



ELEMENTARY LARGE GROUP

LESSON 1

GOD'S AMAZING LOVE

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Nothing Can Separate Us from God's Love

SCRIPTURE: Romans 8; 1 John 3

GOD'S BIG STORY: Paul and John remind the early Christians that no matter what hardships they face, God loves them. As Jesus-followers, we can know that nothing can separate us from God's love.

WORD OF WONDER: The three most important things to have are faith, hope and love. But the greatest of them is love. —1 Corinthians 13:13

CURIOSITY

BELIEF

FAITH

- Welcome Question: Who's someone you love who lives far away?
- SMALL GROUP
- Interactive Game: Human Knot
- Declaring God's Wonder
- Prayer of Invitation
- God's Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Responding in Worship
- Blessing Your Kids



INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Nothing Can Separate Us from God's Love

SCRIPTURE: Romans 8; 1 John 3

WORD OF WONDER: 1 Corinthians 13:13

Have you ever considered the power in the word *nothing*? No, just me? OK, let me explain why I think the word *nothing* is powerful.

First, read Romans 8:33–39.

Paul's words in Romans 8 were meant to encourage the early Christians to stay strong in their faith. He wanted them to realize that God was with them even in the hardest of times. Paul understood the power of the word *nothing*.

Let this lesson's Wonder Truth really sink in: *Nothing Can Separate Us from God's Love*.

Nothing. Maybe you're having a week where you wish you could separate yourself from certain situations (or even people!). Yet, even those things can't separate you from God's love.

Not troubles, not hardship, not persecution or famine, nakedness, danger, or sword. *Nothing* can separate us from God's love. Replace the words in this list with things from your own life and context. Perhaps your list sounds something like this: "Not volunteer or budget shortages, not falling short on goals, not lack of recognition. *Nothing* can separate me from God's love." Read your list out loud as a declaration of faith.

Paul experienced the power of *nothing* firsthand, and my prayer for you today is that you too understand just how connected you are to the Father's love—so connected, in fact, that *nothing* can separate you from Him!

Rest in the power of the word *nothing* this week. Receive God's overwhelming, inseparable love for you, and share it with the kids you lead.

—Tom Bump

Children's Ministry Leader, Author, and Coach

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

Under the Roman Empire, many people joined clubs and voluntary associations devoted to common religious, economic, or social causes. Early Christians followed some of this pattern when they formed “assemblies” in homes. The same Greek word is often translated as *churches*.

WHAT?

Paul mentions the threat of natural disasters. Ancient Rome had a housing density beyond even the densest modern cities. Cities were plagued by food shortages, infectious diseases, fires, and building collapses. Average life expectancy was under 30.

WHERE?

Christians in the capital of Rome faced many difficulties. The emperor Claudius expelled Jews from Rome around AD 50 (see Acts 18:2), and this would have included Jewish Christians such as Priscilla and Aquila, close friends of Paul.

WHEN?

Paul wrote his letter to Rome before being brought there as a prisoner in the early AD 50s. There are a wide range of dates proposed for 1 John. The books of Romans and 1 John reflect a concern for the first generation of churches.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY

Jesus told His followers to place a radical trust in the heavenly Father's daily provision (Matthew 6:25–34). The church community endures trials together. Come what may, God sustains the church, and He will not allow it to fall to the powers of darkness (Matthew 16:18).

Large Group

Spark curiosity, encourage exploration, and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Nothing Can Separate Us from God's Love

SCRIPTURE: Romans 8; 1 John 3

WORD OF WONDER: 1 Corinthians 13:13

As kids arrive...

Around 20 minutes before service begins, display series theme loop.
Play high-energy music in the background.

LG Leader walks around the room on mic and greets kids by name as they enter the room. Be sure to move to their level and introduce yourself to any new friends. Welcome kids by name and greet them with enthusiasm. Be extra intentional about hearing and responding to what they say.

SLIDE: SERIES THEME LOOP

Welcome Question

Consider using a:30 or 2:00 Countdown to let leaders and kids know it's almost time to begin!

At Your Start Time...

SLIDE: WELCOME QUESTION

At your start time ...

At your service start time, call attention to the Welcome Question on the

screen and invite Small Group Leaders to begin: **"Who's someone you love who lives far away?"**

"Some of our family and friends live quite far from us. Even though we don't see them often, we still love them. Today, we're going to learn about how God's love is never far from us."



