers be bolder? Would how you pray change?

This week as you prepare for a new year of Bible teaching take some Post-Its and write the various attributes of God around your house, your work desk, your car etc. All the places you will frequent this week. Each time you see the characteristic written down, reflect on who God is and thank Him that He is your God and your King.

Icebreaker

Begin by welcoming the girls to Girls' Brigade. Take some time catching up and helping them to connect as a group. You may like to do some icebreakers if there are new girls in your section.

Before you begin to tell the girls what they will be studying this year, ask them to do an exercise in their journal. Explain to them that every single one of us have characteristics that make us who we are, and you want them to begin to think of which ones they possess. They are asked the question 'What are you like?' on page 4 of their journals. They are asked to write down or doodle what qualities they have. If they were to ask their friends and family to describe them, what words would they use? If your group know each other well, you could ask them to help each other out. This is also a great exercise to allow you to affirm your girls. They may use words such as kind, funny, thoughtful, generous etc. When they have this done, ask them who do they get these qualities from? Family members? Which ones reflect their friends? Explain that very often the more time we spend with people, the more we begin to be like them.

When they have completed this exercise and you have discussed their answers, begin to introduce the theme for this year's course.

For those girls who studied the 'God is' Part One Course, remind them that they began to look at who God is, last year, and what He is like. Can they remember any of the attributes or characteristics they studied? Use the PowerPoint provided in the Leaders' Section of the GBNI website that briefly recaps the attributes of God they studied. They can also look at the attributes and a summary of what they mean on page 5 of their journals.

We are aware that some companies did not study the Scripture Course last year so for those girls, please use this time to introduce them to the theme. (You too can use the PowerPoint that has been provided that will allow the girls to have a brief summary of what was studied last year).

Tell the girls that the title for this year's course is 'God is' Part Two. Explain that this year we are going to begin our journey of looking at who God is and what He is like. Explain that you will do this by studying various stories in the Bible that will help them learn very important character traits or attributes of God.

Read the Bible and Journal (Pages 4-7)

An attribute is a quality or a characteristic of someone. It describes who they are so we can know more about them. The attributes of God are things we can know about Him, and as we will learn throughout the year, they are true of Him all the time. Each week we will explore a new attribute of God and what it teaches us about Him. We will also understand how what we have learnt about Him impacts us and how we can apply it to our own lives. It's important we know who He is but also that we realise there is an invitation to know Him intimately for ourselves.

Explain to the girls that having a correct understanding of God's character is absolutely essential; we need to know who we serve and build our confidence in Him so we can trust Him more and grow in faith. When a builder is building a house he spends a lot of time getting the foundations of the house just right so that the house will be secure and safe. With us, knowing who God is helps us to build 'secure foundations' for our faith. This means when difficult and testing times come we know who He is and can draw on this to help us stand firm in our faith. It also will help us as we share our faith with friends and family and it will help us understand there is none like Him.

Explain to them that the characteristics they learnt about last year are what are called the incommunicable attributes which means these are attributes that only God has, they are what make Him God. We cannot be all knowing, all powerful and present everywhere at the same time nor can we save anyone. We can never be fully like Him.

Explain that there are other attributes that we can learn about God that He actually shares with us. These are called the communicable attributes and this just means these are the attributes that God has, that we as His people, can also have.

At the very beginning of the Bible in Genesis 1:26 we are told, 'Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."' Explain because God is Spirit, being made in His image does not mean that we are physically like Him. Rather part of being made in His image means that we can possess His attributes or characteristics. Ask the girls can they think of any of those attributes? God has made us with some of His qualities in us! How wonderful is that!

Ask the girls to now look up Ephesians 5:1-2 (NLT) and write it out on page 7 of their journals. Tell them you want them to focus on the start of the verse that instructs us to imitate God. What does it mean to imitate someone? Ask them to put into their own words what the word imitate means. It means to follow as a

model, to copy someone, to resemble them or to appear like them. God wants us to imitate Him. When we look at these attributes this year, they help us to know how we can imitate Him in our lives. Explain that the verse in Ephesians commands or instructs us to be imitators of God, to seek to be just like Him. When we are followers of Jesus this is not an optional extra, these are marks of being a follower of God. Ask them what they think would happen if we imitate God the way we are supposed to? Why does it matter that we imitate Him and be like Him in the way we live our lives?

Before you begin looking at the attributes this year, explain that it is important to understand that we can never possess them perfectly like God does. It is impossible to be perfect. Only God can possess all His divine qualities perfectly and He is like that all the time. Similarly with the attributes we will be learning this year, such as God is love and patient etc. He is able to possess all of these qualities perfectly and at the same time. However, for us, we need to take time learning and practising these qualities. We need to spend time studying God in His Word so we can know what He is like and imitate Him.

