

1 John 4:1-11

Get Real

Scripture: 1 John 4:1-11

Memory Verse: 1 John 4:11 "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

Lesson Focus: We will highlight John's emphasis on REAL things in this passage. First, he challenges believers to be able to detect REAL truth and then he follows that up with a challenge to practice REAL love...the same REAL love God has already shown us!

Activities and Crafts: Hearts Coloring Page, Word Search of different terms from lesson, Bring it Home Discussion for 3rd - 5th.
Activity for 1st and 2nd Graders: Heart Wall Hanger

Starter Activity: Real vs. Fake AI Photo Challenge

Consider starting off the lesson using some photo printoffs that we will provide you. These can be used to help the kids learn the importance of carefully evaluating the trustworthiness of whatever comes their way. Begin with some discussion about AI. Q: What is AI? A: Computers/machines/tools designed by humans to do things that typically require human thinking. Just like with any tool, people can use AI for good reasons or bad reasons. One common and helpful use is the Google or Apple maps app which uses AI to help your grownups get places on time! *

But there are some other areas where people are using AI for more harmful purposes. One of those is to use AI to manufacture fake images and present them as if they were real! For example, look at this real picture of pastor Doug. Imagine if someone took this picture, used AI to make him look like a clown, and then put it online to embarrass him! (Teachers: Start with those two pictures we left you and have some laughs!) *

People use AI to doctor up fake photos all the time. * Have a look at some of these other fake AI-generated photos and see if you can spot what is wrong with them! (Teachers: See the second copy of each with the suspicious details circled)

Notice that you had to look **carefully** at the photo to spot the fishy details. While it might look real at first glance, after a deeper look you could spot details that indicated they were not real! * In the same way, we're going to see in our lesson today how believers are to **carefully** evaluate spiritual things! People make all sorts of claims about spiritual things that might sound good at first glance, but after taking a deeper look they will also be found to be false and dangerous. Let's open our Bibles and take a look!

Bible Study:

1 John 4:1a: Just like we had you "test" the truth of those fake photos, John would have believers "test" the truth of spiritual claims that people make. In other words, John wants believers to be good truth detectives! (**Teachers:** We will leave you a magnifying glass in your class and consider using it throughout the lesson) *

Good detectives need a "baloney detector" to be able to distinguish truth from error! *

Q: Guess what the believer's primary "baloney detector" is? A: The Bible! All spiritual claims must pass the "test" of Scripture before they can be trusted.

1 John 4:1b: Why is this so important? Because back then and still today, people are pushing bad ideas. * A lot of these ideas even sound good at first, but after applying the "baloney detector" they will be exposed as what they are: false and dangerous!

1 John 4:2-3: Back in John's day one idea being pushed out there was that Jesus was not a real human being. Yet the Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus is fully God and fully man. * To deny this is the spirit of anti-Christ because you are denying who Jesus is! To deny this is to believe not in the REAL Jesus, but a FAKE Jesus! *

Teachers: Below is a little sampling of ideas that you might hear today, some true, some baloney. See if the kids can separate out the "baloney" from the truth. Remind them that we must "test" the idea with our baloney detectors (Scripture)! Compare the claim with what the baloney detector says:

- 1) There is no God: **Psalm 14:1: Baloney! ***
- 2) There is only one way to God: **John 14:6: True!**
- 3) Jesus is fully God: **Colossians 1:16-17: True!**
- 4) Jesus is fully Man: **Matthew 1:23: True!**
- 5) After I die, I will be reincarnated: **Hebrews 9:27: Baloney!**
- 6) Because I'm saved, now I can do whatever I want: **Romans 6:1-2: Baloney!**
- 7) Because I'm saved, even my future sins are forgiven: **Romans 8:1: True!**
- 8) I'm a Christian, now my life should be easy: **1 John 3:13: Baloney!**
- 9) We have evolved from apes: **Genesis 1:27: Baloney!**

Read Acts 17:11: These people were commended because they searched the Scriptures daily to see if what they were being taught was true. Let's do the same! *

1 John 4:4: John certainly does not want believers to be afraid. While believers must be good truth detectives, they also have the Holy Spirit living inside of them Who will protect them from falling for the baloney!

1 John 4:5-6: John reminds us that everyone is either on God's side or the world's side. Those on God's side are those who "hear" and receive the word of God as given by the apostles like John. And in so doing, they are able to sift through all of the baloney and cling to what is REAL and TRUE!

1 John 4:7-8: John now shifts his focus from detecting REAL truth back to detecting REAL love. Last week we saw how John challenged believers to practice REAL love (**see 1 John 3:18**). * Notice how this REAL love doesn't just come from God, but this REAL love is who God is at His core (as well as holy, righteous, powerful, etc.)!

We use the word "love" so freely in our day.

Q: What are some things you might say you "love"? A: Lollipops, the Broncos, swimming pools, ice cream sundaes, etc. Notice how this mostly describes how we feel about things. * John's word for love meant something much deeper back in his day. The word he used for love was "**agape**". "**Agape**" love is not just a feeling but involves a costly choice to joyfully put the needs of the one you "**agape**" love above your own needs. This is REAL love!

1 John 4:9: This REAL love is exactly what God showed when He gave us His only Son!

1 John 4:10: For this REAL love was costly! It cost God the Father His only Son to be the propitiation of our sins. *

Q: What is sin? A: Anything we think, say, or do that disobeys God. The Bible is clear that everyone of us has sinned and is guilty before God, deserving of death and hell. Our sins may be great, but God's "**agape**" love is greater! For Jesus willingly came to "propitiate" or satisfy the payment that must be paid for our sins. His costly sacrifice is what makes it possible for sinners like you and me to be forgiven and cleared of all of our guilt! Wow! What could be more loving than that? This is REAL love!

