



By Matthew Ruttan | March 2020

### Main point

**God loves you when you're good—but not *because* you're good.**

### Materials

- A Bible (modern version; if you don't have one, a recommended text is below)
- Some Hershey's kisses
- A bowl for the slips of paper (described below)
- Different strips of paper listing examples of good and bad behaviour, one strip of paper per sentence. Here are some suggestions to include (adapt as necessary):

- 'Good' behaviour examples:

*I encouraged someone who was having a bad day.*

*I helped my parents by doing a chore.*

*I paid attention at school.*

*I played my best and our team won.*

*I did all my homework.*

*I read my Bible.*

*I helped my neighbour shovel the driveway.*

*I included someone who was lonely.*

- 'Bad' behaviour examples:

*I threw a snowball at the pastor.*

*I spilled paint on the drums/organ at the church.*

*After dinner I threw my plate out the window.*

*I tried to flush my dad's shoes down the toilet.*

*I put ketchup in my friend's hair.*

*All I had for dinner was a baseball hat full of chocolate ice cream.*

*I used my mom's smart phone as a hockey puck.*

*I took a marker and drew a moustache on my mom's face when she was sleeping*

### What to do (15-20 minutes)

1. Prepare the slips of paper ahead of time and put them in the bowl.
2. Hide the Hersey's kisses somewhere.
3. Gather together Explain that *you think God loves us when we're good.*

4. Invite the kids to pull out a piece of paper and read it (if they can't do it themselves, help them).
5. As they do so, invite them to imagine that what the paper says is behaviour they actually did themselves. Have some fun with this!
6. After each one, ask them whether what "they did" (what they read) was 'bad' or 'good.'
7. After you've gone through all the slips of paper, return to the idea that "God loves us when we're good," but go further and add, "...but not *because* we're good."
8. Open the Bible to Ephesians 2:4-10. Explain that it was written in the decades after Jesus' resurrection by an influential leader in the early church named Paul. He wrote to encourage people in (and around) Ephesus—an ancient city on the north side of the Mediterranean Sea—about God's big-picture plans for his people. Read the passage together, stopping as needed to explain tricky concepts like sin (=thinking, talking and acting in a way that goes against God's teachings and commands), salvation (=being made right/at peace with God both in this life and the next), and grace (=generosity we don't deserve but get anyway through faith in Christ).
9. Explain how even though God wants us to love him and to love our neighbours as ourselves, God doesn't un-love us when we make mistakes. In fact, through faith in Christ, he saves us and makes us new!
10. Explain how God's love is like the love of a perfect parent. Since that love often includes hugs and kisses, have them discover some Hershey's kisses chocolate that you have hidden somewhere. But tell them to not open them yet.
11. Ask them: Do you think that *just* the people who pulled out slips of paper listing good behaviour should get the kisses, or everyone? Of course, everyone!
12. Enjoy some chocolate! (Be mindful of any allergies).
13. Close in prayer, being thankful for God's unconditional love for us.

#### Ephesians 2:4-10 (NLT)

But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) 6 For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. 7 So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.

8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. 10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.