Leader Tip: Some kids may not have loved ones far away or may have strained family relationships. Encourage them to share about someone who loves them but doesn't live far away. And remind them that God is always near to them and loves them—He is never far away!

SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH

"Today's Wonder Truth is **NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US FROM GOD'S LOVE.**"



Small Group

While kids are in small group, consider sitting in the groups for a few minutes each. Engage and interact as is appropriate.

Countdown

After about 15 minutes of small group, give a 5 minute warning and begin the countdown.

VIDEO: COUNTDOWN

"Hey everyone! Welcome to our Large Group Worship time! My name is _____ and I'm excited to take this time to worship God, review what we just read, and talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning about God! I have a little game for us first today!

Interactive Game: Human Knot

SUPPLIES: hand sanitizer (optional)

SLIDE: HUMAN KNOT

Leader Tip: For Younger Kids. Put younger kids in smaller groups of 3–4 so that the knot is easier to untangle.



Invite all but two of the kids to form a circle. Encourage them to reach out their right hands and gently clasp hands with someone in the circle (not someone standing right next to them). Then ask them to reach out their left hands and gently grasp hands with a second person in the circle (again, not someone right next to them). Kids will now be tangled up in a giant human knot.

Encourage them to stand quietly and keep their grips loose as they try to figure out how to untangle their knot. The two kids who are not part of the circle have the task of helping to untangle the knot from outside the circle. They can see what moves need to be made and help direct the other kids to get their knot untangled. (Kids technically shouldn't unclasp hands during this activity, but they may need to for a moment to readjust hands.)

Work until the knot is untangled and you have one big circle again. Play a couple more rounds if time allows. Consider distributing hand sanitizer to all the kids at the end of the activity.

"We all had to stay connected until our big knot was untangled.

We're going to learn more today about how we are always connected to God's love.

SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH

Today's Wonder Truth is **NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US FROM GOD'S LOVE.**"



Declaring God's Wonder

SLIDE: DECLARATION

Read each line boldly and invite kids to repeat after you.

Thank You, God, that You are good! (Kids repeat.)

You made me on purpose, for a purpose. (Kids repeat.)

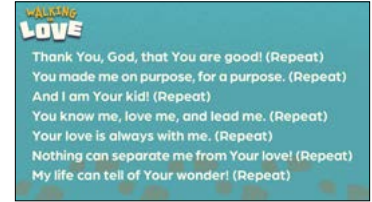
And I am Your kid! (Kids repeat.)

You know me, love me, and lead me. (Kids repeat.)

Your love is always with me. (Kids repeat.)

Nothing can separate me from Your love! (Kids repeat.)

My life can tell of Your wonder! (Kids repeat.)



Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use your own words with these as a guide if needed:

God, thank You for the chance to be together today to learn more about You. We pray that You teach us from Your Word today, and we ask the Holy Spirit to lead us to Your truth. Help us remember that nothing can separate us from Your love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Worship

****NEW SONGS!** Consider sharing some about the songs you are going to sing. What they mean, why we sing them, why they are meaningful and important to you!

"We're going to stand and sing together! One way that we show love to God is to worship through song! So stand up, sing loud, and join in the motions with us. God loves to hear us sing praises to Him! This first song is very special because you get a sneak peak at a song for Adventure Week VBS that starts next week!"

WORSHIP VIDEOS: BREAKER ROCK BEACH, PRAISE

God's Big Story

SLIDE: TITLE

Explain to them that today's story is from the books of Romans, which is in the New Testament, after the four Gospels and Acts,

"Let's start by watching part of God's big story directly from the Bible. Afterward, we'll watch and experience more of the story!"

VIDEO: GODS BIG STORY



LESSON 1 GOD'S AMAZING LOVE EXPERIENCE IT! SCRIPT

SUPPLIES: Apostle Paul costume, Bible, paper grocery bags (4), random props (4), marker (prep only), DIY time machine or streamers (optional)

Walking in Love Experience It! Script Background:

During the Walking in Love Series, the Apostle Paul takes a break from his missionary work in the first century and walks forward in time to share God's message with the kids in your church! (Join kids in suspending disbelief and welcoming this enthusiastic time traveler!) The Walking In Love Experience It! Scripts have been designed independently of each other but can also be used as a cohesive unit. If choosing to utilize more than one Experience It! Script during the Walking in Love Series, try to have the same dynamic volunteer act out the part of Paul each week. (If this isn't possible, then have the volunteers playing the part of Paul wear the same costume.) This will help keep kids engaged while creating anticipation and excitement from week to week.

