HOW TO LOVE GOD

Lesson 3: Love With All Your Strength
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Unit Summary
When Jesus was asked to identify God’s greatest commandment, He answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). But what does this truly mean? What does it look like? Too often we give children “pie-in-the-sky” platitudes but without supplying practical steps they can apply in everyday life. This unit will help your children know what it means to love God with actions—not just words. Your kids will discover how to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. They will also learn that loving God involves loving other people, too.

Lesson Summary
The Christian life is not easy. It requires determination and effort. While we are forgiven and renewed, we are not instantly made new. God asks us to give Him our strength, and this refers to physical, emotional, and spiritual strength. It means to give God our all. The good news is, God promises to reward us if we work hard and do not give up! He also promises that we are not on our own, that He will give us His strength as we seek to follow Him! So our walk with God is a partnership between our effort and His empowering. We give our all, and God makes up the difference. It is in our weakness that we become strong because of Him!

Paul’s Power Principle: Love God by giving Him your all!

In this lesson, your children will...

KNOW
• The strength and energy inside their bodies comes from God

FEEL
• Thankful that God will answer their prayers for strength to obey Him

DO
• Make a list of selfless things they do this week to serve others
Welcome!—Exercise
Set up some kind of exercise activity for the kids to have fun with as they arrive. Be sure to have a leader supervise the activity and be safe. One idea could be to have a pull-up bar and see how long kids can hang in a pull-up position before they need to come back down. You could have jump ropes and see how many jumps they can make; note those who make “records” to announce at the beginning of the service. You can also do sit-ups or push-ups to keep things simple. The point is to introduce some physical activity and friendly competition as they arrive to fit in with the lesson. (Have leaders and volunteers wear athletic headbands this week to go with the theme of the lesson.)

Let’s Meet-n-Greet!
Take two minutes and have the children turn and greet the person next to them on each side and learn their names if they don’t already know them. Next, tell everyone to choose a partner. Tell them you are going to do an “Air Arm Wrestle.” It’s the same as arm wrestling, but instead of a table, they grab left hands in a firm handshake to form a “table” and arm wrestle with their right hands. Do a countdown and let them arm wrestle. (Then alternate hands and repeat.)

Leaders, be sure to stop whatever you are doing to move through the audience and greet the children, especially those you do not recognize. Announce any birthdays for the week. (See the How to Use DiscipleTown guide for quick and easy ways to acknowledge visitors and birthdays.)
Let's Worship!
In your time of worship, be sure to demonstrate through both your song selection and how those up front conduct themselves that the worship time is a time for expressing love to God. Consider asking the kids to even take turns each week calling out, “I love God because ...” and completing the sentence.

**Recommended Song:** 2 Peter 1:5-7 or 1 Corinthians 16:13 from Complete Library of Songs by Kathy Vincent, “The Scripture Lady,” available at Kidology.org/ScriptureLady.

Puppet Intro
Leader & puppet introduce today’s lesson. You will find a scripted version of this intro at the end of the lesson.

Puppet comes out dressed like he is going to the gym. He has a short-sleeved shirt on, a water bottle with some green gooey health drink inside, an iPod, and a printout of exercises he downloaded off the Internet. When the leader asks what he is doing, he explains that he joined a gym because he wants to “go all out” for God and give “all his strength” to God. Leader explains that it isn’t about working out; it is about giving 100 percent of our effort to live for God when it gets tough to do the right thing. Leader says that it isn’t always easy to do the right thing, but if we will work hard at it, God will reward us. Puppet says, “So what you are saying is, NO PAIN, NO GAIN? I got it!”

Let’s Play!—Would You Rather

*Would You Rather* is a fun interactive game that involves the entire audience as well as some volunteers on stage. A child is invited up as a volunteer. You may use one volunteer for the entire game, or choose a new one for each question. He or she is presented with a choice that has two equally compelling answers, but the person must choose one of them. The leader reads both choices and offers two index cards with the answers. The volunteer takes the card that represents his or her choice. The child should not reveal in any way which was chosen. The leader reads the choices again to the audience members, who move to one side of the room or the other based on the choices. Label one wall “Choice A” and the other wall “Choice B.”

