

Lesson 1 - God is Love

Let's read 1 John 4:7-10 together:

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

These verses declare God IS LOVE and that He loved us FIRST!

God's Kind of Love - There is a difference between God's love and human love. Human love is conditional. God's love is unconditional. (For example: Romans 5:8-10 says, "While we were enemies of God, He still loved us". He is love! You can't earn His love. He already loves you more than you can imagine!)

There are 4 types of love mentioned in the Bible:

- 1) **phileo** (friendship)
- 2) **storge** (family)
- 3) **eros** (sexual)
- 4) **agape** (God's kind of love).

1 John 3:1,2 says:

"Behold what manner of love (agape) the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God."

1 John 4:16 says:

"... we have known and believed the love of God."

We have become the children of God! And we BELIEVE IN His love for us! This is VERY IMPORTANT! We were created for His love and fellowship! We BELIEVE His love is an EVERLASTING, NEVER-CHANGING LOVE!!!

Jeremiah 31:3 declares:

*"The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying:
"Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love;
Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you."*

God draws you because He has loved you with an everlasting love!

CREATED FOR LOVE - GOD'S PURPOSE FOR MANKIND

Let's read Genesis 1:26-28:

"Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Again, God is love. God CREATED US to LOVE us. We are HIS MASTERPIECE and we are created in HIS IMAGE and LIKENESS... We are different than the animals. God spoke to everything else and created it with His words, but He created us with His words AND His hands (there is power in the hands of God) and that shows His GREAT care and attention to detail in forming us! And THEN He breathed His Spirit into us!!

Psalm 139:13,14 declares this!

*"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Marvellous are Your works,
And that my soul knows very well.
My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And skilfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth."*

Many people question God's love because of bad experiences in their lives - e.g. The loss of a loved one, tragedy, abuse, a miscarriage... The strategy of Satan is to say that everything bad comes from God, but when God created man He placed him in a PARADISE! His plan for man NEVER included sorrow, pain, sickness, disease, suffering, tragedy or death!

There are 3 places where God's PERFECT WILL FOR US is revealed:

- 1) The Garden of Eden - there was no sin, sickness, sorrow, pain or death.
- 2) Heaven - again, there is no sin, sickness, sorrow, pain or death.
- 3) Jesus' life - Jesus laboured to preach the Good News, heal the broken-hearted, heal the sick, liberate the captives and deliver those who were oppressed by the devil. He never said "No" to anyone! He never turned anyone away saying, "I'm sorry, I can't heal you today" or "I can't help!" HE WAS ALWAYS READY TO SAVE, HEAL, DELIVER, FORGIVE, AND SET PEOPLE FREE! He was and IS ALWAYS READY TO ANSWER A CALL FOR HELP!

Romans 10:13 says:

"For whosoever calls upon the Name of the LORD will be saved." The meaning of the word "saved" includes: salvation, healing, deliverance, preservation and safety. It's a complete package!

1 John 3:8 says, *"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, TO DESTROY the works of the devil."* The word "destroy" means to break up, destroy, dissolve and render of NO EFFECT! That is what JESUS came for, to destroy EVERY WORK of the devil!

SO WHAT IS GOD LIKE? - JESUS WAS GOD IN ACTION!

Jesus said, *"If you have seen Me, you've seen the Father!"* - John 14:9,10. Jesus flawlessly and completely revealed the nature and character of God the Father to us here on earth so that we would NEVER QUESTION His mercy and commitment toward us!

Hebrews 1:1-3 says that God, in these last days, has spoken unto us through HIS SON, and that He (Jesus) was "the brightness of His glory" and the "express image of His person." In other words, JESUS DEMONSTRATED THE ABSOLUTE PERFECT WILL OF GOD FOR MAN and his COMPASSION for us!

Jesus' Name as He returns is called "Faithful and True!" - Revelation 19:11. There is NO ONE who has ever been or EVER WILL BE MORE FAITHFUL AND MORE TRUE TO YOU!

Read John 10:10, Jesus said:

"The thief (the devil) does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep."

Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd." His HIGHEST AIM was to give us LIFE and LIFE MORE ABUNDANTLY! That word "life" means "God's kind of Life!" AND He was willing to LAY DOWN HIS LIFE in order for us to receive it!

This was the ULTIMATE EXPRESSION of his love for us, which He demonstrated when He went to the cross on our behalf!!! HE BORE the pain, the penalty and the punishment for our sin, so WE WOULDN'T HAVE TO! He took it ALL OUT OF THE WAY, BEARING IT UPON HIS CROSS!!!

God has NEVER left you or forsaken you. He has seen all you've gone through, your suffering and your pain. Sin and rebellion against God opened the door to all the suffering we see around us. It's the devil who steals, kills and destroys, NOT God! God's character is COMPLETELY OPPOSITE from the devil's!

NEVER BE CONFUSED ABOUT GOD

James 1:17 exhorts us NEVER to be confused:

“Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every GOOD GIFT and every PERFECT GIFT is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is NO VARIATION or shadow of turning.”

