

Mealtime Conversations

TOPIC 3: Loving Our Neighbors

Discussion 1: God Is Love	1
Discussion 2: God Wants the Best for Us.....	3
Discussion 3: Sharing God's Love	7
Discussion 4: Loving Others Well.....	11
Discussion 5: Jesus Loves Us	14

HOW TO USE MEALTIME CONVERSATIONS

“Deep conversations with the right people are priceless.” - Anonymous

As parents, we desire a close relationship with our children. We care about their spiritual lives and want them to grow in their faith. It can be challenging to make time in our busy lives for intentional and meaningful conversations about God. We at Living on the Edge want to help! We've created *Mealtime Conversations* as a fun way for your family to come together and talk about God.

As you begin . . .

- Be ready to lean in and listen to your kids.
- Don't feel that you have to know all the answers, answer every question, or do all the activities.
- Keep in mind that the goal is to grow together as a family and deepen your understanding of God.
- Pray and ask God for His help and wisdom.
- Remember that learning about God as a family is a lifelong process!

Plan on spending about 30 minutes for each discussion. Some discussions may move quickly, and others may take longer as your family engages in conversation and in the activities. This discussion guide contains three main sections:

- **GET TOGETHER:** This section brings the family together for a fun game or activity to get the conversation going.
- **GET TALKING:** This section contains the Big Idea about God, discussion questions, and a key verse.
- **GET GOING:** This section contains an activity to help your family better understand the Big Idea and apply it in your lives.

Use *Mealtime Conversations* in a way that works best for your family!



 **GET TOGETHER**

Gather around the table and have some fun!

- What three things are the most important to you?
- What three words would you choose to describe yourself? Why?
- What was the best gift you have ever received? Why?

 **GET TALKING**

Read today's Big Idea, and then use the questions to get everyone talking.

***Note to Parents:** Encourage everyone to share because everyone's story is important, but depending on the ages and personalities of your family members, you may not get much of a response. Give your family time to let the question soak in and the space to respond when they are ready. You can guide the conversation and be the first one to share.

BIG IDEA God's love for us is perfect.

We can't gain more of God's love. He loves us fully; it's not possible for Him to love us more. We can't lose God's love. He loves us unconditionally—no strings attached.

Use these questions to talk about how you've seen God's love in your life.

- What is one word you would use to describe God's love?
- How has God shown you His love in the past?
- How have you experienced God's love for you today?

Work on memorizing the key verse together.

KEY VERSE FOR THIS DISCUSSION

*You, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger,
abounding in love and faithfulness.*

PSALM 86:15

Here is an idea for having fun as you read the key verse out loud.

- Print the words of the verse on pavement with sidewalk chalk or on big pieces of paper. Then play hopscotch on them, reciting each word as you hop on it.

 **GET GOING**

Read the following quotes aloud.

“God loves each of us as if there was only one of us.” - Saint Augustine

“The great thing to remember is that though our feelings come and go, God’s love for us does not.” - C. S. Lewis

“There is no pit so deep that God’s love is not deeper still.” - Corrie ten Boom

- Which of these truths about God’s love stands out to you the most?

Encourage each person to think about a favorite love song. Share it by playing it out loud for everyone to listen to. Have some fun and turn it into a lip-sync, sing-along, or dance party.

 **GET TOGETHER**

Gather around the table and have some fun!

- Come up with a list of positive character traits to look for in a good friend.
- Write each of the traits on slips of paper.
- Place all the character traits into a bowl or bag.
- Take turns picking one character trait out of the bag, reading it, and sharing who at the table demonstrates that trait and why.
- Keep going until everyone is chosen for a positive character trait.

 **GET TALKING**

Read today's Big Idea and about the life of Ruth, and then use the questions to get everyone talking.

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BIG IDEA God's love for us is perfect, and because He loves us, He wants what is best for us.

Read aloud Ruth's story (below or from Ruth chapters 1-4 in your Bible).

RUTH

In a place called Moab, there lived a family from Judah. Elimelek, his wife Naomi, and their two sons moved to Moab from Bethlehem because of a famine. There in Moab, they were able to work, eat, and live well. After some time, Elimelek died. Naomi was so sad, but she was thankful she

(Continued on page 4)

RUTH

(Continued from page 3)

had her two sons. Both of her sons married women from Moab. Their names were Orpah and Ruth.

