



This set of activities gives some simple ideas for RE lessons in the lead up to Christmas, exploring the idea of love. If your school has a carol service, which some schools still do, this work could be used as part of the programme, which is always a good thing.

▶ How to start

Begin with a poem, given to four pupils ahead of time to practice. You can label the different sections with letters or colours and divide it up more simply if necessary.

Love

A: What if I could speak all languages of humans and of angels?

B: If I did not love others, I would be nothing more than a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

A: What if I could prophesy and understand all secrets and all knowledge?

C: And what if I had faith that moved mountains?

B: I would be nothing, unless I loved others.

A: What if I gave away all that I owned and let myself be burned alive?

B: I would gain nothing, unless I loved others.

D: Love is kind and patient, never jealous, boastful, proud, or rude.

C: Love isn't selfish or quick tempered. It doesn't keep a record of wrongs that others do.

D: Love rejoices in the truth, but not in evil. Love is always supportive, loyal, hopeful, and trusting.

C: Love never fails!

A: Now all we can see of God is like a cloudy picture in a mirror.

B: Later we will see him face to face.

C: We don't know everything now, but then we will, just as God completely understands us.

A: For now there are faith, hope, and love.

D: But of these three, the greatest is love.

Tell the students this is the most famous 2000 year old love poem in the world, and defines Christian love. Talk about whether it has anything to do with Christmas.

▶ Activity

After hearing the poem and some class discussion, ask all the students in pairs to create their own poems using this framework:

Love is...

Love is...

Love is...

What if...

What if...

What if...

I gain nothing unless...

I gain nothing unless...

I gain nothing unless...



WHAT IS LOVE? (cont.)

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Love is not...

Love is not...

Love is not...

Love is always...

Love is always...

Love is always...

Tell them they have 5 minutes in their pairs to share ideas and write down their first thoughts. After this, if needed hand out some materials to use as inspiration to help them with developing their ideas. Use quotations from famous people, images, song lyrics, all related to different views of love.

Reflection question

Ask pupils to replace the word 'love' with the word 'Jesus'. Does the poem work? Christians believe Jesus was God's expression of love to the world.

My best Christmas Ever

This activity is based on a story of Paul's best Christmas.

'My best Christmas ever' by Paul Owen

I've always enjoyed a family Christmas with loads of laughs and presents. We throw parties, and go to parties. But my best Christmas ever was when I was 23. That year, I'd just finished college, and I decided to volunteer to work for the Cyrenians. It's a charity that helps homeless people. They sent me to work in Bristol, and I was part of a great team. Four of us worked at a day centre for homeless people in a big upstairs room of a Methodist church. We also did a 'soup run'. We would go all round the city centre and take hot soup in the middle of the night to people who slept in doorways or derelict buildings.

I learned that homeless people aren't bad people – they have been unlucky in life. Many of them are talented, able, skilful and kind, in their own way, like the rest of us.

For Christmas, we decided to keep the day centre open for four days, from Christmas Eve to the day after Boxing Day. It can be a very hard time for the homeless, not just because of the December cold, but also because of the sense of loneliness many might be feeling. We asked lots of local schools to help raise funds. Many did so, to sponsor a meal for our 65 homeless people. We begged and borrowed some decorations. A bunch of the homeless people who were musical got together. They stood round a piano and sang loads of Christmas songs. It wasn't 'Silent night', but it warmed your heart. Outside it was freezing.

Usually at our day centre, there could be a fight or an argument, and Christmas was like that too, but at the same time we all felt a kind of warm spirit.

Volunteers came in for a few hours to wash up, cook or help out – or, best of all, just to sit and chat, and make the party atmosphere work a bit. It was friendly. People talked about their childhood, and what Christmas had been like for them long ago.

Lat Blaylock, 2009



WHAT IS LOVE? (cont.)

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Activity

1. PATIENT / KIND / SUPPORTIVE / LOYAL / HOPEFUL / TRUSTING. Circle the places where you find these expressions of love in Paul's Christmas story.
2. Ask the students to write a paragraph describing their best Christmas ever. What do they think makes a perfect Christmas, or a perfect celebration? Offer a small prize to the pupils who write the best Christmas poem or story.

Send the best ones to schoolswork.co.uk, they might get published on the site!