

## *Taking It Home*

As a reminder that you are God's Valentine, please accept this gift. Let it remind you of the grace and power of the Holy Spirit through which you have received God's gift of love! Happy Valentine's Day in Jesus!



## *You Are God's Valentine*

### *Introduction*

*Read aloud 1 John 4:9–10.*

If Valentine's Day is all about the giving of love, it should be a celebration of the Creator of love, the Ultimate Giver of love, He who is love: God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The verses I just read sum up the love of God through Jesus Christ. They also convey an amazing message: We are God's Valentine!

These verses are all about his love—his love for the world and, more specifically, his love for us. This is love in its purest form. It is an unconditional, undying love that came to us through the death of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection that followed. We are the undeserving recipients of his perfect, life-changing love, love delivered by his Son, Jesus Christ. Scripture calls that kind of love *grace*. It's God's kind of love.

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# HNLVDS (VALNDA)



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## Getting to the Heart

Using the truths found in God's Word, let's unwrap the gift of God's love in the letters from the word *VALENTINE*:

**V**aluedô Being God's Valentine means we are highly valued! The God of heaven and earth valued us enough to show his perfect love through his Son, Jesus Christ. And he did this while we were sinners (see Romans 5:8). He brought us life through the death of his Son.

**A**doptedô The life he brings includes adoption by the Father. He has said to us, "Be mine!" He chose us before the creation of the world to be his children. Adopted by his grace, we are now children of the King of kings.

**L**ovedô That is love! *You* are loved! The love of God is like no other. Remember the description of love in 1 Corinthians 13 (*read the chapter aloud*). These words describe God's perfect love. This is how he loves youô perfectly!

**E**ntrusted with blessingsô He has entrusted his love to our care. As sinners, we often ignore it, fail to return or share it, and even misuse it. Yet his love keeps coming to us, and along with it comes a package of other blessings. God entrusts these to our care while we live here on this earthô blessings such as his Word, food, clothing, health, strength, Christian friends, good government, peace, a good reputation, joy, and a host of others. Amazing blessings! Amazing love! All this comes to us as God's gift, his gift of love, all entrusted to our care.

**N**ew Creationô Another of the blessings that comes with the love of God is the gift of life. Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we receive true life, God's kind of life. We have abundant life through Jesus and in

him. This is not just scraping by, but life overflowing with love, a life beyond what we could imagine before we knew Christ. In Christ, we have become new creationsô the old has gone, the new has come, come to life (see 2 Corinthians 5:17)!

**T**riumphantô Part of our new lives in Christ, grounded in his love, is the triumphant victory we receive. We have victory through Jesus's sacrifice on the cross and his triumphant resurrection on Easter morning. He defeated sin, death, and the devil. It's his victoryô but in love, he shares it with us so we can live triumphantly.

**I**nsightfulô As we live triumphantly, we realize we want to grow deeper and deeper in his love. That was Paul's prayer for the people at the church in Philippi, and it's Jesus's prayer for us. He wants us to have a greater insight into just how in love with us he is! *Read Philippians 1:9-11.*

**N**eedyô While growing in God's love, we'll constantly see how often we fail him. We will sin, have no doubt! We are Valentines, but needy Valentines. We need forgiveness. We need a love that won't give up on us; a love that doesn't have limits. God knows all about our needs, and that's why he sent his one and only Son into the world to be the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Being God's Valentine means our needs are metô most important, the need of forgiveness for our sins and salvation for our souls.

**E**quippedô Bask in the glory of God's love for you. You are his Valentine. You share his life. He is truly in love with you. And through his perfect, unending, unconditional love, he equips you to love him and others. His love will shine through our lives, our words, and our actions.

**When you know you are loved, you can live without fear.**

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear”

(1 John 4:18). Fear cripples many. Fear can keep us from ever becoming what God intended us to be. Because of fear, we quit. We refuse to stand up for our beliefs. We run away. We never try. When we focus on ourselves, our confidence dribbles away. But when we focus on the infinite love of God in Christ, the fear of failure melts away. We lose our fear of rejection in the sunshine of God’s authentic love. God’s perfect love expels all fear.