**Note:** The audience members do not answer the question; they try to guess which answer the volunteer chose. Everyone should keep track of how many times they guessed correctly.

Below are suggested questions. You can make up your own (there are many “would you rather” websites you may reference), but keep the questions somewhat related to the topic of strength.

1) Would you rather have...
A. super strength or
B. the ability to fly?

2) Would you rather be...
A. the president or
B. a movie star?

3) Would you rather grow...
A. a tail or
B. a horn?

4) Would you rather...
A. crawl everywhere or
B. hop everywhere?

**The point:** Sometimes it takes a lot of strength to do the right thing, but if we love God, we will!
Connect with Your Kids
Can you think of a time when it was hard to do the right thing? What did it mean to obey God or follow God even when you wanted to do something else, or when it would have been easier to go about things differently? What was the result? Once again, bring the lesson into reality by telling the kids how you love God with all your strength and the difference it has made in your life. Perhaps it is your daily devotional life, some other spiritual discipline you are working on, or another aspect of your life that took hard work or determination to do the right thing. But because you chose to love God with all your strength, you saw that God worked all things together for good because you loved Him (Romans 8:28). When we share these real-life stories with our students, it gives them more confidence to trust God themselves when they face a time when strength will be needed.

DiscipleTown Visitor
Character: Personal Trainer Ike Andoit loves to help people exercise their bodies and stay fit and healthy. He’s here to encourage people to love God by looking after their “temples.”

Props/Costume: Ike should arrive in full-on workout gear complete with sweatband, towel around his neck, running shoes, shorts, tank top, knee-high socks, and a water bottle. Have some upbeat worship song clips to work out to (about 5 or 6 minutes’ worth).

Note: If possible, allow this skit to happen in an area where the kids can jump and do the exercises.

[Ike arrives very energetically and all hyped up. He is clearly an athletics enthusiast who believes that exercise is worship and that when we exercise our muscles we are giving our 100 percent to God.]

Ike Andoit: [Jogs in place.] Good morning, ladies and gentlemen! Today is a very special day because today we are going to love God with all our strength. Are you ready? [Allow kids to respond.]

Ike: Well, answer me this: If you owned a water slide and wanted people to enjoy it every summer, would you want them to go down with just “some effort,” which most people think of as “just enough,” [Models trying to keep his balance, but being relatively timid and unenthusiastic.] or ALL their strength? [Models using his arms to go faster, screaming with his arms up, and having a great time.]

Leader: Wait a minute, what do you mean we are going to love God with all our strength? Doesn’t that verse simply mean to give God your best effort?

Ike: Well, answer me this: If you owned a water slide and wanted people to enjoy it every summer, would you want them to go down with just “some effort,” which most people think of as “just enough,” [Models trying to keep his balance, but being relatively timid and unenthusiastic.] or ALL their strength? [Models using his arms to go faster, screaming with his arms up, and having a great time.]

Leader: Well, I guess they would have more fun if they used all their strength.

Ike: You betcha! And as the owner, you would believe that they LOVED that slide, right?

Leader: Yeah, I guess so, but how does that work with loving God? It’s not like He gave us a water slide!

Ike: As cool as that would be, He actually gave us something better! He gave us the most sophisticated machine to live in that you could possibly imagine! These bodies of ours can perform amazing things. They process food, they have an internal cooling system—that’s the real reason we sweat, so I hope you brought your deodorant today!—they can climb, they can swim, they can run, they can float, they can roll, they can jump, and they can twirl. That is ten times better than a slide!

Leader: Wow, I never thought of it that way before!
Ike: Yup, in fact, God gave us these bodies, not only to be able to do all of those cool things, but He gave us these bodies so that if we take care of it, we can live a long healthy life, living and working with God in this amazing world He created! It's a remarkable gift God has given us. So today we are going to worship God by exercising!

