

# Liturgy of the Word for Children

## Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

*\*\*Please Note: All scripture readings must be read from the Children's Lectionary\*\**

### Opening Prayer:

O God, we cannot see you  
yet you call on us to love you,  
even as we know you love us.  
Make us understand that everybody  
without exception is precious to you,  
and that to love them is to love you.  
Let us not be bothered  
about what we like and do not like  
but be awake to the needs of all the people we meet,  
just as Jesus did and who is now living with you,  
forever and ever. Amen.

### First Reading: Exodus 22:21-27

Our God says: "When there are foreigners and strangers living among you, you must never do anything to hurt them. Remember that you used to be strangers in the country of Egypt. And don't do anything to hurt widows and orphans. If you do hurt them, and they cry out to me, I will listen to them, and I will help them. But I will punish you.

"When you lend money to people who are poor, don't make them pay back more than they owe you. And if you take their coat as a promise that they will pay you back, don't keep it overnight because they will need it to keep warm. If they cry out to me, I will help them, for I love the poor and will take care of them."

### Gospel Reading: Matthew 22:34-40

(This reading is to be used for personal study. It should not be used in liturgy.)

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"

He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

### The Best Commandments of All: Gospel Reflection

This week, Jesus tells you about the two most important commandments: "Love God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself."

If you love God with all your heart, you will never misuse God's name or put others before God. And if you love your neighbor as yourself, you will not lie or steal or hurt others. Then Jesus makes it even easier. He says, "Whatever you do for others, you also do for me" (See Matthew 25:34-40). Every kind deed you do for a friend is a kind deed you are doing for God. Whenever you obey your parents, you are really obeying God.

Jesus gives you two great commandments that help you obey the Ten Commandments. Then he shows you that by obeying one you obey both. What a super shortcut to loving God!

**What Is Love?: Gospel Reflection**

**IS LOVE FOLLY?**

Many people believe that the Two Great Commandments of Jesus are absurd -- that they can't work. They say things like: "Why should I love the jerk who broke into my 'Vette and ripped out my stereo?" Or: "Give 'em an inch and they take a mile!" Or: "What about terrorists and rapists and child abusers?" Lots of folks who are down on religion use the excuse that Christianity just doesn't work. After all, look at all the bad in the world. "Good guys" just get pushed around -- or worse. "Get real!" they sneer.

**IS LOVE WISDOM?**

These are relevant points to look at. What do you do when somebody actually harms you or someone close to you? How do you handle situations where love isn't reciprocated? How do you keep from being "used"? Seriously, what about terrorists and rapists and child abusers? Does Christianity work?

G. K. Chesterton, a famous Catholic author, wrote this way back in 1910: "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried."

**When 2 = 10: Scripture Quiz**

Today's gospel tells us that by following only two laws we can keep the Ten Commandments that were given to Moses on Mount Sinai. How can this be?

JESUS' TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS

1. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.
2. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Carefully study the Ten Commandments, listed for you below, keeping in mind the Two Great Commandments listed above. On the blank following each of the Ten Commandments note whether it falls under Jesus' first commandment (1) or under his second commandment (2).

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (See Exodus 20:1-17)

1. I am the Lord your God ... you shall have no other gods before me. \_\_\_\_\_
2. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Honor your father and your mother. \_\_\_\_\_
5. You shall not murder. \_\_\_\_\_
6. You shall not commit adultery. \_\_\_\_\_
7. You shall not steal. \_\_\_\_\_
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. \_\_\_\_\_
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. \_\_\_\_\_
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods. \_\_\_\_\_

Have you marked every one of the Ten Commandments with either a "1" or a "2"? Do you understand how Jesus could say, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets"?

### **Loving God and Neighbor: Class or Family Activity**

Jesus' command to love our neighbors as ourselves is a challenge to all classes and families. Here are a few ideas that will help your children grow in their understanding of Jesus' commandments:

1. Have a "love God through our neighbor" meeting some day this week. Discuss who your neighbor is and new ways the class or family can love.
2. Select a project that will involve everyone in some way. Some classes or families may prefer an ongoing project like sponsoring a Third World child through one of the international organizations. Others may choose to help someone closer to home.
3. Learn and pray the following prayer together each day this week.