## Taking It Home

You and I have more in common with Gajowniczek than perhaps we thought at first. Someone loved us enough to die in our place. As you take this nail home, use it as a reminder of God’s deep love for you. When you see it, remember the cross. Bask in the warmth of heaven’s authentic acceptance. Then use the courage it gives to love others.

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#HNLVDS(NAILDA-KJV)



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# The Nail ~ KJV

1 John 4:8-18

## Introduction

The names Gajowniczek and Kolbe probably don’t mean much to you, but consider this amazing story. These two men were incarcerated at Auschwitz, a German concentration camp of World War II. Kolbe was a Franciscan priest. In the harshness of this slaughterhouse he maintained the gentleness of Christ. He shared his food. He gave up his bunk. He prayed for the Nazis.

In July of 1941, a prisoner escaped from the camp. The German custom was to kill ten prisoners for each one who escaped. All the prisoners were gathered in the courtyard and the commandant randomly selected ten names from the roll book. The ten were immediately taken to a cell where they were given no food or water until they died. The tenth name called on that July day was “Gajowniczek.” He began to sob, “My wife and children.”

At that moment, one of the remaining prisoners left his row and pushed toward the front. This was unheard of—one could easily be shot just for moving. It was Kolbe. There was no fear, no hesitation in his step. One of the guards shouted, “Stop or be shot!” Kolbe replied calmly, “I want to speak with the commander.” For some reason the guard did not kill him. Kolbe stood before the commandant and removed his hat. “Herr Commandant, I wish to make a request please. I want to die in the place of this prisoner,” he said as he pointed to the weeping Gajowniczek. “I have no wife. I am old and good for nothing. He is in better condition.” (Kolbe was fully aware of the Nazi mentality.) Everyone stood still, stunned. After a moment of silence, the commander yelled, “Request granted.” Gajowniczek said later, “Prisoners were never allowed to speak. I could only thank Kolbe with my eyes.”

Kolbe died on August 14, 1941, and then only after a camp doctor injected his heart with phenol. Gajowniczek survived the Holocaust. He returns to Auschwitz every year on August 14 to say thank you to a man who died in his place.

## Getting to the Heart

Would you agree that Kolbe showed authentic love? In a truly Christlike way, Kolbe died in Gajowniczek’s place. We must understand that authentic love in its purest form comes from God. In fact the Scripture tells us, “God is love” (1 John 4:8). So what does God’s love look like, and how do I know it’s directed toward me?

God is love, and he communicates that love not only with words, but in actions. Romans 5:8 says, “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” That means his love is not based on how good I am or how pretty I am or what I have accomplished in life or what I might someday accomplish for him. Rather, his love is based on

his own decision to love. In love, he sent his Son to die in my place and in yours! Loved by him, we’re free to love others.

Some people find it hard to love because they have been burned in a relationship; they’ve lost trust in the other person, and love has faded; or they don’t want to open themselves up to being hurt. God’s love is like no other. His love for us in Christ answers all the reasons why we are reluctant to love others.

***When you know God’s love, you can love others.*** “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” (1 John 4:11). This means no matter how big the hurts in my life, I know God loves me. No matter who disappoints me, no matter who dumps on me, no matter who despises me despite my love for them, God loves me, and he always will.

God loves you! Nothing you can do can make him love you more, and nothing you can do will make him love you less. He loves you, but not because of what you do. He loves you! He loves you, so now you’re free to love others and to share his love with them. You can love them because you are secure in his love.

***When you know God’s love, you can forgive those who take advantage of your trust.*** “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us” (1 John 4:16). Only God is completely trustworthy. His love never fades. In fact, even when we lose trust in him, he is still faithful to love us. “If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself” (2 Timothy 2:13). Scripture never commands us to trust others; it does tell us to love them. A person with an alcoholic husband or wife understands the courage tough love takes. Sometimes—in love—we cannot trust people. We forgive them, but we refuse to trust them—for their own good! In Christ, we can always find the courage to love them, to act in their best long-term interests. Sometimes, love says no. Sometimes, love grounds a son or daughter. Sometimes, love even calls the police.