About ten years later, both of Naomi's sons died. Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth were heartbroken. Naomi decided that she would move back home to Bethlehem. In those days, it was the custom for a widow's sons' wives to stay with their mother-in-law. But Naomi loved them and didn't want them to remain widows forever. So she told Orpah and Ruth about her plans to move to Bethlehem, and she encouraged them to return to their families. They all hugged each other and cried together. Orpah decided that, yes, she would go back to her family. She said goodbye and left. But Ruth refused. She said to Naomi,

"Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me" (Ruth 1:16-17).

Ruth loved Naomi, and she wanted what was best for her, even if it meant that life would be hard. For Ruth, choosing to stay with Naomi meant an unknown future in a new land as an outsider. It also meant that she may remain a widow for the rest of her life, and widows didn't have it easy in those days. It was a life full of hard work, poverty, and hunger.

When Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem together, Ruth decided to go out into the fields and hunt for grain so they would have bread to eat. She found a nearby field and walked behind the harvesters to gather up whatever was left behind. The owner of the field, Boaz, noticed Ruth and

(Continued on page 5)

RUTH

(Continued from page 4)

asked his workers who she was. They told him her name was Ruth, the Moabite who came to Bethlehem with Naomi, and they described how hard she worked in the fields.

Boaz invited Ruth to gather grain in his fields and drink from his workers' water jars when she was thirsty. He also told her that she would be safe in his fields. Ruth was amazed at his kindness, especially since she wasn't even from Bethlehem. Boaz explained that he knew Ruth's care and love for Naomi. Boaz was so moved by her loyalty and commitment that he even ordered his workers to drop extra grain for her. In time, Boaz married Ruth and they had a son, Obed. In fact, Ruth became the great-grandmother of King David.

Use these questions to talk about Ruth's story.

- What is one thing that stood out to you about Ruth's story?
- Why do you think Ruth chose to stay with Naomi?
- By keeping her promise to care for Naomi, what did Ruth give up?
- How do you see God's love reflected in the love Ruth had for Naomi?

Work on memorizing the key verse together.

KEY VERSE FOR THIS DISCUSSION

*You, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger,
abounding in love and faithfulness.*

PSALM 86:15

Here are a few ideas for having fun as you read the key verse out loud.

- Pour rice, oatmeal, or another grain onto a clean counter. Use a clean finger to write out the verse on the counter and through the grain. Say the verse aloud together.
- Pour rice, oatmeal, or another grain onto a clean plate and write out one word of the verse at a time onto the plate with a clean finger. Say the verse aloud together.



GET GOING

Write everyone's name on separate pieces of paper. Place the names into a bowl and take turns drawing a name that is not your own. Look at the name on your paper, but don't show it to anyone else. Sometime within the next twenty-four hours . . .

- Write a note or draw a picture to that person expressing what you love and appreciate about them.
- Think of one or two ways you can show your love to that person - and do it! (Keep in mind what that person likes, what's important to them, and what makes them feel loved.)



GET TOGETHER

Gather around the table and have some fun!

- If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go? Why?
- What job would be the most fun? Why?
- If you had a million dollars, what would you do with it?

GET TALKING

Read today's Big Idea and about the life of Charles Mulli, and then use the questions to get everyone talking.



***Note to Parents:** Encourage everyone to share because everyone's story is important, but depending on the ages and personalities of your family members, you may not get much of a response. Give your family time to let the question soak in and the space to respond when they are ready. You can guide the conversation and be the first one to share.

BIG IDEA God loves us and wants us to share His love with others.

Read aloud the story of Charles Mulli below.

(Excerpt from *Charles Mulli: We Are Family*, by Janet and Geoff Benge)

CHARLES MULLI

Charles Mulli was six years old when he woke up in his family's hut in Kenya and discovered he had been abandoned. Every day became a struggle to survive. One night Charles accepted Jesus as his Savior, and his world was forever changed.

Charles eventually married, had eight children, served in church, and made millions in business. But he knew God wanted more. "Daddy Mulli" began rescuing kids from the slums—children like Rael, whom he met in an alley.

(Continued on page 8)

CHARLES MULLI

(Continued from page 7)

“Can you tell me why you’re here so late at night?” Charles pressed, praying under his breath. He knew from experience that now was the moment that a child trusted and opened up or pulled away.

Rael looked him in the eye. Charles Mulli smiled at her. She opened her mouth. “I . . . my mother lives near here, but I can’t go home. I ran away. Every night my mother would get drunk on chang’aa and beat me and my brothers and sisters. In the end, I thought it would be safer on the streets, but it’s not. Instead of my mother beating me now, men abuse me,” Rael said matter-of-factly.