### **THE GREAT COMMANDMENTS PRAYER**

Dear Jesus, help us to love you by loving others. Remind us when we are impatient with one another, we are impatient with you -- and when we are kind to one another, we are kind to you. Help us to keep growing in love until we are truly loving God with our whole hearts. Thank you, Jesus, for showing us how easy it can be. Amen

**Prayers of the Faithful:** Allow a few moments for the children to offer prayers aloud for their special intentions. Ask them to end with "Let us pray to the Lord". All respond, "Lord, Hear our Prayer".

**Apostle's Creed:** You may end the Liturgy of the Word by reciting the Creed as a group if there is time.

## FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

Our readings focus on love of neighbor. In cycle C the commandment found in today's Gospel is coupled with a reading from *Deuteronomy* which puts the Sunday focus on love of God and neighbor. Here in cycle A, our first reading gives us a list of commandments relating to the treatment of others. The list includes foreigners, widows, orphans, the poor. In short, we are commanded to love everyone and to take special care of those in need.

The Gospel is a simple, straightforward presentation of the "greatest commandment." The focus is clear. Love of God and neighbor is not merely an option but the definition of what it means to be Christian.

## REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

At first glance this may seem a simple Gospel to reflect on with children. But, remembering that children take our words very seriously and often literally, we will want to exercise caution. I recall a vivid experience with this very text. After hearing Sister say that we "must love God more than anyone," one little first grade child went home crying. Finally that evening, she told her parents that she thought God didn't love her because she loved them (her parents) more than she loved God. And quite naturally so! Fortunately, the parents were very understanding and had the kindness to tell Sister what happened. When she shared this with the rest of the faculty, it was a learning experience for all of us!

With this caution in mind, let us proceed to our reflection on the Gospel. Rather than dwelling on how much we love God, we might explore with the children ways which we show our love for God:

- in our prayer,
- at mass,
- at home,
- with others, by telling them about the good things that happen (instead of the bad),
- by having a joyful disposition,
- by showing gratitude for God's gifts,
- by showing respect for the things God created and using them respectfully.

We might also explore how we show our love for our neighbor. The children will be able to make many suggestions.

The minister of the Word will want to keep the children focused on ways they can show love of neighbor which are truly possible for them. For example, they *cannot* feed the hungry of the world, but they *can* share their "goodies" generously with others.

They *cannot* make global peace, but they *can* work for peace in their families and with their playmates. What is important is that the children realize that when they show love for others, they are also showing love for God.

# Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Thought for the day

We are to love God with our whole being, and love others as much as we love ourselves.

## Readings

Exodus 22:20–26

1 Thessalonians 1:5–10

Matthew 22:34–40

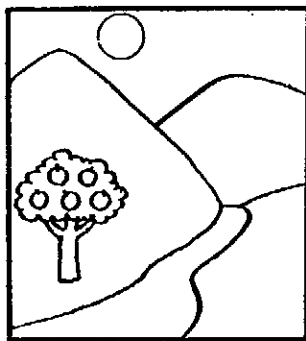
*Aim:* To know the summary of the law.

## Starter

Tape some lengths of yarn to the floor, criss-crossing the circle where you are all sitting. Choose four or five people to cross the circle at the same time, walking along the lines. The rule to avoid collisions is that whenever you meet someone else, both of you get off the line, swap positions and carry on. Point out how useful the rule was; keeping it made life easier and better for everyone.

## Teaching

You will need a full sheet of blue poster paper as the background, yellowy green hills, a blue river, a brown trunk and branches, green foliage and red and yellow fruit. As you talk, gradually the picture is built up, sticking one layer over another. The completed picture should look something like this:



In the countries where lots of rain falls all the year round, the trees have plenty to drink, so their leaves grow well and stay green in the summer. The tree grows lots of juicy fruit. In places where there isn't much rain at all, like this picture, the grass gets yellowy and dies in the heat of the sun. The trees can't survive either. *But*, suppose there is a river flowing through the dry grass (stick it on) and suppose a tree grows up right beside the river (put on the trunk and branches). The roots of this

tree can drink up the water from the river, so this tree grows lovely green leaves (put on the foliage) and they stay green. The tree beside the water can grow so well that it starts to have fruit—lots of fruit (stick on the fruit). Even when there are times when it doesn't rain, this tree beside the water is going to be fine, and have lots of fruit for the people and animals and birds to eat.

