

UNEQUALED

There's nobody like Him.

Lesson 3 of 4

More Than a Facebook Friend

Scope and Sequence

Doctrine: Meaningful relationships

Objective

Students will recognize the reality of God's love and be encouraged to respond with love for others.

Memory Verse

1 John 4:10-11
What motivates our love for others?

Worth Repeating: Real relationships require rare sacrifice.

HOOK: In a world filled with “fake” friends a true, loving friend is hard to find.

You may have a million friends on Facebook, but how many friends do you have that will be there for you, understand you, and want you to succeed? It's hard to translate real love through a computer screen. What we really want is real genuine love. That's the heart of all true friendships and great relationships. We all want friendships and loving relationships, but what we really desire is to be truly loved.

LESSON CONTENT: God's definition of love

- I. God's Love for Us (vv. 9-10)
 - A. God's love gives all He has for us (v.9).
 - i. Love means giving (v.9a).
 - ii. Love requires “rare” sacrifice (v. 9b)
 - B. God's love continues when we are at our worst (v.10).
- II. Our Love for Others (v. 11)

CONNECTION: Real love can transform our relationships.

1. God must always be our most important relationship.
2. Learn what rare sacrifice means.
3. Real relationships require rare sacrifice.

DECISION: Think about what rare sacrifice means in your life.

So where do you begin? It's simple, think about what rare sacrifice means in your life. Choose someone, a friend, a loved one, or even a stranger and

sacrifice for them in a rare way. Something you can do this week is all the chores around the house without being asked by your parents. You know what they are because you are used to your parents nagging at you to get them done. Instead, show them your love. That's a rare sacrifice of your time and will definitely show them your love. Are ready?!

Definitions

Love: A purposeful act of selfless giving for the good of others.

Propitiation: The turning away of God's wrath toward sinful man made possible by Christ's death on the cross.

Checklist

- Video screen or projector to show the YouTube video
- A bag of M&Ms and two cups
- A PowerPoint presentation is included for this lesson.
- Video: <https://teachersource.wol.org/videos/SBS17/17-1/>

Resources

The New American Commentary 1, 2, 3 *John* (Vol. 38, p. 176). Akin, D. L. (2001).

Additional Teacher Resources

Even Me – I am They

Your Love is Loud – Luminare

3:18 minute video "Never Too Far Gone" by Jordan Feliz

<https://teachersource.wol.org/videos/SBS17/17-2/>

Hook: In a world filled with "fake" friends a true, loving friend is hard to find.

Teacher's Note

Start the lesson by playing the following video:

<https://teachersource.wol.org/videos/SBS17/17-1/>. *The video highlights the fact that even though we have more social media in the world we are less social and feel more alone. You can stop the video at the three minute mark.*

We live in a world filled with Facebook friends, unseen followers, pokes, and likes. Even though we are more connected, does it ever feel like we are more disconnected? Do you ever feel with all this social media we have really become less social? People go out to eat to spend time together, then spend the entire time looking at their phone or watching a movie on their tablet. Often, we don't even have real conversations anymore; we just send each other 140-character messages to communicate.

You may have a million friends on Facebook, but how many friends do you have that will be there for you, understand you, and want you to succeed? It's hard to translate real love through a computer screen. What we really want is real genuine love. That's the heart of all true friendships and great relationships. We all want friendships and loving relationships, but what we really desire is to be truly loved.

We're going to look at God's love and how He loves us. We will see what our friendships and relationships will look like when we love the way God loves. The problem is there are many kinds of fake or shallow love in the world. There are several wrong ways the world tells us to love, causing us to lack true friendships and relationships.

The world says that relationships are all about emotions. It's touchy feely; you have to "connect" and "be on the same page." But what happens when you don't *feel* like being someone's friend? What happens when the excitement of a new relationship wears off, or it's not *fun* being a friend? The friendship or relationship crashes and burns. You just want to move on to the next thing that feels good. How often do you "friend" and "unfriend" people on Facebook? So many times, it just takes one comment or problem and it's over.