Leader: Wait a minute, isn't worship like singing?

Ike: Worship can be many things, but worship celebrates God and the things He has given us. If you were God and you gave your kids these cool machines to live in, and they sat on a couch or sang songs to you while just standing there, would you feel like they were loving the body you gave them? Would you feel they were passionate about expressing their love to you?

Leader: Well, now that you mention it, no! My friend gives me a big hug whenever I see her. And kids sometimes run to greet me, and sometimes they are so happy to be here they jump and twirl and spin all around. [Use specific examples from your kids if possible.] I guess if I am truly passionate, I'm going to express it through my body language.

Ike: You guessed it; so we are going to worship God with all our strength! Are you ready? Hit it! [Start music.]

[Have Ike lead the kids in pogo dancing, jumping jacks, clapping, and other dance moves to an upbeat worship song. Have him encourage the kids to show God how much they love Him and want to celebrate Him by moving their bodies. After a few minutes of exercise, wind down with some stretches in worship postures: kneeling, hands raised, etc. Encourage them to think about God in these moments and to tell Him thank You for the ability to love and worship Him with all their strength.]

Leader: Wow, it feels so great to just be excited about God!

Ike: Yup, that's why the Bible encourages us to love God with all our strength. God loves it when we enjoy Him and enjoy the things He has given us. Using all our strength shows we love God. So next time, don't worry—you can jump and dance and celebrate God with your whole body.

Leader: Can we grownups do that, too?

Ike: Of course! In fact, it's one of those things we often forget when we grow up! Go ahead, dance and have fun in God's presence. He loves it.

Leader: Okay, I'm gonna try! Thanks, Ike!

Ike: No problem. I'm off for a run now. See ya, kids! [Exits.]

Leader: Wow, I think we are going to have to add more actions and dancing into our lives. I can love God with all my strength by worshiping him passionately and by taking care of this amazing machine He gave me to live in.
Let’s Search!—Bible Dash

**Supplies:** Bibles

Ask all kids with Bibles to participate, or invite a few volunteers to come to the front. As children hold Bibles closed with hands on covers, state the Bible reference twice, then on the command “SEARCH!” have the students race to locate the verse. Once they have a finger on the verse, they can stand and call out, “FOUND IT!” Have the first child read the verse aloud while you project the verse on a screen via PowerPoint. See suggestions below for comments on each verse. Keep your comments brief and to the point of the lesson.

- **Deuteronomy 6:5**
  - Love God with all your strength.
- **Psalm 73:25–26**
  - God is my strength.
- **Psalm 18:1–3**
  - I will love the Lord my strength.
- **1 Corinthians 10:31**
  - Whatever you do, do it for God’s glory.
- **2 Corinthians 5:10**
  - We will give account for what we do.
- **Romans 12:1**
  - Present your body as a living sacrifice.
- **Mark 12:33**
  - Love is more important than sacrifice.

**Paul’s Power Principle:** Love God by giving Him your **all**!

**Suggested Bible Narrative**

1 Samuel 17:31-50—David Defeats Goliath

David loved the Lord so much that he was willing to face a gigantic warrior—and David was just a boy! He readily gave his entire body to God’s cause, and he trusted the Lord to help him. David was not strong in the muscle-body sense, but he still loved God with all his strength. God rewarded that love and gave David the victory.

**Let’s Learn!—Love with All Your Strength**

**Opening Joke:** A man once told me the secret to getting really strong. You start out with a 5-pound potato sack in each hand and hold them out, arms fully extended from your sides, until you can do that for a full minute. Once you can do that, you move up to 10-pound potato sacks. Once you can hold them out, arms fully extended for a full minute, move up to 20-pound potato sacks. Continue this process, moving up to 50-pound potato sacks and then finally to 100-pound potato sacks! Once you can hold a 100-pound potato sack in each hand fully extended for a full minute...you start putting potatoes in the sacks!