Charles told her that he understood because his father beat him and he looked for something better too. It was Jesus’s love that had changed his life and gave him hope. He told her that Jesus was the Son of God and loved her very much. He invited her and the other girls to become part of his family.

At dinner the next night, Charles spotted Rael. By now she had on clean clothes, after taking the first shower of her life. Clinging to her were two of Charles’s smaller children. “Look, Daddy,” Rael said, laughing. “I have found my younger brother and sister. You already adopted them!”

There have been many difficult times for the Charles Mulli family, but with God’s help, children are still being rescued—more than 23,000 so far!

Use these questions to talk about Charles Mulli and God’s love.

- How would you feel if you were in Charles Mulli’s shoes?
- Where do you see God’s love at work in Charles’s life?
- How do you see God’s love reflected in Charles?
- How can you share God’s love with someone today?

Work on memorizing the key verse together.

KEY VERSE FOR THIS DISCUSSION

*You, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger,
abounding in love and faithfulness.*

PSALM 86:15

Here is an idea for having fun as you read the key verse out loud.

- Make up motions to help you remember the verse. Use your motions and say the verse together.

GET GOING

Play Mancala together! This game has many variations and is a favorite of kids in Kenya. In Kenya, kids use whatever they have on hand to play, and you can too. Go grab an empty egg carton along with stones, Legos, cereal, beans, or marbles to use as markers.

- The object of the game is to capture more stones (markers) than your opponent.
- Four markers (marbles, beans, etc.) are placed in each of the twelve egg carton holes.
- Each player has a store (called a mancala) to the right of the board (or egg carton). The game begins with one player picking up all the markers in any one of the holes on their side of the board.
- Moving counterclockwise, the player deposits one marker in each hole until the markers run out.
- If you run into your own store, deposit one marker in it. If you run into your opponent's store, skip it and go on.
- If the last marker you deposit is in your store, you get another turn.

- If the last marker you drop is in an empty hole on your side, you capture that marker and any markers in the hole directly opposite.
- Always place all the captured markers in your store.
- The game ends when all six holes on one side of the board are empty.
- The player who still has markers on their side of the board captures all the markers.
- The winner is the player with the most markers.

 **GET TOGETHER**

Gather around the table and have some fun!

- Set a timer for five minutes. Every person at the table sketches a favorite family memory. Have everyone share their drawing as the others guess what it is. Talk about your favorite memories.

 **GET TALKING**

Read today's Big Idea and about the Parable of the Good Samaritan, and then use the questions to get everyone talking.

***Note to Parents:** Encourage everyone to share because everyone's story is important, but depending on the ages and personalities of your family members, you may not get much of a response. Give your family time to let the question soak in and the space to respond when they are ready. You can guide the conversation and be the first one to share.

BIG IDEA God loves us and wants us to share His love with others.

Read aloud the Parable* of the Good Samaritan (below or from Luke 10:25-37 in your Bible).

*A parable is a simple story that Jesus told to help people understand a spiritual lesson.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

One day Jesus told a story to help us better understand the greatest commandment—to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”—and what it means to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27).

There was a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes and beat him so badly that he was near death. It so happened that a priest was walking by, but when

(Continued on page 12)

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

(Continued from page 11)

he saw the hurt man, the priest moved to the other side of the road and kept walking. Then a Levite came up to the wounded man, looked at him, and also crossed to the opposite side of the road.

Next, a Samaritan came by. When he saw the injured man, he felt compassion. He bandaged up his wounds and put the man on his own donkey to take him to an inn where the man could stay until he was better. The Samaritan paid the innkeeper to look after the man and care for him. He even told the innkeeper that he would pay extra if it cost more to care for the man.

Those in first-century Judea who heard this story must have been shocked by what Jesus was saying. The Samaritans were despised by the Jews, yet Jesus made the Samaritan the example of what it means to show love. The religious men (the priest and Levite) should have been the ones to demonstrate the love of God and help the man, but they didn't. They were too concerned with their own rules to help.

Jesus's story helps us see that love doesn't ask, "How much do I have to do?" It asks, "What can I do?" The Samaritan's actions demonstrate what love really means because not only did he have nothing to gain from helping the hurt man, it also cost him his time and money. Love gives 100 percent.

Use these questions to talk about the Parable of the Good Samaritan and what it means to love others, according to Jesus.