Remember after the icebreaker we talked about the fact that the more time we spend with someone the more we become like them? This is true of God. The more time we spend with Him and learning more about Him then this will allow us to imitate Him better.

Tell them that in order to help them on this journey, that you will study eight new attributes of God this year that will show us more of who He is but it will also help us think about how we can be like Him in our daily lives.

As you finish, pray with the girls and ask God to reveal Himself. Remind them that there is none like Him and that nothing compares with knowing Him more. Encourage them that, as they explore more of who God is, their faith will be strengthened and they will have increased confidence to talk to the people around them about their amazing God. If they commit to seeking Him they will be drawn to trust Him more deeply with their lives and live to worship Him with all their hearts.



Notes

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God is loving

Introduction

1 John 4:7-21

“Whenever I get gloomy with the state of the world, I think about the arrivals gate at Heathrow airport. General opinions starting to make out we live in a world of hatred and greed, but I don’t see that. It seems to me that love is everywhere. Often it’s not particularly dignified or newsworthy, but it’s always there - fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, husbands and wives, boyfriends, girlfriends, old friends. When the planes hit the twin towers, as far as I know none of the phone calls from people on board were messages of hate and revenge - they were all messages of love. If you look for it, I’ve got a sneaky feeling you’ll find that love actually is all around”. These are the words of Hugh Grant’s character, the Prime Minister, in the film *Love Actually*.

I hate to admit it, but Hugh Grant is right - it’s easy to get gloomy with the state of the world; you only have to watch the news for five minutes. Wars, terrorist attacks, trouble in the Middle East, poverty, politics and more. When we look at the world and the state it’s got itself into we have to ask the question, like the pop group Black-Eyed Peas, ‘Where is the Love?’

This session explores exactly where the love is and where the love should be. Hugh Grant wishes in his speech saying, “If you look for it, I’ve got a sneaky feeling you’ll find that love actually is all around” I can go one better, because I’ve got more than a sneaking suspicion that love is all around and the Bible tells us it all stems from God, who in our passage is described as ‘love’. GOD IS LOVE!

Pray that the girls, as they explore these truths, will know deeply the reality that their Father God loves them with no strings attached. Pray that as the girls consider God’s love for them that it would bring them life and life more abundantly.

As you prepare

One of the passages the girls will be reading this week is 1 John 4:7-21 which tells us that God is love. Take some time to read slowly through this passage and as you read, write down the verses that stand out to you. Which verses challenge you and how will you change your life accordingly? There is a lot to take in within the passage and so much you could talk to the girls about so as you read, pray and ask God to reveal to you what parts of the passage you should focus on with your girls as you will know them best.

Background notes

- The context of this passage, stating that God is love, is that John wants his readers to love each other. And, as people who love one another, and people who have been loved by God, he wants them to have the assurance that they do indeed ‘abide in God’ and have eternal life. But to encourage them in all that, John wants them to understand how God first loved them. John’s purpose for this letter depends on his readers’ understanding of how God’s love is most powerfully expressed.
- The same is true of us. As Christians none of us would deny that we should love each other, but to encourage us to love in the way God wants us to love, we need to understand how God first loved us. The love that we show each other depends on our understanding of how God’s love is most powerfully expressed.
- Verses 9-10 ‘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. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He has loved us and sent His Son as a propitiating sacrifice for our sins’. In both verses, God shows His love by sending His son. The question we need to ask is: To do what? Well we can pick out two things from what John says: He sent His only Son that we might live. He sent His only Son to be the propitiation for our sins (propitiation = a sacrifice that appeases God’s righteous, holy anger). John is telling us that ‘God is love’ because He went so far as to send His Son to die on the cross. The love that God demonstrated by sending Jesus was a: costly love (He gave His only Son), undeserved love (He did not wait for us to love Him first, in fact He showed us love when we were His enemies), effective love (it gives us life by paying our ransom).
- Verses 11-12 ‘Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us!’
- Mother Teresa once said, ‘Love, to be real, must cost, it must hurt, it must empty us of self’. That’s the kind of love that God calls us to demonstrate. Our love amongst each other should also be costly, undeserved and effective. It is Bible fact, that the love we demonstrate to the world and amongst fellow believers should be one of the most powerful magnets to draw others to Jesus. It is not just a cheap love that the world offers, but a love that reveals the heart of God (what a responsibility).

Icebreaker

What do you love? Give every girl a piece of paper or Post-It note, cut in the shape of a heart. Present them with a series of statements as follows, getting them to write down one answer onto their heart each time. Firstly ask them to write down a food that they love, then a TV series that they love, then a song that they love, and finally a person who they love. Then have a discussion with them about how we use the word ‘love’ in so many different context that sometimes the meaning can be lost. For example, the love they



have for pizza would be very different to the love they have for their mum.