Read Mark 12:30. **Today we are going to talk about what it means to love God with all your strength.**

**Spiritual vs. Nonspiritual**

Ask the kids to share what they do during the week—as randomly as possible (for example, homework, prayer, eating, playing, games, Bible reading, and so on). As the kids suggest activi-
ties they do each week, write them on notecards or slips of paper. Show two bags, one labeled “Spiritual” and the other one “Nonspiritual,” and ask the kids which bag they think the activity goes in.

After doing this for a while and collecting ten to twenty activities, ask a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 10:31. Ask the kids what they think it means to “do everything for the glory of God.” (Allow responses. Accept all answers no matter what the kids may suggest. If they are way off target, you can respond, “great guess.”)

**Whatever we do, we should do it for the Lord. It doesn’t matter whether it is something “spiritual” or not. In God’s eyes, everything is “spiritual.”** Take all the notecards or slips of paper from the “Nonspiritual” bag and pour them into the “Spiritual” bag, and explain that EVERYTHING is spiritual. We should “give our all” in everything.

**Game: Cookie Stack!**

**Supplies:** several packages of Oreo or other flat cookies, flat plates, table, tablecloth, zippered plastic bags

Choose several kids from the audience to come up on stage. Place all the cookies out so that they can be accessed by the volunteers. Give each child who is playing a plate. Instruct them to try and stack the highest stack of cookies possible. The stacks will fall, but give them several minutes to compete. Encourage them not to give up, but to keep on trying. Point out that if they give up, they won’t win. Let them know that they will get to keep the cookies that they stack! (Try not to stop when a child has a collapsed tower.) When time is up, give them a zippered plastic bag to put their cookies into.

Read Galatians 6:9.

**Object Lesson: Super Strong Kindergartner!**

**Supplies:** plastic cup you don’t mind damaging, a clipboard or board about the same size, and a cloth that will completely cover both the clipboard and cup set in the center. You also will need a pitcher filled with water and another filled with air.

Beforehand, cut a hole in the plastic cup on the side near the bottom that is just large enough for your thumb to fit inside. The audience CANNOT be allowed to see this hole. It must also be small enough to cover with the thumb.

Show the cup with your thumb over the hole. Pour some water into the cup and pour it back out to show that the cup is “normal.” Next get out a clipboard or thin hardcover book or small board. After shaking out all the water, lift the second pitcher and say it is filled with “heavy air” and pretend that it is heavy! Set the cup onto the clipboard or book and “pour” some “heavy air” into the cup, letting the board or book move down to show how heavy it is. Next, take your cloth and cover the cup; while you’re doing this, slide your thumb into the hole so that you have your thumb in the cup on top of the board or book and your fingers underneath. In this way, you can anchor the cup to the board very tightly. To the audience, it simply looks like the cup is covered and you are just holding the board or book from underneath because they are assuming there is no way to hold the solid cup with one hand and hold the board.

Walk around the audience, inviting kids to try and lift the cup by grabbing it from the top and trying to lift it off the board or book without removing the cloth from the cup. They will not be able to do so because your thumb will be securely holding it to the board. The “heavy air” has made it impossible! After letting eight to ten kids try, choose the smallest child in the room. Tell the child to ask Jesus to give him or her the strength to do it; while the child is “praying,” slide your thumb out of the hole. Tell the child not to pull hard; just lift the cup, and it will lift easily. Be sure to take the cup quickly so you can uncover the cup, cover the hole with your thumb again, and show the cup. If you want to pour water in again and drink from the cup to throw off
Any suspicions about the cup, that is a great way to end.

Read Philippians 4:13. Talk about how we can try to use our own strength to be victorious in the Christian life, and how we should always give our all. But to be truly victorious, we need to ask Jesus to give us strength! And He will enable us to do what otherwise might be impossible to do on our own!

**Dee’s Disciple Tip:** GATHER MORE!

If you want to grow in your strength, use the gift of the Church that God has given us. Just like getting together with your friends, when you gather at church with others who love God, your spiritual strength will grow. How often do you go to church?