In the Bible, we are told how to live in the very best way, like trees planted beside streams of water. The Bible tells us that the river we need to live by is this:

To love God, and to love one another. (Write this in on the river of the picture.)

Live by this, and we'll grow and live strong and tall, with lots of good fruit in our life. Read the summary of the law, now that they know its outline.

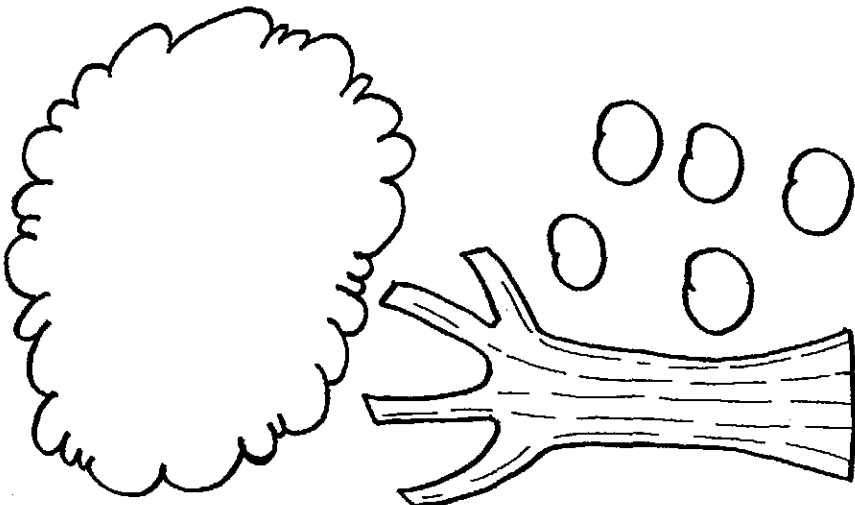
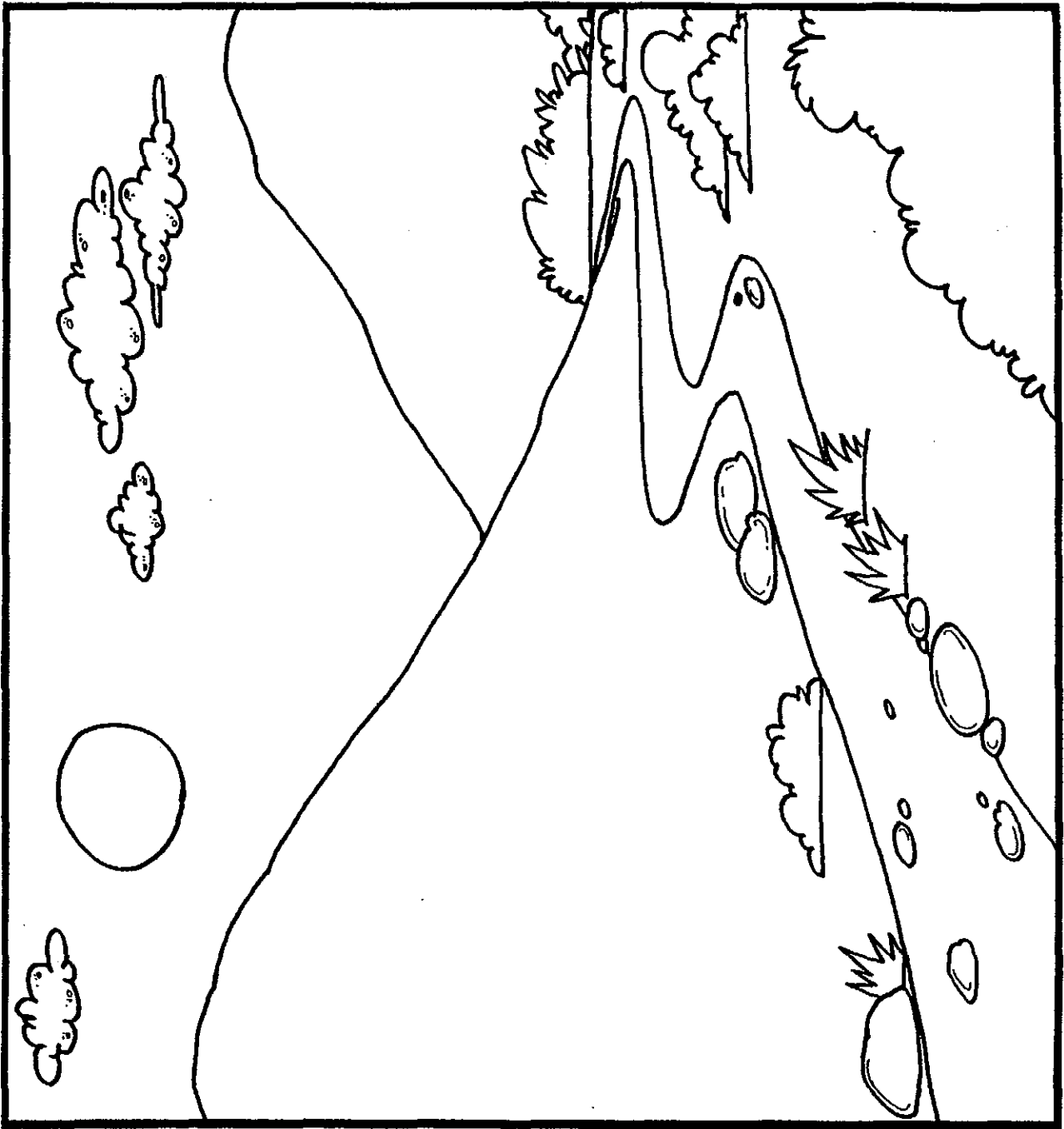
## Praying