Studying the Bible

Split the girls into small groups of five-six (preferably with an adult leader in each) and have them read 1 John 4:7-21, perhaps one verse each.

This letter would have been written at a time when many Christians would have been experiencing intense persecution for their faith. 1 John was probably one of the last letters in the Bible to have been written.

John in this letter urges us all that we must love one another because God is love (verse 8). Ask the girls what other verses stood out to them in the passage, ones that made them think?

'Being a Christian is a down-to-earth practical business' (Simon Jenkins -The Bible From Scratch). These passages are very clear, you can't say you love God if you don't love people, it simply cannot square up!!

Let's take some time to consider these questions.

1. What does this passage tell us about love?

This short passage summarises all that God's love is. Firstly it is very clear that God is love and if we are a child of His then we should be loving those around us. It goes as far as saying that if we don't know how to love then we can't know God because He is love. The passage explains to us that God showed how much He loved us by sending His Son Jesus into the world as a sacrifice, so that we could know eternal life. Jesus died on the cross paid for our sins. The passage also explains to us that when we show love we are showing those around us what God is like. This is huge! Imagine that by loving people around you, you are showing them what God is like. This passage also explains to us that when we live in God, our love grows more perfect. This means the more time we spend with Him and learning about Him, the more we will learn how to love just like Him. The passage also talks about His perfect love casting out fear which means the more we realise how much God loves us, and the more we grow in love for Him, the more we will see that we don't need to let other things make us afraid.

2. What is the difference between our love and God's love?

God's love was costly, He gave everything to display His love for us, can we say that loving people around us costs us? Would we give up what we need to love those around us? God's love was also undeserved love for all of us. He didn't wait for us to love Him first; Christ died for us when we were still sinners. Very often our love is reserved for those who deserve it, it is conditional on how we are treated or what we get out of it, yet God's love is unconditional. God loves everyone, even those who appear unlovable to the world around us, those who are different are who are difficult to love, yet very often we choose the people we love. Verses 20 and 21 are particularly challenging; they tell us that we cannot say

we love God yet hate someone who is a fellow believer, because God has commanded us to love each other.

3. What should the difference be?

If we are those who claim to know and love Jesus, we should be striving to love just like Him so there really should be no difference. Acknowledge this is difficult and obviously our love can never be completely perfect like God's love but this is something we should be aiming for.

Take a few moments to share your thoughts as a group.

Journal (Pages 8-11)

There are two hearts on page 9 of the journals. One is for the world's version of love. Encourage the girls to write words inside it like 'romantic, fleeting, conditional and soppy'. Then have another colour for what God's love is like and ask them to write words that describe it eg. immeasurable, unconditional and so on.

Ask them to complete the exercise on page 10 of their journals. They are asked, if we took these verses seriously and modelled the kind of love God demonstrated and desired, how could this make a difference in -

- how you view yourself?
- your family?
- your school?
- your communities?

4. When do you find it difficult to love people in your life?

From reading this passage what do you think God would want you to do? Encourage the girls to keep the people they are talking about anonymous so the others will not know who they are talking about. As you discuss this question, think practically about how they can love these people when they find it difficult.

If you have older, mature girls you may like to discuss the following quote from Mother Teresa with them, 'Love, to be real, must cost, it must hurt, it must empty us of self'. Ask them what they think this means. Do they think they love those around them like this?

As you conclude this week's lesson reiterate the truth that God is love and offer those girls who have not experienced God's love to know it today. Share with them your story of how you understood God's love and pray God will work in their hearts for them to receive Jesus as their Saviour today.

Creative prayer idea

Give each girl another blank heart shaped piece of paper/ Post-It note like they were given in the icebreaker activity. This time give the girls some time to listen to worship music and to use their Bibles to find verses that talk about God's love (you may need to provide some guidance on this). Ask the girls to write a few different Bible verse references on their heart





and to thank God for His great love as they do. Then encourage them to keep this heart (maybe stick it to their mirror or keep it in their school blazer) so that it can act as a reminder of God's love anytime they see it.

Notes

Internet clip

Agape - Love by the Bible Project (4:48 minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slyevQ1LW7A>

This is a short, Bible Project video on the meaning of Agape love and how to love God and love your neighbour.

Challenge for the week

Think of one way that you can show God's love to others around you this week. Remember that God's love is unconditional, so maybe encourage them to think of someone/some situation where they find it difficult to love and encourage them to be intentional in showing love regardless of their feelings.

Girls' prayer

Dear Heavenly Father thank You that You are loving and that Your love is unconditional. Thank You that You loved us so much that You sent Your Son Jesus into the world to die in our place. Help us to love those around us everyday and we pray that the way we love them would point them to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Memory Verse

'God loved the people of this world so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who has faith in Him will have eternal life and never really die'. John 3:16 (CEV)

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