**KeyVerse**

**Topic:** The Greatest Commandment  
**Reference:** Mark 12:30–31

Encourage the children to memorize this verse. Work on it each week. This week, focus on the third phrase: “and with all your strength.”

Use the following hand motions to learn the verse. Review the motions from last week and add the motion for “and with all your mind.”

- **Love:** cross arms over chest
- **the Lord:** form an “L” with your thumb and finger; start on your left shoulder and then move the “L” down to your right side, forming a royal banner
- **your God:** point up to the sky
- **with all your heart:** point with both index fingers to your heart; then moving in opposite directions, draw a giant heart on the front of your body, ending with fingers together again at the waist
- **and with all your soul:** interlock thumbs with fingers open and lift hands up waving fingers to make a bird (dove)
- **and with all your mind:** with both hands point to the head from the sides
- **and with all your strength:** tell the kids to strike a bodybuilder pose, and let them be creative. They can do it any way they would like to!

For the reference:

- **Mark:** make a check mark in the air
  - 12: show all ten fingers, quickly switching to one finger on each hand for twelve (ten + two)
  - 30–31: on left hand, lift three fingers and on right hand make a fist; close all fingers and lift three again on left hand and one finger on right

Review briefly again what you have learned today about what it means to love God with all your strength.
Dramatize the Point

Characters: Timothy—a teenage boy who thinks he’s “all that”! Timothy needs some swagger, some “bling,” and some attitude. He talks with a hip-hop ring in his voice.

Costume/Props: Timothy wears stylish pants and long T-shirt. He has ostentatious jewelry (“bling”), a ball cap, and he carries the latest technology (tablet, smartphone, earbuds).

Messy Option: If you have the means and space, the messy option is very humorous. Your actor will need shower facilities and needs to be okay with getting quite wet and dirty. For this you should have a large tarp, weighted down so it can’t become a tripping hazard. A large 5-gallon jug of water (like those used for a water cooler) approximately half full—no cap or lid. A large bag of rice or flour with a slit cut in the top third of the bag. (When he swings it over his shoulder it should spill down his back.) The lines of the script can be followed regardless of the option chosen. Timothy should ham this up with lots of facial expressions, along with body language that mimics the Three Stooges humor. Have water, rice or flour, and tarp set out ahead of time so Timothy can enter and begin. You’ll also need a small table at the edge of the tarp where he can set up his video so that the kids cannot see the screen. The mess should be contained to the tarp area so that it can simply be gathered and emptied in the trash.

Tidy Option: If space or ability to be messy is not an option, simply use a water jug with a seal/lid/cap and a bag of rice or flour that is not cut open. Timothy will need to over-exaggerate the weight of these items to compensate for not being able to spill items.

[Timothy enters very enthusiastically, carrying his laptop or tablet and strutting as if he is very tough.]

Timothy: Yooooo peeps! Tim-o-THEEE is in da’ house!

Leader: Well good morning, Tim-o-THEEE! You are in a good mood this morning!

Timothy: Indeed I am! This cat is going to prove to Lisa that I can carry my weight on one of her mission trips to feed orphans. She’s bound to like me then, right?

Leader: Uh, well, I don’t know, Tim. How exactly do you propose to do this?

Timothy: [Begins setting up video recorder.] Well, pretty simple. I am going to send a little video that shows me carrying rice and water so she knows I’m fit for the team.

Leader: Interesting strategy. Is there something I can help with?

Timothy: Well, first I need you all to be very quiet because I will be recording the video. [Leader name], if you don’t mind, could you come here and press the record/stop button when I give you the sign?

Leader: Ah, sure!

[Leader name motions to kids to be quiet. Moves to operate recorder.]

Timothy: Okay, so what’s going to happen is the video will be rolling. I’m just going to show her the supplies I bought and then move them from one side of the screen to the other. It is all set up so that when I finish I will end with a dramatic thumbs-up. Then you will know to press “stop” on the recording and hit “send” in the top right corner, okay?

Leader: Thumbs-up and send! Got it!