Sometimes you hear that relationships should be 50-50, give-and-take. If you do your part, then I will do my part. Everything needs to be fair and equitable for this to be a good friendship. All that causes us to do is to constantly measure performances. Are they keeping their end of the bargain? If not, then I'm going to hold it against you.

One other way the world tells us to love is through duty or obligation. You should just buckle down and *make* yourself love other people because you think you owe them. You should *make* yourself be a good friend. If we are all honest, we know that we don't want that kind of friend. We don't want a relationship with a person that is just forcing themselves to have a relationship with us. It just doesn't work!

In the midst of all this fake love, fake friendships, and hurtful relationships we can see how God loves. God's love teaches us this powerful truth: real relationships require rare sacrifice. You see, God wants to have a real relationship with you, so He sacrificed His Son for you. That is what real relationships are based on – rare sacrifice. Let's look at God's Word in 1 John 4:9-11.

Lesson Content: God's definition of love

Teacher's Note

Read 1 John 4:9-11 out loud before continuing.

First we see:

- I. God's Love for **Us** (vv. 9-10)
Our plan is to study how God loves us. As we study 1 John 4:9-11 let's start by trying to understand God's definition of love. Notice what it says in the first part of verse 9, "In this the love of God was manifested toward us..." That means this is how God showed His love for us. As we study God's love for real relationships we need to take note of the next part of verse 9:
 - A. God's love **gives** all He has for us (v. 9).
 - i. Love means **giving** (v. 9a).
Notice the middle of verse 9, "God has sent." That is a phrase that means simply, God gave to us. As we study God's love we learn one important thing: love is about giving. When we talked about the fake kinds of love before did you notice how all of them were about taking?

If it's all about emotion, then love is all about how other people make me feel. If it's a give-and-take, then the relationship is all about what you can give to me, and it better equal what I am giving to you. If love is a duty, then it's all about how good I can look by loving you. All of those things are selfish, and are about taking from other people. God says true love,

the kind of love that leads to real relationships, is about GIVING! And giving that demonstrates love is sacrificial.

ii. Love requires “rare” **sacrifice** (v. 9b).

John uses specific words to describe to us the level of sacrifice the Father made to show you and me how much He loves us. He describes Jesus as the “only begotten Son” or “one and only Son” of the Father. Jesus is in a class of His own; He is the “unique one” in that His relationship to the Father is a one-of-a-kind relationship.

Jesus is so very special to the Father, yet the Father was willing to send Him to earth to die so that you and I may live. Think of your closest relationship, one relationship that you would never give up. The Father’s relationship with the Son is infinitely deeper and fuller than anything we could imagine. His love for the Son is so deep and extravagant, yet He was willing to allow the Son to suffer so that you and I might be forgiven!

When we say, real relationships require rare sacrifice we can see that sacrifice in God’s love. He gave up the most valuable thing He had, and the most valuable thing there could ever be. That is what rare sacrifice means: being willing to give up the most important thing in your life for another.

B. **God’s love continues when we are at our worst (v. 10).**

We see that real love the way God defines it means giving everything I have to another person no matter how I feel or what they have done to deserve it. That is how God loves us.

Teacher’s Note

Call on a student to read 1 John 4:10. Give them time to finish before continuing below.

Notice this phrase that John uses, “In this is love...” John is again drawing our attention to something important about God’s love. What does he say immediately following? He says, “not that we loved God...” In other words God sacrificed for us the most important thing He had when we were at war with Him. John uses the word “propitiation” here, which *means the turning away of God’s wrath toward sinful man made possible by Christ’s death on the cross.*

Let’s look at one other passage that shows or demonstrates God’s love for us.

Teacher’s Note

Have a student read Romans 5:8.

Will someone read Romans 5:8?

In this passage we see this phrase, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us...” In other words, this is how God shows His love for us. This time it says, “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” God didn’t sacrifice for us when things were going well; He did it when we were at our **worst**.

Christian singer Jordan Feliz captures this idea in his song, “Never Too Far Gone.” Listen to the lyrics and remind yourself of how much God loves you, even at your worst.

