

upper elementary



Lesson 1 / March 2, 2025

# Unconditional Love

By RLD Editorial Team

for use as  
**STEP 1**



## Lesson 1

### Focus:

Jesus loves us even though we sin.

## Lesson 1

### Bible Basis:

Luke 5:27-32

## Lesson 1

### Memory Verse:

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.  
—Romans 5:8.

**Students will understand that we all sin and will discover that God's love for us is greater than our sin.**


### Materials:

- Internet access

In the summer of 2021, athletes from around the world competed at the Summer Olympics in Tokyo. One of these athletes, gymnast Simone Biles, made the decision to withdraw from a competition to focus on her mental health. She shared that she wasn't in a good mental place to participate in the competition, and she didn't want to negatively impact her team's chance at a medal by competing.

When she first made the decision, Biles received a lot of criticism. People accused her of not being strong and letting her team down. In the years since her courageous choice, important conversations have begun happening about the importance of mental health and well-being for athletes. Let's take a look at how Simone Biles continues to be an advocate for mental health by sharing her own experiences.

Show the following video [3:06].

"I say put mental health first!" | Simone Biles talks   
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovD6MUbk8Rc>

➤ **Simone faced a lot of criticism when she chose to step away from a competition to protect her mental health. How do you think it might feel to be criticized or rejected by people who felt disappointed by your actions—even good actions?** (Answers will vary; students may say that you might feel unloved—like a failure, hurt, worthless, etc.)

**Simone Biles chose to take a break rather than compete poorly and make costly mistakes for her team. She valued her mental health and her team's success more than her need to compete. In stepping away, Simone chose not to make mistakes in her competition.**

**Sometimes, though, we all do make mistakes. It's part of being human. In some situations, when we mess up, it's because of choices we made even when we knew better. We might feel ashamed or alienated as a result of those poor choices.**

➤ **When have you felt unloved or unaccepted because of mistakes or poor choices you made?** (It may be difficult to get students to share an answer; you will have a better chance of getting someone to open up if you share your own experience first.)

**We are all sinners. We all mess up—sometimes on purpose, sometimes unintentionally. Let's see what an invitation, a dinner, and a group of tax collectors can show us about Jesus' response to sinners.**

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher's guide; your Step 4 appears below.)

# Unconditional Love

for use as  
**STEP 4** **Lesson 1****Focus:**

Jesus loves us even though we sin.

**Lesson 1****Bible Basis:**

Luke 5:27-32

**Lesson 1****Memory Verse:**

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.  
—Romans 5:8.

**Materials:**

- Internet access
- Small stones (1 for each student)
- Permanent markers

If your class is meeting online, invite students to bring supplies with them to class.

**Remember the video we watched earlier about Simone Biles? She was honest about her mental health and knew that if she competed, she'd probably make big mistakes and cost her team points. Although many fans criticized her for this decision, her team was supportive of her decision.**

- **What do you think it felt like for Simone Biles to receive support from her team?** (Answers will vary but might include that she felt loved, accepted, like she mattered to them more than winning or losing mattered.)

**In today's lesson we learned about Jesus inviting Levi to follow Him. Jesus ate at Levi's home with a number of tax collectors—people in that day who were known for dishonest practices, people whom the Pharisees called sinners, people who let God down.**

- **What do you think it felt like for the tax collectors to be loved and accepted by Jesus?** (Answers will vary; they felt a sense of relief and gratitude to Jesus.)
- **How do you think God responds when He sees you sin? Do you imagine God booing or God wrapping His arms around you? Explain.** (Answers will vary.)

➤ **What is it like for you to know that even though you sin, Jesus still loves you and that He loved you enough to die for your sins?** (Answers will vary.)

**When we are honest with God and confess our sins—when we own up to mistakes we’ve made and tell God about them, He has promised to forgive us and wipe away all our unrighteousness.** Have a volunteer read 1 John 1:9.

**When we are busy with school and daily life, when we mess up or feel down, we may not spend much time considering the love Jesus has for us. We are going to make symbols of God’s love to keep in our lockers this week. These will be reminders that while we are sinners, Christ died for us. No matter how badly we mess up, on purpose or unintentionally, Jesus still loves us.**

Distribute supplies (or invite students to have them ready at home). Demonstrate drawing a large outline of a heart on the stone. Ask the students to use the markers to write their name in their hearts. Alternatively, if there is enough room, they may write “Jesus Loves (student’s name).”

**Place this stone somewhere you’ll see it often as a reminder to stop for a moment and think about the love Jesus has for you. Confess any sin and thank God that Jesus loves us even though we sin.**

Before closing, offer time after class if anyone wants to talk privately with you about what it means to repent and accept the love Jesus has for them. (If any students have questions about salvation, see the inside back cover of the teacher book.) Then offer a prayer of gratitude, thanking God for loving us so much that while we were sinners, He gave His only Son to die for us.

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