



LOW-ENERGY GAME

Father, May I?

[10 min]

Play a Version of Mother, May I?

Say: **Today we heard about a father who showed love to his son even after the son had done some wrong things. Let's play a game where you'll pretend to be the son coming home to his father.**

- You'll stand at one end of the room while everyone else gathers at the opposite end of the room.
- One at a time, kids will take turns asking you if they can take steps toward you, the "Father" from the story.
- They'll ask, "Father, may I...?" and then ask to take up to three steps. They can be *big* steps, leaps, hops, baby steps, and so on.
- In the traditional game play of Mother, May I? the "Mother" is able to respond with "yes" or "no." In this twist on the game, only say "Yes, you may" to show how the father in the story loved and welcomed his son home.
- The first person to reach you will be the new Father. You can allow new Fathers to vary their answers so your consistent "yes" in the first round will stand out as different.

Talk About It

Ask: • **What differences did you notice between all the Fathers in the game?**

Say: **Not all the Fathers said "yes" all the time. That might be more like what we'd expect from a father who could be upset with his son for doing wrong things. But the father in the story did things differently and showed only love—like in the first round when I always welcomed you to come closer.**

Ask: • **Tell about a time a parent or other family member was loving and patient with you.** Share an example of your own, such as a parent not being upset that you hadn't called in a long time and simply being happy to hear your voice on the phone.

Say: **It would have made sense for the father to show anger toward his son when he returned home, but instead the father showed love. Love is a fruit of the Spirit, and God helps us show love even when it might not make the most sense. The Spirit can help us show love instead of anger or hurt.**



TALK-ABOUT VIDEO The Lost Grape

[10 min]

Supplies

- “The Lost Grape” teaching video

Discuss and Watch “The Lost Grape”

Say: **We’re learning that love is a fruit of the Spirit. We saw how the father in the story Jesus told showed love when his son ran away and then came home.**

Ask: • **Tell about a time you knew your parents *really* loved you.** Share your own story first.

Say: **Let’s see what happens when one of our fruit-basket friends heads off on his own.**

Watch “The Lost Grape.”

Ask: • **Why did the adventures the grape went after seem exciting at first?**

• **Why weren’t the adventures as exciting as he expected?**

• **Why is being safe in God’s love better than doing our own thing?**

Say: **For the grape, the best place to be was in the fruit basket with his loving fruit family. For the son in Jesus’ story, the best place was home. Sometimes it can seem like following our own way will be more exciting, but the best thing in life is accepting God’s love! Then God will help us pass his love on, because love is a fruit of the Spirit.**



DEEPER BIBLE

How Can I Love Like God?

[15 min]

Supplies

- Bibles
- dominoes (at least 34)

Set It Up

Say: **We're learning that love is a fruit of the Spirit. You probably have a general idea of what love is. But how can we really love like God? Let's dig in to that. First, let's play a game.**

Join kids in standing in a circle. Say: **In this game, we'll pass around a high-five. When you get one, turn to the next person and pass it on.** Begin the game by high-fiving the child next to you.

When the high-five gets back to you, change it to a fist bump and pass that around. For a third round, pass around a cool handshake, such as one where you slap the backs of each other's hands, bump your fists on top of each other's, double high-five, and then shake hands.

Ask: • **How did you know what to pass on to someone else in this game?**

Say: **This experience reminds me of something in the Bible.**

Read 1 John 4:19.

Say: **Love is a fruit of the Spirit. You know what's cool about fruit? An apple tree doesn't have to try really hard to grow apples. The apples just grow! The point of this lesson is not "try harder to be more loving." The point is that as we grow in our friendship with God, love grows in our lives. And it happens because we get to know God's love for us! Let's see what else we can learn from God's love.**

Dig Deeper

Set out the dominoes. Say: **I'm going to read some verses. Every time I read the word *love*, someone will set up a domino, adding to a line. Be listening and paying attention for what these verses say love means and what it looks like.**

Read 1 John 4:7-12, 16-21. (In the NLT, these verses use the word *love* 28 times!)

Ask: • **What did you learn about what love means or looks like?**

Say: **There are some other verses that teach us what it means when we pass on God's love. Let's find out what those verses say.**

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, pausing after each sentence for kids to share a real-life example of a way they could show love based on that description and then set up a domino.

Say: **Imagine these dominoes are people. When we haven't accepted God's love, we're just standing there with no love to pass on. But watch what happens when we receive God's love.**

Push the first domino over, and watch the chain fall.

Ask: • **How do these dominoes remind you of what our verses talked about?**

Say: **Let me reread the verses that talked about how God showed us love.**

Read 1 John 4:9-10.

Say: **God loved us and sent Jesus to die for us. When we truly get how much God loves us, we can't help but pass it on! And the more we get to know God, the better we can show love. Check this out.**

Read the first sentence of 1 John 4:17.

Say: **Maybe you didn't think our chain was perfect the first time, or you have a cool idea of how to set it up differently. For example, maybe you want to make it so one domino knocks down two and splits the path. Take some time to try different methods and get the perfect domino effect.**

Allow time for kids to experiment with the dominoes.

Ask: • **What helped you get the dominoes just right?**

• **The Bible says as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. How is that different from just practicing love out of our own strength?**

Say: **Love is a fruit of the Spirit.** That's because the Bible says God is love! Every time you built a domino chain, the chain was a little different. But one thing never changed: Someone had to push over the first domino to start the chain falling. We'll never be good at loving people unless we realize one important thing: Love comes from God.

Read 1 John 4:7.

Say: **This part of the Bible was written in Greek. In Greek, there are a lot of different words for love. For example, there's *phileo* (phil-EH-oh) love, which means brotherly or friendship-type love. It's where we get the city name *Philadelphia*. There's also *eros* (EE-ros) love, which is more romantic. And there's *storge* (STORE-gay) love, which is a natural love you feel, like the way you feel about your parents.**

Ask: • **Tell about someone you love like a friend—*phileo* love.**

• **Tell about why you *storge* love your parents.**

Say: **Those kinds of love are good. But there's one word for love that's different from any of those, and it's the word that was used every time love was mentioned in the verses we read. It's called *agape* (ah-GAH-pay) love. It means unconditional love. No matter what someone does, someone with *agape* love still loves them. *Agape* is a deeper kind of love, always wanting good for the person you love, giving to that person, and prizing that person.**

And that's how the Bible describes God's love for us.

Ask: • **Describe what God's *agape* love might look like when a person passes it on.**

Say: **Agape love is a fruit of the Spirit. When we have God's Spirit living in us, he'll help us love fully, unconditionally, and with a giving heart like his.**



LIFE APPLICATION WRAP-UP From My Heart

[5 min]

Supplies

- slips of paper
- pens

Write and Pray

Say: **Love is a fruit of the Spirit. When some people are hard to love, we can pray for them and for God's love to flow out of us. We can ask God to help us see people the way he does.**

- Give each child a slip of paper and a pen.
- Have each child discreetly write the name of someone who seems undeserving of his or her love. It might be someone who is mean, annoying, or acts weird.
- Have kids fold their papers and hold them against their hearts as they pray for those people.

Wrap Up

Pray: **God, thank you for your love and that love is a fruit of the Spirit you can grow in us. Help us love like you this week. In Jesus' name, amen.**

Thank kids for coming, and encourage them to come back next week. Also encourage kids to take their slips of paper home and pray for those people all week.