

Breathe

Module: Message of Jesus

Lesson 4: The Core Teaching of Jesus

Objectives:

Students will be able to

- identify the difference between doing something out of love and doing something because of law
- tell the reasons why Jesus focused on love over law

Materials Needed:

- Bibles
- Masking tape
- Paper (construction or cardstock)
- Paints of various colours
- Paintbrushes
- Cups for water
- Garbage bags (if desired)
- Paper towels

Pre-lesson preparation:

- Before the session begins, tape a line of masking tape down the middle of your meeting room OR if there is an obvious line in the carpet or flooring of your meeting space, use that.
- Read over the three passages in Matthew used for this lesson. Be knowledgeable about and familiar with what they say before the activity begins.
- Pre-set a creative area/station for the activity time. Set out paper, paint, brushes, and cups for water. Take appropriate precautions such as garbage bags or drop sheets to cover carpet, paper towels to clean mess, etc.

Minds On: (15 minutes)

When all the students have arrived, explain that you are going to begin with an activity. Have the students stand in single file on the masking tape or pre-existing line. Explain that you will read different statements, and the students must decide if this person in the situation is acting out of choice (love) or because they must (law). Point to the right side of the line and tell the students to step to that side if they think the answer is “love”, point to the other side of the line and say to step there if they think the answer is “law”. Read the various statements below and pause as students pick which side they are to stand on. After each statement, ask “Love or Law?” When everyone has chosen a side, tell them which side it did represent (in case there were any discrepancies), and why you feel it belongs on that side. Some students might disagree with the “right” answer. If so, pause for a moment to discuss why they disagree. If you feel they have a good reason, highlight it. If they continue to disagree, follow up with that student once the Minds On activity is finished. (Feel free to create your own as well.)

Statements:

- I did my homework so that I wouldn't get in trouble with my teacher. (LAW)
- I set the table when no one asked me to. (LOVE)
- I never skateboard at the mall, because of the signs that say no to. (LAW)
- A few of my friends started to watch a restricted movie. No one would have found out if I watched it, but I would have known. It didn't seem okay so I decided to leave. (LOVE)
- I started to read my Bible so I could learn about Jesus. (LOVE)
- I pray because I feel like I am supposed to. (LAW)
- I saw a homeless person the other day and gave her the money I was going to use for hot chocolate. (LOVE)
- My parents have been really busy, so I made lunches for my brother or sister for school. (LOVE)
- I take out the garbage because that's what I get an allowance for. (LAW)
- I try to be nice to all people, even the ones who are mean to me. (LOVE)

- I don't download pirated music off of the internet because I'm afraid to get caught. (LAW)
- I told my parents that my brother was doing something he shouldn't because I didn't want him to get hurt. (LOVE)
- I go to church every Sunday, because the bible says to keep the Sabbath holy (LAW)
- I had to choose between spending time with my sister and finishing my homework. I chose my homework. (Could be LAW or LOVE – have students comment on why this could be either!)

Once you have finished your list, walk down the line, and pair the kids 2 by 2. Still on the line, tell students to think up one example themselves. Have them share their example with the group responding as before. The pair providing the example will tell the group if they stood on the right side or the wrong side.

Action: (45 minutes)

Students will be looking at portions of the Sermon on the Mount, and what is considered the core teaching of Jesus. Walk down the line, and number each pair 1, 2 or 3 so you have 3 groups of pairs, passing one bible to each pair. Have all the 1s put up their hands, then 2s, and 3s to make sure no group was missed, and that everyone knows where they belong. Tell the students that each group number will be reading a different Bible passage, and they need to decide what part of the passage is law, and what part is love. Tell the students to wait until all the passages have been announced, then they can sit down to read and discuss it with their partner.

Prompt:

Jesus takes the teachings of the law that the Jewish people had known for years and years, and he zeros in on what is really at the core of things. Jesus challenges us to

choose love over law. He points to motives – the “why” of what we do – over the simple rule that is given.

1. Matthew 5:21-22
2. Matthew 5:38-42
3. Matthew 5:43-44

Tell the students to read their passage by alternating verses with their partner, and to discuss what part is law, and what part is love. Give them a few minutes.

Coaching Tip: Make Your Rounds

While students are reading the passages, make rounds. Help them answer the question of what is the love portion and what is the law portion. Be sure they have a clear understanding of what this means. Continue to make your rounds and encourage their painting. Note to students how love is other-centred.

Tell the students they will be creating a poster, with the left side representing the LAW portion of the passage, and the right representing the LOVE portion. Tell them to wait for your signal to “Go”, but instruct them that with their partner they will be going to the “art” station, but to leave their Bible where they were having the discussion. Tell students to divide their page in half and on one side paint their interpretation of the “law” portion of the verse, and on the other side of the page, paint their interpretation of the “love” portion of the verse. Let them know that stick figures are welcomed, and that their interpretation of what things should look like can be as creative or plain as they would like. Once you have given these instructions, ask if there are any questions, then say “Go”.

Leader’s Note:

Some students do not feel they are as creatively inclined, so make sure you make them aware that there will be no judging on artistic ability, but the focus is on the interpretation they make of the passage they are reading.

Once the students have had ample time to paint their pictures, have the students share the picture with their partner. Ask the partners to provide feedback on what they like about the interpretation. After each group has had a chance to share with their partner, ask a few of them if they would like to share their pictures with the whole group. Once sharing is done, continue by prompting: How would you describe what it means to do things out of love instead of out of law? Why is it important for us to be able to take these ideas and apply them to our lives?

You may want to remind students that the Bible does not have a firm law for every possible thing in life. We must try to understand the heart of Jesus' teachings and be able to apply that to our lives.)

As students are considering this, have them along with their partner find another set of partners to group with. Give each group another passage to look up:

- Matthew 6:1-4
- Matthew 6:5-6
- Matthew 6:16-18
- Matthew 6:19-21

Ask them to talk in their groups about how love is at the core of each verse. What is the main idea in the verse that they read? How is it linked to love over law?

Leader's Note:

If you do not have enough students to cover each passage, consider keeping your students in pairs or assigning one version to each student, or cover one passage yourself as an example to the students, and assign the remaining.

Consolidate/Debrief: (15 minutes)

Breathe In

Prompt:

Jesus' teachings highlight love over law. He challenges us all to go beyond the law and to rather act out of love. Love puts Christ first. Love puts others before us.

Read together Matthew 6:9-13. You should read it aloud or have one of your leaders read it aloud and ask students to listen to the words.

Prompt:

This is called the Lord's Prayer. It is how Jesus taught people how to pray.

Read it a second time and ask the students to join their hearts in prayer with you as you make it a prayer. Challenge students to return to this prayer on their own through the week. Discuss as a group how love is at the center of this prayer. You could open the discussion by asking the question, "How do we see God's love for us in this prayer? How do you see our love for God in this prayer?"

Breathe Out

Prompt:

Practice choosing love over law this week. Find something that acts as a prompter to remind you. For example, every time someone says, "I'm tired," consider asking them if there is anything you can do for them. Or, every time you see a _____ (you fill in the blank with your own signal), go find someone you can help. Or, when you are asked for help, do it without grumbling and complete the task to the best of your ability.