- What stood out to you about the story of the Good Samaritan?
- How does the Good Samaritan reflect God's love?
- What does "Love gives 100 percent" mean?

Work on memorizing the key verse together.

KEY VERSE FOR THIS DISCUSSION

*You, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger,
abounding in love and faithfulness.*

PSALM 86:15

Here are a few ideas for having fun as you read the key verse out loud.

- Write the verse on a piece of paper. Cut the paper into various-sized puzzle pieces. Reassemble the puzzle to show the verse. Say the verse aloud. This can be a group project or an individual one.

GET GOING

What are the needs of your family, friends, neighborhood, or community? Brainstorm ways to brighten someone's day and help meet their needs. Work together to decide what needs you will meet—and do it!

Pray together. Thank God for His love and the specific ways He has shown His love to you. Pray for the people who came to mind and for their needs.

 **GET TOGETHER**

Gather around the table and have some fun!

- Everyone shares their favorite song and why it is their favorite.
- If possible, play everyone's favorite song. If not, try singing it together!

 **GET TALKING**

Read today's Big Idea and about the life of Jesus, and then use the questions to get everyone talking.

***Note to Parents:** Encourage everyone to share because everyone's story is important, but depending on the ages and personalities of your family members, you may not get much of a response. Give your family time to let the question soak in and the space to respond when they are ready. You can guide the conversation and be the first one to share.

BIG IDEA Jesus is the ultimate expression of God's love.

God sent His Son to live a perfect life, die for our sins, and defeat death through the Resurrection—all so that we may be found and have a relationship with Him.

Read aloud Jesus's story (below or from John 13:1-17 in your Bible).

JESUS'S STORY

John, one of Jesus's disciples, wrote about an amazing moment during the last Passover that Jesus celebrated with the disciples. People in Jesus's day wore sandals. Everyone's feet would get very dirty. Washing feet was an unpleasant job assigned to slaves who typically attended to anyone who came into a house.

Jesus knew the time was coming for Him to die on the cross, so he wanted to show the disciples His love for them. Jesus removed His outer

(Continued on page 15)

JESUS'S STORY

(Continued from page 14)

tunic, then took a towel and wrapped it around His waist. He poured water into a basin and began to wash each of the disciples' feet. Peter was shocked and asked Jesus to stop. But Jesus told Peter that although he didn't totally understand everything in this moment, if he wanted to be His disciple, Peter had to let Jesus wash his feet. When He finished, Jesus told His disciples that what He had done was an example of how they, as His followers, were to treat others.

Although Jesus was God's Son, He humbly took the job of a slave and washed all the disciples' feet, even Judas's. Jesus's symbolic act shows us what true humility and selfless love look like. Jesus's love didn't stop there. It went much further than that. Jesus loved us so much that He would die for us.

Jesus allowed Himself to be beaten, mocked, whipped, and hung on a cross. God placed all the sin of the world onto Jesus, and with Jesus's death, He paid for the sins of the world. Jesus was buried, and three days later He rose from the dead! His resurrection was evidence that He defeated sin, and everyone who believes in Jesus can have a forever friendship with God. There is nothing we can do to earn eternal life—Jesus did it all.

John 3:16-17

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Romans 5:8

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Use these questions to talk about Jesus's love.

- How is Jesus the ultimate expression of God's love?
- In your opinion, how is God's love different from human love?
- What is one way you can love others the way Jesus has loved you?
- What does it look like for you to be loving to people who don't believe in Jesus?

Work on memorizing the key verse together.

KEY VERSE FOR THIS DISCUSSION

*You, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger,
abounding in love and faithfulness.*

PSALM 86:15

Here is an idea for having fun as you read the key verse out loud.

- Make up motions to help you remember the verse. Use your motions and say the verse together.

GET GOING

- Discussion Option

This is a great opportunity to share with each other when you accepted Jesus as your Savior and how God's love has changed you. If it is not something you have done and you would like to, that's great! There are no magic salvation words, but on the next page is a prayer you can use as you talk to God.

ADMIT

God, I know that I am a sinner and I need You. Please forgive me for my sin.

BELIEVE

I believe You love me so much that You sent Your Son, Jesus. I believe that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead for me so I could have a relationship with You.

COMMIT

God, I choose You and commit to following after You. Amen!



If you would like more information on how you can grow as a new believer, go to <https://livingontheedge.org/new-believers/>.

- **Game Option**

God loves us so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to seek and save the lost. Have fun playing a game of hide-and-seek together!