Help us, Lord, to keep your law,  
loving you with all we are,  
loving other people too,  
that's what we will try to do.

## Activities

Sing the summary of the law with actions in a around. This is sung to the tune of *London's burning*, and the words and actions for this are in the all-age ideas. Provide the children with the different shapes of colored paper as shown on the activity sheet so they can make their own collage of the tree planted beside the water, with the summary of the law written on the river.

Notes



To pray this week

Help us, Lord, to keep  
your law,  
loving you with all  
we are,  
Loving other people too,  
that's what we will  
try to do.

## Thirtieth Sunday of the Year

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### Living love

#### INTRODUCTION

Jesus taught us to love God and to love each other more than anything else in our lives.

#### SIGN OF THE CROSS

#### LIGHT THE CANDLES

Jesus, help us to listen to your word today.  
And let the light of your love  
shine out like these candles,  
touching the lives of everyone we meet.

#### SORRY

When we fall, we pick ourselves up again and carry on as before. As we journey through life, sometimes we get things wrong, we make mistakes, we stumble and fall. Jesus is always there to help us up, so we can carry on. Sing Sorry Song 4.

#### GLORIA

#### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

To welcome today's Gospel sing Acclamation 1.

#### GOSPEL (MATTHEW 22:34-40)

Again the Pharisees asked Jesus a question which was meant to trick him. "Which of the commandments is the greatest?" they asked.

Jesus answered, "You must love God with all your might; this is the first and most important commandment. The second greatest commandment is that you should love your neighbor as yourself. All the other rules are based on these two commandments."

#### DISCUSSION

God gave Moses ten commandments to help his people to lead lives pleasing to God. Can you remember any of them? (See Sixth Sunday of Year A.) What are the two commandments that Jesus said are the most important? Why do you think Jesus chose these two commandments above all the others?

By loving God all we can, each of us becomes more loving in turn and ready to share that love

with each other. Our *neighbors* are not only the people we know well, our friends, and those that we like. They include the people we meet by chance every day of our lives; each one of these is a neighbor.

Jesus showed us how to love God and our neighbor. He put his words of love into action every day, and this is what he wants us to do. St. Paul wrote a letter to the Christians who lived in the Greek city of Corinth, to remind them of the perfect love which Jesus had shared with everyone:

Love never hurries, it is always kind.

It is not jealous

and never boasts of its greatness.

Love is not rude or selfish.

It is always ready to forgive

and forget mistakes we make.

Love is no friend of wickedness

but delights in honesty and truth.

Love is strong and never gives up.

It never loses its trust in God

or its hope for the future.

Love will survive all things

because it is everlasting.

(1Corinthians 13:4-8)

If we remember to put these words into action, then we will be putting the two greatest commandments into action in our lives.

#### ACTIVITY

Copy the words of St. Paul for each child to decorate and take home with them.

#### CREED

#### CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, I have only one life

and shall not live this day again.