Teacher's Note

Show the 3:18 minute video "Never Too Far Gone" by Jordan Feliz
<https://teachersource.wol.org/videos/SBS17/17-2/>

In spite of that moment, even when you were at your worst doing the most terrible thing you've ever done, Jesus died for you. Even when you were at your worst, God loved you and gave Jesus for you.

God's rare sacrifice happened when we were at our worst. When we were enemies of God (Romans 5:10), when we were sinning against Him and didn't care about Him. It was in that moment that God loved us and gave Jesus for us.

All of this can help us define what true love really is. Love is *giving everything I have to another person no matter how I feel about it and even if they don't deserve it.*

II. Our Love for Others (v. 11)

In verse 11 John states why he spent so much time explaining God's love. He did it because God's love is our blueprint for loving others. Let's read verse 11 one more time.

Teacher's Note

Read 1 John 4:11.

There's a word in here that seems sort of strange given our discussion. It's the word "ought." We generally think of the word "ought" as a negative thing. As in, "I guess I should because I'm supposed to." But that's almost exactly the opposite of what John means here.

The clue is the first part of the verse where it says, "if God so loved us..." We just spent a ton of time talking about how God loves us. Did you notice as we looked at how God loves us that there was nothing in there about God forcing Himself to love us? God doesn't say, "Well, I guess I have to love these people since I created them." He doesn't say, "I guess I ought to love them because I'm God." God loves us because He *is* love. 1 John 4:8 says, "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

When John says, "We also ought to love one another," He is saying that God's love **compels** us to love others. When you meditate on and embrace the truth of how He loves you, you can't help but love others the same way.

But it also means something else as well. Because God *is* love, our love for others is simply an extension of His love for others. We can only love people when God loves them through us.

Teacher's Note

Call several students to the front for this illustration. Give each student a cup of M&M's. Explain that the M&M's represent love. Have them give M&M's to others, but it empties their cup. Then bring a huge bag of M&M's and dump tons of them into one of the student's cups. With their cup full they can freely give M&M's (or love) to others. To make your point stronger you can dump a huge amount into the cup to show how God's love overflows in our lives, filling us up and empowering us to love others as He loves us.

To help you understand how God loves us I need some volunteers to help me with an illustration. I need three helpers. Each of you gets a cup that represents your life. You each get some M&M's in your cup that represent love in your life. Now the goal here is to share your M&M's (or love) with the others. Go ahead and share your M&M's with the others. What happens after a while?

Teacher's Note

Allow students to answer. (They will run out; you may even start to hoard them.)

You will eventually run out! You'll eat your M&M's or someone else's, but the amount starts to run out. Now what if I come along with this huge bag of M&M's and dump a gigantic amount into one of the cups?

Teacher's Note

At this point choose one student and fill their cup to the top with M&M's, allow the students to tell you what will happen. (That person has a lot more M&M's to share with everyone.)

The person with all the M&M's has plenty to share with everyone. What happens if I just keep dumping M&M's in their cup?

Teacher's Note

Choose that same student and dump a huge amount of M&M's into their cup until it overflows and falls on the floor. The point is to make it a bit shocking with M&M's falling everywhere. This shows how God's love overflows in our lives. You can even take some time to draw attention to the fact that the M&M's fly everywhere. Just as God's love spreads farther than we expect when it starts to overflow in our lives.

When you have an infinite supply of M&M's you will *never* hesitate to share with others. You will never be stingy because you know there is always more pouring into your cup to share with others.

It's the same in our lives with God's love. If we have the love of God pouring into our lives, we have plenty of love to give others. When you realize how much God has loved you, you can't help but love others with the same kind of giving and sacrifice that God gave. In fact, it doesn't even *feel* like a sacrifice because you have so much love in your own life from God that you can love others completely and fully without hesitation.

That is the kind of love that leads to real, long-lasting relationships with people and with God. That is why real relationships require rare sacrifice. Earlier when we discussed how much God sacrificed for us, did you panic a little bit? Did you think, "I could never give up everything for someone else"? Well the truth is you can't, unless God's love is being poured into you completely. When you receive complete love and acceptance from God it becomes truly easy to love others because you have so much love pouring into your life from God that you always have plenty to share with others!