Timothy: [Positions himself opposite the rice/water supply, in view of the camera. Points to leader (who presses “record”). Arrogantly struts across the stage, stopping halfway to speak to the camera.] Yo, Liiiiisa! It’s Tim-o-THEEE! Wuzzzz up, girl? I just—CUT! Stop recording! That wasn’t cool. I’m showing off a bit. She needs to take me seriously. Let’s try that again.
Timothy: [Overcompensates by being too serious. With no swagger, and in military stiffness, he approaches the center of the stage, takes off his hat, and bows his head. Lifts his eyes, places his hand on his heart, and begins to speak very seriously. As he begins, leader can't help himself and begins to snicker. Eventually leader belly laughs at how fake he is being.] Lisa, it’s me, Tim. I was so moved when you told me about what you do with orphans that I just had to do something about it. [Hears leader snicker, but tries to ignore him and continue on dramatically.] I have bought some supplies that I hope will help—some rice, which I personally hate, but I hear orphans really like, and... [Leader laughs out loud, finally unable to control him/herself.] Whuz up, dude? You ruined a very good take. I was in the zone on that one! What on earth are you laughing at? This IS very serious, you know!

Leader: Oh, I’m so sorry, I’m sure it is very serious. But you are being so—NOT YOU! She’s going to see right through that, man. You really need to lighten up and just be yourself.

Timothy: Oh, you’re right, I would hate for her to think I’m a fake. Wow, okay, take 3. Hi, Lisa, it’s me, Tim, I, um, just wanted to send you a little video to let you know that I am ready to help you on your next trip to feed the orphans! In fact I bought some stuff to bring along. [Puts his index finger up as if to say “hang on a second,” then proceeds to grab the bag of flour/rice. He laboriously carries it back to center stage, trying not to show that it is too heavy.]

[Messy option: Be sure Timothy turns in such a way that the kids can see the rice pouring out the back. He needs to exaggerate how strong he is, so increase the gestures as the bag gets lighter and empties onto the tarp behind him.]

[Tidy option: Timothy is trying to put on a very brave face; his actions should be completely contradictory to the words coming out of his mouth. He gradually begins to sink under the weight of the bag till he is on the floor and out of camera view.]

Timothy: So I have this huge bag of rice. It’s light as a feather! I could sling this and twenty more on your orphan food bus to help you out! Strong as an ox, I am. Look at me! Oh, and I got more stuff. See, I have this big, huge jug of water. [Leaves bag—full or empty—oblivious to the pile of rice in the messy version, and runs to get the jug of water.]

[Messy Version: Timothy picks up the jug of water and tries to show how light it is by spinning it and holding it up over his head and striking a pose—not realizing it is full of water. The water dumps all over him, and he stumbles back, tripping over the pile of rice behind him. He slowly puts a thumb up.]

[Tidy Version: Timothy drags water bottle over to center stage without being able to lift it off the ground. Exaggerate this with lots of grunts and straining and several attempts to lift the jug of water into the view of the camera. On his final exaggerated attempt, he finally lifts it, but it then is lighter than he realizes, and it flies into the air, knocking him backwards so that he lands on his bottom on the floor. Dejected, he gives leader the thumbs-up.]

Leader: Thumbs up! Got it! Stop recording and SEND!

Timothy: [Jumps up as if to try and stop the e-mail.] NO, NO! You can’t send that! It was awful. [Slumps down again.] That’s it! I’m ruined. She won’t ever want to talk to me again. What will she think of me now?

Leader: Timothy, don’t be so hard on yourself. You put everything you had into that video. You gave 100 percent of your strength to that. I think she’ll get your point! [Sees a return e-mail from Lisa on the computer/tablet.] Hey, Timothy, she just sent a reply to your e-mail. Do you want me to read it to you?

Timothy: What’s the point—it’s over!

Leader: [Reads:] “Hey Timothy, I got your video. What a riot! I can’t believe you went to all that effort to make me laugh and show support for my mission trips. You are one cool guy! The second take, with you trying to be so serious, really had me howling!”
Timothy: What? You were supposed to stop the recording! Oh man, this is awful! She must think I’m making fun of her.