Help me to remember

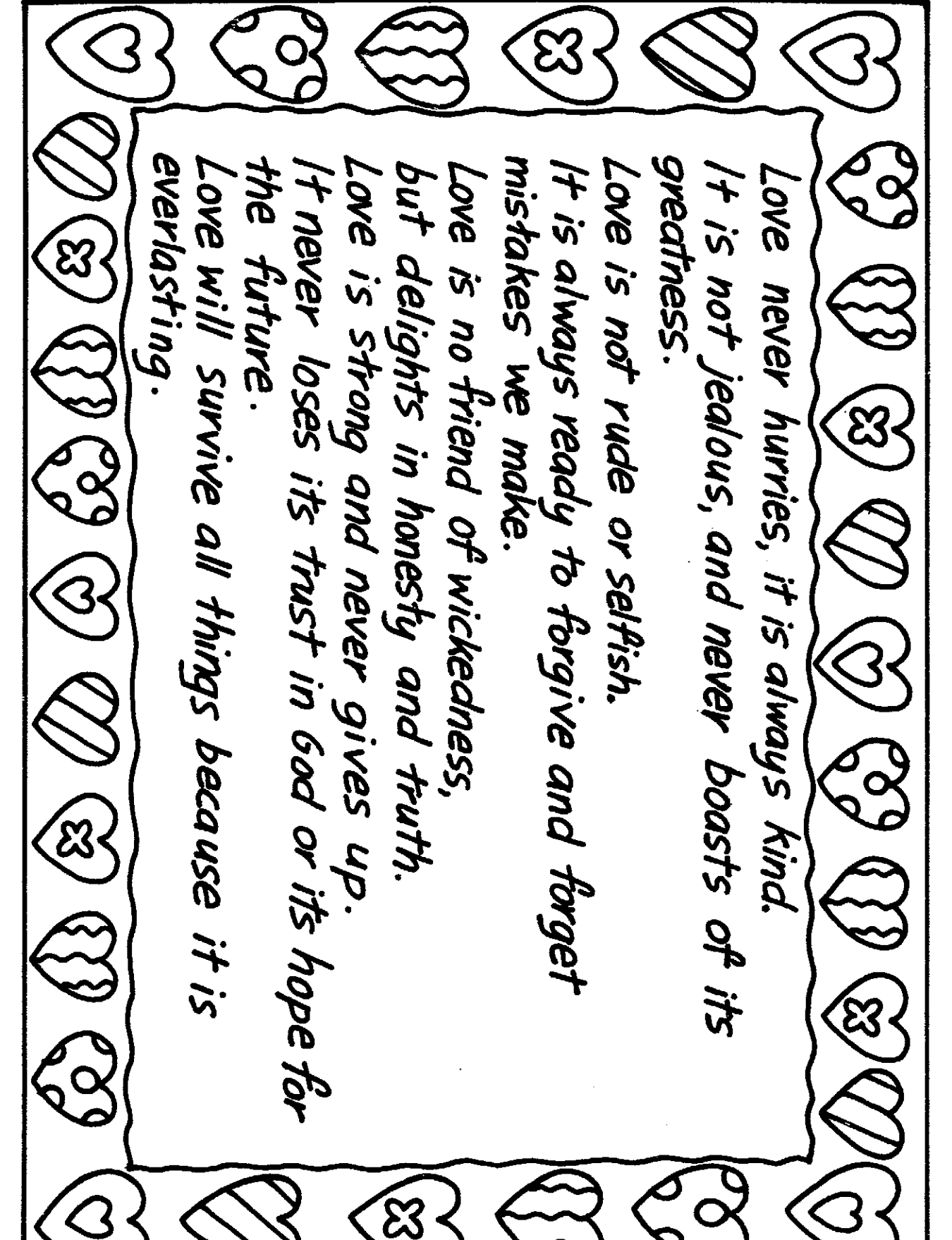
that everyone is my neighbor.

If I can do something good

or show my kindness,

then help me to do it today,

for unless love is shared it cannot grow.



*Love never hurries, it is always kind.  
It is not jealous, and never boasts of its  
greatness.*

*Love is not rude or selfish.  
It is always ready to forgive and forget  
mistakes we make.*

*Love is no friend of wickedness,  
but delights in honesty and truth.  
Love is strong and never gives up.*

*It never loses its trust in God or its hope for  
the future.  
Love will survive all things because it is  
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