- Consider one of these directions for Paul's costume: 1. First century-inspired clothing, such as a simple tunic with a rope tied around waist. 2. Silly, mismatched outfit, such as a Hawaiian shirt, hat, and scarf.
- To create the illusion that Paul has taken a walk forward in time from the first century and appeared on your ministry stage, consider creating a time machine or dressing up a doorway with streamers for Paul to enter through.
- Two closing options are written into today's Walking in Love Experience It! Script. If your church is using the Experience It! Script for more than one lesson in the series, choose Option 1 to close today's teaching. If today's teaching is the only Experience It! Script you plan to use in the Walking in Love series, select Option 2.

This Experience It! Script calls for four mystery props. Ahead of time, gather four items and place each one in a separate large, paper grocery bag. Label the bags 1–4. Some prop ideas are a football, rubber duck, noise maker, bandana, accordion spring toy, or silly wig.

At given points in the script, the person playing Paul will stop and ask kids to choose a bag. Paul will then make his best attempt to incorporate the prop into the story. The idea is to have fun and be silly. Items such as a football or rubber duck obviously have no place in the first century, but kids will enjoy watching Paul attempt to utilize them anyway.

Apostle Paul enters stage right, stumbling as if he has tumbled through time and landed in church. Paul is carrying four bags (which could be inside a backpack or a larger bag). Paul looks around and smiles with excitement to see a room full of kids who have come to hear God's Word!

PAUL: Wow! I just took a walk forward in time—all the way from first century Rome. Where am I? Pause for kids to respond. What year is it? Pause for kids to respond. I took a walk through time so we can take a walk in love together. My name is Paul. Many people call me the Apostle Paul because I'm a Jesus-follower and missionary. I did a lot of work back in the first century to help the early church get started.

(Optional script: Use if Paul is in a silly costume.) **I want to apologize for my clothes. I had no idea how I should dress here in the 21st century. How did I do? Do you think I'll blend in dressed like this? Pause for kids to respond.**

I can't get over how much life has changed since the first century! Look around the room. Consider commenting on something specific in your ministry environment that would be unknown to Paul, such

as computers, phones, lights, etc. **However, the three most important things in the entire world haven't changed at all. They are faith, hope, and love! And today I'm going to tell you why no amount of time or space can separate us from God's love.**

Unfortunately, the tools I planned on using to teach about God's love got lost while I was traveling through time. But I did pick up some fun souvenirs to take with me back to the first century. Would you like to see them? *Pause for kids to respond. Show kids the four bags, but DO NOT show kids what's inside. Place bags front and center stage. Wait! I have an idea. Let's play a game. I'm about to share with you why nothing can separate us from God's love, but every so often, I'll pause. When I do, you can pick one of these four bags, and I will use whatever is inside it to tell the story, no matter how difficult it might be. Are you ready?* *Allow kids to answer.*

OK. What bag would you like me to choose first? *Allow kids to pick from bags 1–4, and then pull the prop from the bag kids choose. Show the prop to kids. Consider asking kids to explain what the prop is and how they use it in the 21st century. Throughout the next paragraph, attempt to incorporate the first prop as many times as possible. For example, toss it from hand to hand, balance it on your head, or lean on it. Have fun, but remember, the prop should enhance the teaching and not distract from it.*

Back in the first century, where I come from, the church as we know it was just getting started. The first Christian churches didn't seem like God's rescue plan for the world. They didn't have church buildings or fancy spaces to meet. The followers of Jesus crowded into houses to share meals, pray, and sing praises to God. Men and women, poor and rich, Jews and non-Jews, slaves and free people—God had chosen them and made them a holy people, a church family set aside for His purpose. Together, they were becoming more like Jesus.

Just like Jesus faced troubles, the early Christians did too. But no matter what the world threw at them *(consider stopping here and gently tossing the prop out to kids), they knew that God loved them and was for them. If anyone didn't have enough food, other Christians shared what they had. If someone was trying to stop them from telling others about Jesus, the Christians were ready to turn to God in prayer.*

OK. This next part of the story is really important. Let's pick out another prop. *Allow kids to choose another bag. Hold up the prop for kids to see. Consider looking confused as to how to incorporate it. Tap your head as if you're thinking while looking at the object. OK, I've got it!*

I was one of the first Christian missionaries, and I wrote to Christians in the city of Rome and said *(open Bible to Romans 8:35 and continue): "Who can separate us from Christ's love? Can trouble or hard times or harm or hunger? Can nakedness or danger or war?" Can* *(insert the name of the prop you have in hand)?* *Look back at the Bible and continue from Romans 8:37. "No! In all these things we are more than winners! We owe it all to Christ, who has loved us."*

I assured the Christians in Rome that nothing we can see or touch can take away the love of God. For in sending His Son Jesus, God had already done the most loving thing anyone could imagine!