Expanding the Impact of Your  
Gifts of Encouragement



# God's Great

*"You're Mine All the Time, Valentine"*



## Promises

Kids Event Outline



This event outline provides ideas for an hour-long event designed for Valentine's Day. It's perfect for Sunday schools that meet the second weekend in February. You might also think about adapting it for midweek classes and Bible clubs that meet during February.

We've planned your event for you—including a Bible lesson presentation, snack ideas with activities, craft ideas, and games for learners of all ages! May God bless you as you show the kids in your care Jesus' love and begin to explore all the promises he makes to us—because of his love!



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# God's Great

## "You're Mine All the Time, Valentine"

### Promises

### Kid's Event Outline

## Decorating Our Space

### Promise Hearts Everywhere

As the children arrive (or perhaps the week before), enlist everyone who will attend your event in helping to decorate for it by using items from this list to make hearts.



### Materials Needed

- ♥ Red, pink, lilac, and purple construction paper
- ♥ Markers, crayons
- ♥ Scissors (safety scissors for little ones!)
- ♥ Heart templates cut from poster board (optional)
- ♥ Red, white, pin streamers (optional)
- ♥ Foil, paper doilies (available in craft stores or bakeries, optional)
- ♥ Chenille wires (a.k.a. "pipe cleaners," optional)

Each heart the children make should include one of God's great "You're Mine All the Time, Valentine!" promises. (See the *Promises from God* magnet (item # VPG8MT), the *My Valentine from God Accordion Sticker Book* (item # VFG8ST), and the list below.)

Be sure the promise hearts become "conversation hearts"! Talk to the children about the promises they add to the hearts they make and about the holy, powerful, loving, saving Lord who has made these promises to us.

### "You're Mine All the Time, Valentine!" Banner

### Materials Needed

- ♥ Paper for brainstorming designs
- ♥ Paint, markers, or other art materials
- ♥ Banner for decorating (see ideas on next page)

Enlist some of the older children in creating a theme banner for your event. Several Internet sites offer relatively inexpensive blank banners in nylon or canvas. Lengths and widths vary. Or check with sign shops or printers in your local area. A long roll of butcher paper or art paper will work, as well.

Ask your banner team to sketch out several ideas on paper before they begin to apply paint or markers to the banner itself. You may want to have the team create several options and then ask everyone to vote on which design to execute.

# Small-Group Activities That Teach

Create small groups of children (4–6 per group) and have them move from one activity to the next every 10 minutes or so. Mix older children with younger ones in each small group and assign one adult to accompany each group. Ask the adults to offer encouragement and show Jesus' love and care to the children in their group.



## Building on the Promises

### Materials Needed

- ♥ Several bags of Valentine's "conversation heart" candies
- ♥ Chart paper or a white board
- ♥ Markers

Pair the children up or let individuals work alone to see who can create the tallest "tower" of hearts in 30 seconds. Some children will want to try several times. Let them, as time will allow.

**Some of these candies say silly things. Some are serious. But suppose these candies had come to us from heaven! Suppose God sent hearts like these to us. What do you think would be on them?** Record suggestions on chart paper or a white board in colorful markers. Refer the children to the promises on some of the decorations they have made if they need help.

**If God sent these hearts to us, they would not be blank on one side. Do you know what would be on the other side? A cross! The cross tells us how much God loves us—without using any words at all! The Bible says, "God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners" (Romans 5:8).** Ask the children what they think this means and elaborate as time will allow.

Use your conversation to share the Gospel message—our sin and God's salvation in Jesus—especially with children in the group who do not seem to know Christ as Savior.

Before the children leave, pray briefly to thank God for Jesus. Give the children a few candy hearts to eat or take with them.