Leader: You said the cue to stop recording was a thumbs-up! Anyway, there is more to her e-mail. She says, “Timothy, I would like you to come and meet my family. I think you and I could really get along well together. I hope you can come. Let me know if it’s okay, and I’ll send you the details! Signed, Lisa”

Timothy: I can’t believe it. She doesn’t hate me!

Leader: There is more—she write a P.S. It says, “Timothy, for the record, you don’t have to be able to lift all that stuff. True strength is measured in how you care for people!”

Timothy: What does that mean, true strength is measured by how we care for people?

Leader: Well, I think it means that when we truly love God with all our strength, it will show in what we do to care for others. Loving others with all our strength is one way to love God with all our strength!

Timothy: Hey, I never thought of it that way. Well, I should go. It was nice to see you again.

Leader: You too, Tim-o-THEE!

[Timothy exits with a humble wave.]

Object Talks—Boy’s Strength Stops Bullies

Supplies: video projection

The video clip for this lesson features Max Imas, a wacky news anchor bringing stories and commentary about kids who are making the news. This video features a dumbbell to talk about how we need to start where we are and do what we can—in time we will be able to do great things for God.

Featured Verse: Ephesians 6:10 and Philippians 4:13

Let’s Talk!—Small Group Discussion

Gather into a circle and appoint one person to be the Jester. Explain the rules of the game. The Jester cannot make rude gestures. The Jester can only speak positive things. The Jester can make funny faces, tell appropriate jokes, or charm his/her way to a smile. Everyone else, however, cannot smile. If the Jester makes you smile, you become the Jester, and he/she takes your spot in the no-smile circle. Allow the game to be played for 3–5 minutes.

Use these questions to discuss the day’s topic within your small groups.

1) If we love something on earth, it usually shows in our actions, facial expressions, and body language. Do you think that these things are important to God too?
2) Why would God desire that we love Him with all our strength?
3) What does it mean to love God with all our strength?
4) Why is taking care of our bodies a part of loving God with all our strength?
5) Can you think of other ways we can use our strength to show God we love Him?

DiscipleTown Super Citizen

Award a Super Citizen certificate to someone who demonstrated passion, excitement, and enthusiasm during worship today.
Let’s Pray!
Dear Jesus, thank You for giving us physical bodies and physical strength with which to show You love. We want to show You our love, not just tell You in words. Fill our hearts with Your joy so that it can shine out of us and give us strength. Let our lives be a source of help and strength to people we meet every day. Help us never to be afraid to show others how much we love and enjoy You. We love You, Jesus. In Your name, amen.

Cy’s Challenge: Think of something you would like someone to do for you...and then do that thing for someone else!

Let’s Review!
Use these questions to review the lesson with the children:

1) Why do you think God included “love God with all your strength” in Scripture?
2) Our actions are an outflow of our hearts and minds. If our strength (actions) isn’t showing our love of God, what does that say about our hearts and minds?
3) Should we love God with our strength only on Sundays? How can we love God with our strength during the week?

For the Home
DiscipleTown Table Talker: Give each child a copy of this week’s DiscipleTown Table Talker. As you show them how to put it together, encourage the kids to ask their parents to lead family devotions three times this week.

Parent E-mail: Copy and send the e-mail below to help your parents connect with their kids during the week. Send them early in the week, but not on Sunday. As a courtesy, be sure parents have opted to receive these e-mails. Review and edit as necessary to reflect the lesson elements you have used. You can also find this e-mail as a Microsoft Word document in your download bundle.

Dear Mom and Dad,

By now your child(ren) are probably getting pretty good at reciting Mark 12:30–31. This week we explored how to love God with our strength. Our strength is our energy, our effort, and our actions. We explored how sometimes we can do something, but not really do it with 100 percent of our effort and energy; we often do the bare minimum just to get by. Sadly, loving God often falls into this category. This includes the energy and enthusiasm we bring to worship and serving in our local church.