No evil forces or spiritual powers can do anything to keep us from God's love either. *Hold the Bible open to Romans 8:38: "I am absolutely sure that not even death or life can separate us from God's love. Not even angels or demons, the present or the future, or any powers can separate us."*

Whether the Jesus-followers in Rome lived or died wouldn't change God's love. Even if Satan—the evil one—pulled out every trick and tried to make God give up on His people, it wouldn't work. Now, it's

important for you to understand, I wasn't saying the people would be comfortable and untroubled; I know life in the world is full of trouble! I was saying that God's love would never change!

I wasn't the only one who believed this was true. There was a Jesus follower named John who wrote letters too; but before I tell you about him, I need another prop. *Allow kids to pick another number. Pull the prop from the bag and hold it up for kids to see.*

John wrote a message to the church about what it means to be children of God and to be loved by God. John said God's love changes people and makes them able to do the right things. *Hide the prop somewhere near the stage area with the kids watching. Return to center stage. **God's love isn't meant to be kept hidden.** Slowly return to where you hid the prop and hold it up as you continue. **It's meant to be shared with one another.** Hand the prop to one kid. Encourage kids to pass the item along until several kids have had a turn to hold it.*

Time for our final prop and the very best part of today's story. *Pull the prop out of the remaining bag. Show the prop to kids and continue the story.*

Jesus is our example for sharing love with one another. If we want to know what real love looks like, we can remember that Jesus even died to save others. Like Jesus, we can also help others and do all we can for them. John writes *(open Bible to 1 John 3:18), "Dear children, don't just talk about love. Put your love into action. Then it will truly be love." Think of it like this. I could just talk about this object.* *Hold up the prop. Describe it using words. Mention its color and shape, and explain briefly what you think it might be used for. **Or I can do something with it!** Use the prop as it's intended to be used (for example, play with it if it's a rubber duck, tie it around your neck if it's a bandana, toss it to a friend if it's a football, etc.).*

Lots of people talk about love. But showing compassion and helping one another is not just a nice thing to do. It shows that someone has God's love inside him. When we put love into action like Jesus did, others see God's love in us. Through Jesus, God has already given everything, and nothing can separate us from God's love.

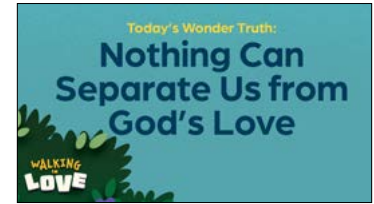
Thank you for allowing me to visit with you today. You are definitely worth walking through time to see! Isn't it incredible that over 2,000 years have passed since the first church began, and yet nothing in all this time has been able to separate us from God's love? I'm leaving now, but I plan on walking back through time to see you again next week. There's no way I can fail! Don't believe me? *Pause for kids to respond. **Come back next time to understand why failure is not an option! So long for now, friends!** Walk off stage.*

Connecting the Wonder Truth

SLIDE: WONDER TRUTH

Pose the following question to kids to help them connect the Wonder Truth to God's big story:

"Our Wonder Truth today is **NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US FROM GOD'S LOVE**. Where did you see our Wonder Truth in the story? Allow kids to answer freely.



Jesus teaches us to trust that our heavenly Father will care for our daily needs. God takes care of the birds of the air, and He will take care of us! The church community will face difficult time , but God will provide for His church. It will not fall, for nothing can separate God's people from His love!"

Responding in Worship

SLIDE: RESPONDING IN WORSHIP

Talk about ways we can respond to what we are learning with next steps such as tithing, prayer, asking questions, and worship. Encourage kids to ask their SG leaders any questions they were wondering during the lesson.

***Introduce this next song and invite kids to respond and participate in worship. There ARE motions to this video for AWWBS, kids may do the motions if they know them, or just worship and reflect.



WORSHIP VIDEO: NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES

Blessing Your Kids

Speak a blessing over your kids Use your own words, with these as a guide if necessary.

Blessing: May you feel God's great love for you this week, and may you remember to show God's love to others. Whatever might happen, know that nothing can ever separate you from God's love!