

Home Study

March, April, May 2017



SPRING QUARTER



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The Love of God

ARLENE KNICKERBOCKER

Nothing is better to focus on than God's great love for us, which we see throughout the Old Testament and New Testament.

Our first unit looks at "The Nature of God's Love." God's love is not the kind of love we see portrayed in our culture. His love is unconditional and others-centered. It is a supernatural display of His character.

In lesson 1, we learn how we can love as God loves. If we are not loving others, we would do well to examine our relationship with God, for God is love.

When we become God's children, we begin to share the love the Holy Spirit produces in us. Jesus demonstrated love, and the Holy Spirit empowers us to love as He does.

Lesson 2 sheds light on how devastating sin is. It enslaves. It causes physical and spiritual death.

We will focus on how Jesus overcame sin and death. He saves rather than enslaves. Instead of being dead *in* sin, we can become dead *to* sin.

God's great grace shows itself through His people. He fills us with so much love that it overflows to others.

Lesson 3 reveals Jesus Christ as the True Vine. In Him is life and love.

Jesus is the Vine, and we are the branches. A branch cannot live and produce fruit without a solid connection to the vine.

Israel thought of itself as the true vine,

but the Israelites were always just branches. Their leaders were not displaying God's love; so the Vinedresser removed them and grafted in branches of Gentile believers to manifest His love.

Lesson 4 spotlights God's mercy, which is a part of His love. He wants to bless! God gives warnings and calls people to repentance, and He sends situations that make them aware of their need for Him.

The second unit is about "The Work of God's Love." Love is an action verb. When God's love flows through us, it can accomplish more than we imagine. As we study the next five lessons, we will see God's love at work in various people living through different circumstances.

Lesson 5 discloses the secret to contentment. When we come to know the One who is caring for us and realize how much He loves us, it can revolutionize our lives.

Lesson 6 encourages saving faith as we study another familiar portion of Scripture. We will see how God's love presents a new perspective on life for a religious leader—and for us.

Lesson 7 stresses the triumph of God's everlasting, faithful, proven love and the hope it brings.

We can contemplate the wonders of the resurrection repeatedly and still gain new insights. We will see hope resurrected in the disciples. Because of Christ's resurrection, our hearts can overflow

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edness to the Spirit of Truth, each writing in his own style as enlightened by the Holy Spirit. At best we know in part only. "They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).



with confident, joyful hope today.

Lesson 8 will cause us to ponder God's power. If He is for us, there is no one who can stand against us. Jesus conquered death. He is above all principalities. He is timeless. When we abide in Him, no person, power, or phenomenon can separate us from His love.

Lesson 9 reveals how the Good Shepherd showed His love. Many mistreat those under their care, but Jesus was more concerned with the needs of others than His own comfort.

The third unit focuses on "The Extent of God's Love." Our human minds cannot fathom how much He loves us. The Holy Spirit must reveal this to us. He does this as we study His written Word (the Bible) and get to know the Living Word (Jesus). God's perfect, holy love has many facets. This unit will uncover some of them.

The last four lessons of the quarter are about how God demonstrated love in and through a reluctant prophet. No fish story can top the true story we will study in lesson 10.

God often allows circumstances to reach a crisis no human can solve. Then it is apparent that God is the one doing the work when He intervenes. In Jonah's case everyone involved in this situation certainly became aware of God's intervention. God gave the

prophet a captive audience of pagan sailors who were offered an opportunity to turn to the true and living God.

Some people have a problem "swallowing" the story of Jonah and the great fish, but Jesus believed it and used it as an example.

In lesson 11, Jonah experienced physically what the people in Nineveh experienced spiritually. They were perishing, and their only hope was in the Lord.

Our merciful Lord gave Jonah another chance. We can identify with Jonah in that God's great love continually offers us new opportunities for spiritual growth and for service.

Lesson 12 proves that the Lord reaches out in love to undeserving people and responds to repentance. We do not know how God prepared the people of Nineveh for Jonah's message, but the people of the city believed Jonah.

We are not certain that every single person exhibited saving faith, but they did show public signs of remorse for their wicked ways.

In lesson 13, the Lord used questions to encourage Jonah to dig below the surface and deal with his own heart issues. Jonah's anger was only a symptom of the deep disease of sin that we all must face.

Jonah needed to ask God to search his heart, and then he needed to repent of the sin that was hidden there. The Ninevites would actually serve as examples of humility to Jonah.

We can take away from this quarter a joyful, confident hope! Our omnipresent Lord is with us wherever we are. He knows our needs, and He possesses more than enough to meet them.

As our loving Father, He provides and protects. As our Saviour, He has paid the price and redeemed us from sin. As our spiritual Comforter and Guide, He leads us into paths of righteousness.

No matter who we are, where we are, or what circumstances surround us, we can praise the Holy One.

Scripture Lesson Text

1 JOHN 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spir'it.

14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

15 Whosoever shall confess that Je'sus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

19 We love him, because he first loved us.

NOTES

The Source of All Love

Lesson: I John 4:7-19

Read: I John 4:7-19

TIME: about A.D. 90-95

PLACE: probably from Ephesus

GOLDEN TEXT—"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (I John 4:11).

Lesson Exposition

John urges us, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us" (I John 3:1). Let us consider the awe-inspiring love of God.

GOD LOVES—I John 4:7-10

Love comes from God (I John 4:7-8). We who trust in Jesus Christ are the beloved (much loved) children of God Himself, who is love. This truth holds the power to revolutionize our lives.

Humans are unable in their own power to produce the kind of love God has. Once we receive the unconditional love of God, we can share His love with one another.

God's very nature is love. We must become His children to take on His nature. Those who lack pure love lack a relationship with God.

Love reveals God's character (I John 4:9-10). Even before time began, the Triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) lived in perfect love and harmony.

This relational God created a relational world. Everything He created has multiple parts designed to work together in harmony.

He desired a further recipient who

would return His love, so He created humans. Adam and Eve enjoyed a loving relationship with God and one another until they listened to a lie and turned away from His love.

If humans had not sinned, we would never have fully known how great God's love is. Instead of destroying humankind, God did what was necessary to redeem us and draw us back into the loving relationship He desires.

Who but God could have devised such a plan? God the Father gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16). God the Son agreed to lay aside His rights and come to earth, knowing He would suffer and die (Phil. 2:6-8). The Holy Spirit implanted the holy seed into a woman God had chosen (Luke 1:34-35).

All of this showed how much the Triune God loved us and valued a loving relationship with us. We were slaves to sin, so Jesus redeemed us (bought us) with His own blood (I Pet. 1:18-20). He is now our loving Master.

God did not love us because we deserved love. He loved us when we were following Satan, His enemy. His love, mercy, and grace are amazing!