This week, carve out a bit of time to worship God in your car or in your living room. Choose an upbeat song that you can do actions or dance to, and celebrate God’s goodness at random times throughout the week. Afterwards, take the time to share how that experience felt for you and how God might have felt about it. This week why not take the DiscipleTown Table Talkers with you and go for a family walk? Use your bodies to walk, explore, and climb in God’s great creation and take time to thank Him OUT LOUD for the gift of activity and energy. You might just stumble onto a new family tradition.

If there is anything else you need from us, or if you have ideas on how we can incorporate more physical activity into worshiping and loving God, we would love to hear it.

Building young disciples,

[Your Name]
**Chip's Snack Time!**

**Supplies:** brand-new, unopened jar of mild salsa, tortilla chips

Pass the jar around to the children and ask them to try to open the jar without using any muscles. Once they have reached the conclusion that this is impossible, open the jar and distribute salsa and chips to the children.

Teachable point: **Just as it is impossible to open a jar of salsa with no muscles, it is impossible to love God without using our strength.**

**Additional Ideas**

**Sing-er-cise**—Use your own choice of worship music and encourage the kids to use their bodies as instruments in worship—clapping, stomping, drumming on thighs, tap dancing, noises with their mouths, etc.
DIRECTOR’S NOTES
The words in italics are notes for you and your puppeteers; they are not to be read aloud.

Prop: water bottle with some green gooey health drink inside, an iPod, wristwatch, a can of tuna, and a printout of exercises downloaded off the Internet (two or three pages taped together for dramatic effect).

[Puppet* comes out dressed like he is going to the gym. He has a short-sleeved shirt on, a water bottle with some green gooey health drink inside, an iPod, and a printout of exercises he downloaded off the Internet.]

Puppet: [Does forward arm exercises as he enters.] And a 1, 2, 3, 4; sideways 2, 3, 4; overhead 2, 3, 4; and back 2, 3, 4.

Leader: Wow, I’m tired already! What on earth are you doing, [puppet name]?

Puppet: Oh, I’m loving God with all my strength! What are you doing?

Leader: I’m standing here thinking you are CRAAAAZY!

Puppet: Say it pretty clearly in Scripture, you know: love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and STRENGTH! See this? [Shows off “muscles.”] That’s strength! I can lift a whole can of tuna!

Leader: Oh, a whole can, wow!

Puppet: Yup, by the end of the week I’ll be moving up to a can of tomato sauce!

Leader: I see. Tell me again what tuna and tomato sauce have to do with loving God?

Puppet: [Annoyed:] It’s like this. God says to love Him with all my strength, so I’m giving it my all in the gym all day to show God I love Him. I just use “tunabells” instead of dumbbells.

Leader: Oh, tunabells. Right. I’m just thinking that maybe you are misunderstanding what the Bible is saying.

Puppet: Do you have another interpretation for strength?

Leader: I think Jesus is saying that in addition to our muscles and bodies, loving God with all our strength means giving 100 percent of our effort to live right. Sometimes it is hard to do the right thing, and we need to put effort into making right choices, doing the hard work, or being self-controlled. God promises that if we do the right things, He will reward us!

Puppet: Gotcha, NO PAIN, NO GAIN! [Yells offstage as he leaves.] Leroy, I’m going to need some big jars of peanut butter. I need to HURT for this to work!

Leader: [Shakes head.] I’m all for exercise, but I think [puppet name] missed the point. Sometimes doing what is right takes hard work and effort—like keeping our room clean, standing up for someone being bullied, or staying to help a teacher after class. Our bodies and our energy are tools to do what is right, and when we use them that way, we show God we love Him.

*PUPPET: Develop a puppet character to use regularly. The children will get to know the personality and enjoy these regular visits. Dee, Cy, and Paul puppets are available at DiscipleLand.com.

Puppet Intro—Muscle “Man”
Each DiscipleTown Unit will teach your kids an essential “how to” skill to become victorious disciples of Jesus!