He’s the SOURCE of ALL good things and He NEVER changes!

No matter what you’ve gone through, God is on your side! No matter what sins you have committed - anger, jealousy, drunkenness, adultery... “JESUS HAS ALREADY GONE TO THE CROSS FOR YOU!!! He has ALREADY FORGIVEN YOU!” He ONLY ASKS that you ACKNOWLEDGE your need for forgiveness and RECEIVE IT! Such a GREAT PRICE was paid to PROVIDE IT FOR YOU!!!

And there simply COULDN’T BE a greater demonstration of God’s love for you than what Jesus has done for you already! And Jesus is the same, “yesterday, today and forever” according to Hebrews 13:8. HIS LOVE FOR YOU HAS NEVER CHANGED! AND IT NEVER WILL!!!

THE GREATEST LOVE!

Let’s read John 3:16 together:

“For God SO LOVED THE WORLD that He gave His only begotten Son, that WHOEVER believes in Him should NOT perish, but HAVE everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

God’s love is not bestowed upon us because we are rich, poor, beautiful, educated, privileged or perfect! It’s NOT based on our works or good deeds, but bestowed upon us simply because He LOVES US! We are His CREATION! And THE CROSS demonstrates His love for EVERYONE OF US!!!

Ephesians 2:4-5,8-9 declares:

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ ... BY GRACE you have been saved THROUGH FAITH, and that not of yourselves; it is the GIFT OF GOD, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

Read Romans 5:8 again:

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

The VALUE of something is the PRICE others are willing to pay for it. YOU were SO PRECIOUS TO GOD, He was willing to give His ALL, HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON and JESUS was willing to LAY DOWN HIS LIFE for YOU!!

THIS IS THE GREATEST KIND OF LOVE!!!

John 15:13 says, *“GREATER LOVE has no man than this, than a man LAY HIS LIFE DOWN for HIS FRIENDS.”*

Love and giving always go hand in hand, like in John 3:16 and 1 John 4:9-10. Love is expressed by what it is willing to give to others: time, energy, trust, forgiveness, gifts etc. GOD GAVE US HIS ALL!!!

We are also told something BEAUTIFUL in Romans 8:31,32:

“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” This is another ASTOUNDING truth, but it flows directly from the GREATEST GIFT EVER GIVEN - It means there is NOTHING that God the Father would withhold from us! He is WILLING TO GIVE US FREELY ALL THINGS!

Remember, He’s the FATHER of LIGHTS from whom EVERY GOOD and EVERY PERFECT GIFT flows!

Think of it this way: There is NO monetary value you could EVER PLACE on Jesus going to the cross on our behalf! (He was the PRICELESS GIFT OF HEAVEN!) But suppose you could for the sake of illustration. Let's say His gift and offering for us was worth £100 trillion pounds. If God the Father was willing to give to us £100 trillion pounds, then how would He have any difficulty whatsoever in giving us the £400 gift of healing? The £900 gift of family salvation? The gift of answered prayer? Do you see what God was illustrating?

How much are YOU worth to God? ALL of this! You were worth Christ's coming! His life on earth! His going to the cross! And His resurrection! IT WAS ALL FOR YOU! This is a staggering revelation! THINK ABOUT IT! AND NEVER LET THIS TRUTH GO!!!

OUR RESPONSIBILITY

When asked which is the greatest commandment, Jesus said, *'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'* This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: *'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'* - Matthew 22:37-39

Loving God with ALL of our heart and with ALL of our soul (mind, will and emotions) is the ONLY appropriate response to God's eternal love and ALL HE HAS DONE FOR US! Relationship with Him fills the empty God-shaped void in our hearts. LOVE FOR HIM shapes our thoughts, words, actions, priorities and goals. There's NO area of our lives that remains untouched!

LOVING OTHERS AS JESUS HAS LOVED US

Jesus not only asks that we love others as we love ourselves, but He went even further! He asked us to LOVE OTHERS AS HE HAS LOVED US!

John 15:12-13 says:

"This is My commandment, that you LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU."

God wants us to love others out of the OVERFLOW of our own personal relationship with Him! AND as we GROW in the infinitely knowledge of His AMAZING LOVE, we in turn, LOVE others! It's SO MUCH easier that way!

Growing in the knowledge of Christ's love for us causes us to be ASTOUNDED and FILLS US with WONDER!!! THEN we can love others as Christ has loved us! It's SO MUCH easier that way!

Loving others means we're patient, kind, forgiving and easily forget when someone treats us the wrong way.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-8 says it the best way!

"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."

Read these verses again carefully. This is the real face of God's love for us and what His love truly looks like. He bears all things with us, believes in us with greatest expectations and His hopes for us are fadeless! We are called to love, believe in and demonstrate this greatest gift of love to others!

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 says:

"And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."

Meditate on God's love for you every day! Think about His forgiveness, His acceptance and the new life and fresh start He's given you! Do the same toward others!

MEMORY VERSE: John 3:16

16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."