Though it must be said that this REAL love must be received for the payment to be applied. It is only those who believe and trust in Jesus who will have their sins forgiven. This entails admitting you are a sinner, turning away from it, and turning to Jesus in faith!

1 John 4:11: And as John has done so many times before in this letter he challenges believers to make it REAL. Let's revisit this verse in such a way to personalize it. "*If God so "**agape**" loved ME, I also ought to "**agape**" love others.*" Believers are to practice REAL love to others. This means believers are to do it not just when they feel like it!

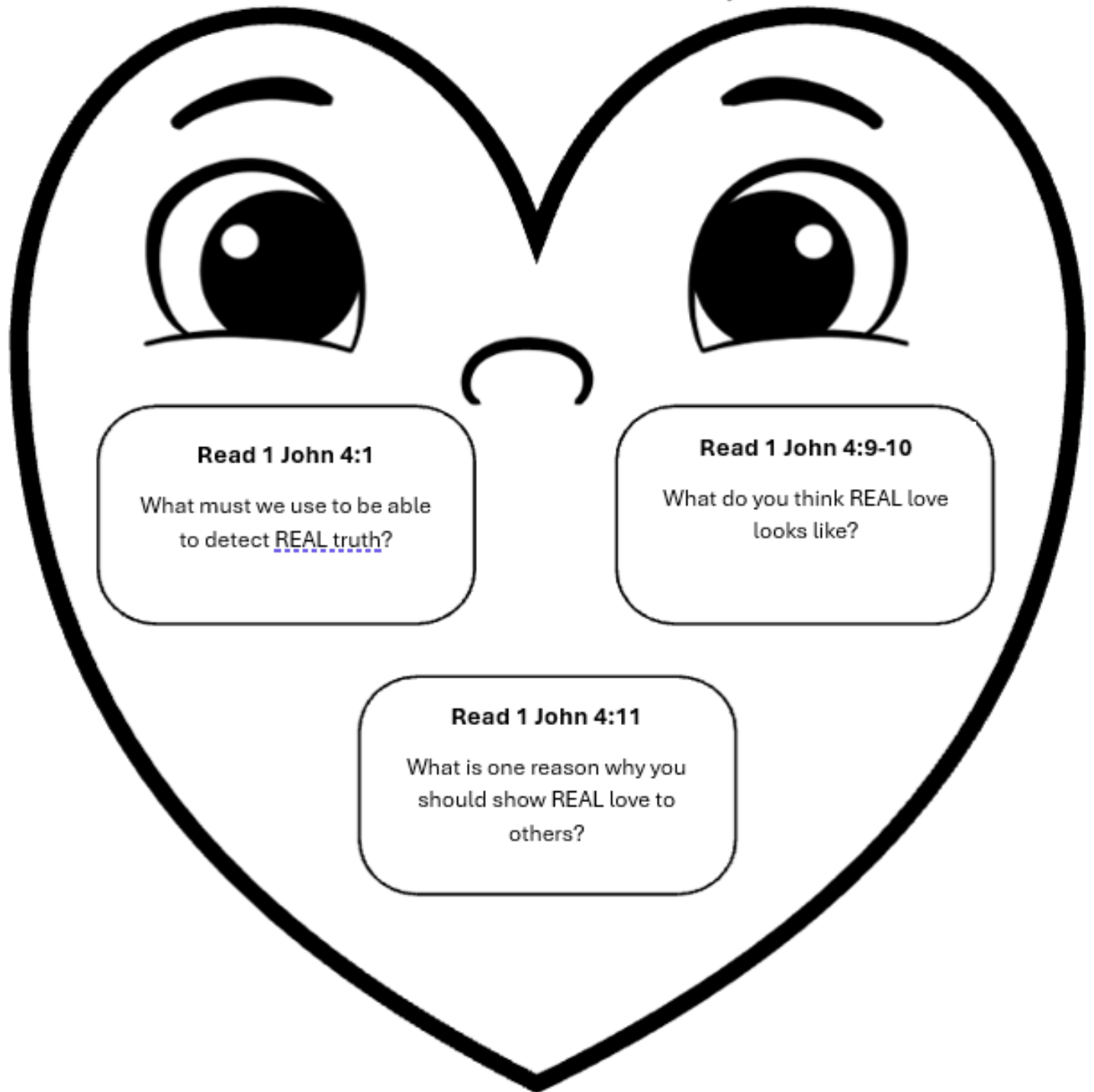
But notice how the believer is first struck by how God has first "**agape**" loved him! Only after being so astounded by the wonderful grace of God that you have freely received do you then gladly say "yes" to Jesus to REALLY love others in the same way that you have been REALLY loved.

Key Point: All throughout this passage we have seen how John wants us to "GET REAL"!

- We are to be good detectives regularly in the word of God where we will be able to detect REAL truth.
- And the REAL truth is that we are to receive God's REAL "agape" love! As **John 3:16** says, it is only those who believe who will receive eternal life. If you haven't received God's "**agape**" love and trusted in Jesus, what are you waiting for?
- And finally, as believers we are to go and practice REAL "**agape**" love to those around us. Let's GET REAL this week!

BRING IT HOME

BEHOLD what manner of **LOVE** the Father has bestowed on us,



that we should be called children of God!