## Valentine Promises from God—A Matching Game

Download the *Valentine Promises from God* game sheets from CTA's Web site ([www.CTAinc.com/FreeResources](http://www.CTAinc.com/FreeResources)—in the Miscellaneous box, choose "Valentine Promises" game sheet) and make as many copies as you anticipate needing, plus a few extras. Have one *Valentine Promises from God* break-apart magnet (item # VAL8MMT) per child. Let the children pair up and play several rounds of the game with a partner as time will allow.

When a few minutes remain, have each child select the promise they like most of all. Have each child read his or her favorite promise as you move around the table from child to child. (If time will permit, ask volunteers to tell why they chose the promise they did.)

Right before the group leaves, ask each child to hold the magnet piece with his or her favorite promise and fold both hands around it. Then pray together: **Thank you, God, for your great promises!**



Give each child a ziplock plastic bag in which to store their magnet pieces and a take-home copy of the game sheet.

## **God's Great "You're Mine All the Time, Valentine!" Promises Charades (preparation)**

### **Materials Needed**

- ♥ Two identical sets of large paper hearts. On one side of each heart, draw a cross. On the other side, write a promise from Scripture (see below).
- ♥ A large decorated box to hold one set of hearts
- ♥ A way to display the second set of hearts where everyone can see the promises displayed
- ♥ A box of props—some silly, others serious or practical (optional)
- ♥ A place to meet out of the sight of the other groups

When each group of children arrives, have a volunteer choose one heart at random from the box and read the promise written on it. Then have the group choose one prop and plan a way to use it as they act out a time when the promise would be helpful and encouraging. When everyone gathers later, their group will act out their scene and the other children will try to guess which promise goes with the situation they are acting out.

Encourage the older children to take the lead in planning, but make sure the younger children get to participate in some significant way in the scene they develop, too. Help all the children understand the promise they will act out. Each group will enact only one scene. One last rule: They may not use any words from the Bible promise in their skit/dialog. They'll present their skits to the large group later on.

Here are some promises and situations to get you started:

- ♥ [Jesus said,] "I am with you always." Matthew 28:20 ESV—in a scary time.
- ♥ [God says,] "I will hear." Zechariah 13:9 KJV—when we're upset about a problem and don't have anyone to talk to.
- ♥ [God says,] "I will forgive." Jeremiah 31:34 KJV—when we've hurt someone or disobeyed God's commands and feel sad and sorry about it.
- ♥ [God says,] "I will help you." Isaiah 41:10 ESV—anytime we need to do something we think is too hard for us.
- ♥ [God says,] "I have called you by name, you are mine." Isaiah 43:1 ESV—when other people make fun of us or don't want to be friends with us; when we feel lonely.
- ♥ "God is our refuge and strength." Psalm 46:1 KJV—when we have a problem too big for us to solve; when we feel afraid and weak.
- ♥ "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16 KJV—when we worry we might not make it to heaven, that God may forget about us or exclude us.

## **Large-Group Activities**

### **God's Great "You're Mine All the Time, Valentine!" Promises Charades (presentation)**

When each group has participated in all three of the small group activities, gather everyone in a large, open area. Have them sit down near the other members of their small-group, and then





call attention to the promises printed on the large hearts pinned to the board or curtain. Remind everyone that each group has had the opportunity to create a scene to act out for the others. Ask which group would like to go first. When that group has come to the front with their prop, remind them that they cannot use any of the words from the Bible promise in their skit.

Have each group, in turn, act out their skit. When each has finished, invite the other children to guess which Bible promise they were illustrating. When someone guesses the right verse, take it down from the display and give it to the person who guessed correctly.

Have each group in turn present while members of the other groups guess.

## Pump Up Cheer

Teach the group the following cheer and perform it together several times. (Each X represents a clap.) It may help at first if you have five posters and five helpers to hold them up. Label the posters **solo**, **claps**, **everyone**, **girls whisper**, and **boys shout**.