Why don't we experience this? Could it be that we view our relationship with God through the lens of our human relationships? Instead of letting God's love for us be the rule and example, we look at our broken relationships, our insecurities, and our let downs. Here God is pouring out abundance, but we don't fully trust Him. We expect Him to let us down. We expect Him to leave us. We assume we have to perform to be loved. We view His love through the lens of humanity.

Connection: Real love can transform our relationships.

I want to spend some time talking about how real love can transform our relationships. Do you want more than just “social media” where you stare at screens, send short texts, and count Facebook friends? If we’re going to get beyond these kinds of friendships, we need to remember three final things.

1. God must always be our most **important** relationship.

We all want and truly need deep, close, and loving relationships with other people. But no matter how much love you get from other people it will *never* be enough.

Other people will fail you; there will be times they betray you and turn their back on you. There will be times when you need their love and they aren’t there for you. But that NEVER happens with God. He is always there for you. He will always love you, and He will love you no matter what you have done or what you do!

The most real relationship in your life must always be with the One Who gave you the rarest sacrifice, God! Always be ready and willing to give God everything you have to build your relationship with Him. The beautiful thing about God is you can’t outdo Him! You can’t sacrifice more than He has already given. You can’t love Him more than He loves you. You can’t do more for Him than He has done for you. The more you build your relationship with God the more of His love you will feel in your life. His love becomes the foundation for all the other relationships in your life.

2. Learn what rare **sacrifice** means.

Second, learn what *rare sacrifice* really means. If real relationships require rare sacrifice, then learning how to sacrifice in a rare way is the key. Challenge yourself to think about what you can sacrifice to love others.

Can you sacrifice your time? Instead of heading upstairs after dinner, sacrifice some of your time to clean up the dishes for your family. Instead of sleeping in and browsing Facebook on a Saturday morning, is there someone at your church who could use some help cleaning their yard? That’s rare sacrifice because most people won’t sacrifice their time to truly love another.

Can you give up some of your money? Here is a true story where two girls wanted to pay for their friends to go to an evangelistic event. They saved up their birthday money, they did odd jobs, and collected every penny they could with the goal of providing a way for their friends to make it to a fun event where they could hear the Gospel. After the event was over, they found out that all their friends had trusted Jesus. That is a rare sacrifice! How many people do you know who would give up their birthday money so someone else can hear the Gospel?

Can you sacrifice your energy? It's hard to love others. Can you stick with it when others are being mean? Can you keep loving them even when they don't show love to you? Would you be willing to be embarrassed to show love for someone else? That is a rare sacrifice for sure! Maybe you have a friend who is high maintenance. If you're honest with yourself, they are constantly just taking from you. It takes *energy* to keep loving them. Another example is to go up to a visitor at church and start a conversation. It takes energy because you have to put yourself out there. All of these things require energy and sacrifice and they all show true love.

3. Real relationships require **rare** sacrifice.

The third and most important lesson is that real relationships require rare sacrifice. When you become a person who is willing to truly love others and sacrifice for others, you *will* have real relationships. That's the payoff!

Maybe you've been sitting here thinking, "I feel lonely," or "I wish I had real friends who would stick by me no matter what." When you become a person willing and ready to sacrifice for others, real friendships will **find** you. You won't have to seek out real relationships anymore; they will come to you.

Develop a reputation for being a person who really knows how to love others. How do you do that? You do that by "rare sacrifice." That means there aren't a ton of people doing it. If you want to stand out from the crowd start sacrificing in a rare way. Start putting yourself on the line for others even when they don't deserve it. If you become one of those people, others will value that and seek you out.

Decision: Think about what rare sacrifice means in your life.

So where do you begin? It's simple, think about what rare sacrifice means in your life. Choose someone, a friend, a loved one, or even a stranger and sacrifice for them in a rare way. Something you can do this week is all the chores around the house without being asked by your parents. You know what they are because you are used to your parents nagging at you to get them done. Instead, show them your love. That's a rare sacrifice of your time and will definitely show them your love. Are ready?