Introduce the activity: **Let's learn a cheer that reminds us about God's love. First, we'll learn the claps** (*practice the clapping pattern by clapping the line twice, once for the children and once with them*). **Next, we'll learn the cheer. Repeat after me, "You are mine all the time, Valentine!"** (*Pause and let them repeat the line.*) **Now we're ready for the whole cheer. Our sign helpers will show us the pattern, and we'll repeat the claps at the end.**

Solo: **God says . . .**

Everyone: **XX** (brief pause) **XXX** (pause) **XX** (brief pause) **XXX**

Everyone: **"You are mine all the time, Valentine!"**

Girls whisper: **"You are mine all the time, Valentine!"**

Boys shout: **"You are mine all the time, Valentine!"**

Everyone: **XX** (brief pause) **XXX** (pause) **XX** (brief pause) **XXX**



**Let's do it again!** Repeat the cheer and make fun variations of it. For example, have everyone whisper each time or shout each time, change body positions each time you repeat—stand, sit, lie down, bend over, wiggle, stretch, spin, skip in a circle.

Summarize briefly: **You are God's "valentine." He loves you enough to die for you! He will never, never stop loving you—Jesus' cross and all of God's wonderful promises prove that!**

## Snacks

### Valentine Cupcake Walk

#### Materials Needed

- ♥ One cupcake for each child (could be prepackaged cupcakes)
- ♥ Numbers taped to the floor—as many numbers as there are children
- ♥ A bag, box, or fishbowl filled with number call cards corresponding to the numbers on the floor
- ♥ A CD or cassette of Bible songs

When the music starts, the children begin to walk around the room. When the music stops, they should step on the number closest to them, one child per number. Have a volunteer pull a number from among the call cards. The child standing on the number called gets to choose a cupcake and sit down. Remove that number from both the floor and the pack of call cards. Continue until every child has a cupcake.



## Valentine Punch

### Materials Needed

- ♥ 1 liter raspberry sherbet
- ♥ 2 ounces pineapple juice
- ♥ 2 liters white soda (7-Up, Sprite)

Put the sherbet in the punch bowl. (It works best if it's half-melted.) Add the pineapple juice. Wisk together until smooth. Add the soda slowly, mixing continuously until the punch bowl is full.

## Valentine Smoothie

### Materials Needed

- ♥ Low-fat strawberry yogurt
- ♥ Frozen strawberries
- ♥ Frozen bananas
- ♥ Orange juice
- ♥ Kiss candies
- ♥ Low-fat whipped topping
- ♥ A blender



Put the yogurt, berries, and bananas in a blender. Pour a little orange juice on top and blend on high until well mixed. Pour the smoothie into tall glasses and top with a little low-calorie whipped topping and a candy kiss.

## Gelatin Hearts

### Materials Needed

- ♥ Strawberry gelatin
- ♥ Finely chopped strawberries
- ♥ Fresh strawberries
- ♥ Baking dish
- ♥ Heart-shaped cookie cutters



Prepare a package of strawberry gelatin according to package directions. Fold in a few finely chopped strawberries at the end. Pour the mixture into a baking dish and allow it to set.

Use heart-shaped cookie cutters to cut out hearts. Top each heart with half a strawberry (cut lengthwise).



## Closing

Gather everyone and use one of the free Valentine's Day Ministry Messages from CTA ([www.CTAinc.com/FreeResources](http://www.CTAinc.com/FreeResources)—click on Ministry Message Index and scroll down to Valentine's Day) as your closing worship thought. Distribute the gift associated with it.

Then repeat today's "Pump Up Cheer" one last time. Thank everyone for coming and make sure they have their take-home items. In addition, give visiting children a letter, brochure, or some other preprinted invitation welcoming them and those in their family to become a part of your church family if they don't already have a church family of their own.

After the event and cleanup, gather volunteers and pray for the children who attended, asking God to bless the Word he has planted in their hearts and that his eternal love for them will remain forever their most precious possession.