

# **A SIX WEEK LENT BIBLE STUDY**



## ***HOW DO WE KNOW GOD LOVES US?***

### **FACILITATORS:**

**AFTERNOON BIBLE STUDY, 1 pm to 2 pm: MINISTERS C. FLOWERS AND L. CRAWL**

**EVENING BIBLE STUDY, 6:15 pm to 7:30 pm: MINISTER T. WILLIAMS JR.**

**WEDNESDAY MARCH 4, 2020 thru WEDNESDAY APRIL 8, 2020**

**Community Baptist Church of Greater Milwaukee**

**2249 N. Sherman Blvd.**

**Milwaukee, WI. 53208**

**Rev. Dr. Demetrius K. Williams, Pastor**

## PREFACE

I would like to thank Community Baptist Church of Greater Milwaukee Associate Clergy, Charlotte Flowers and Timothy Williams Jr., for their initiative, theological/biblical training and collaborative labor in putting together this Lenten Study for our collective enrichment and spiritual growth. After searching various sources and resources that we might consider for our 2020 Lenten Studies series, they determined that the Lenten themes and studies they examined and explored did not quite mesh with what the Spirit was saying to them regarding the spiritual needs of Community Baptist Church of Greater Milwaukee. Therefore, they chose to develop their own Lenten Study with the goal of exploring the theme of God's faithful and abiding love for God's people as expressed in both the Old and New Testaments. I look forward to participating with you all as a fellow learner, and I encourage you to read, reflect and pray together with the faithful all over the world as we engage the meaning and purpose of God's love in our lives.

In the service of Christ,

Rev. Dr. Demetrius K. Williams , Pastor  
Community Baptist Church of Greater Milwaukee

## **LENTEN BIBLE STUDY**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

There was a poem in the 19<sup>th</sup> century called "*The Hound of Heaven*," written by English poet Francis Thompson. Below is the meaning of the poem.

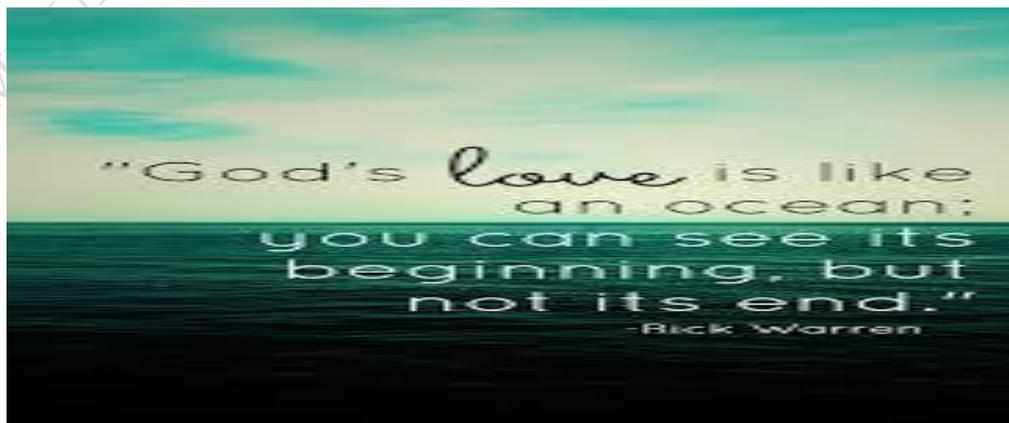
This Christian poem has been described as follows:

"The name is strange. It startles one at first. It is so bold, so new, and so fearless. It does not attract, rather the reverse. But when one reads the poem this strangeness disappears. The meaning is understood. As the hound follows the hare, never ceasing in its running, ever drawing nearer in the chase, with unhurrying and unperturbed pace, so does God follow the fleeing soul by His Divine grace. And though in sin or in human love, away from God it seeks to hide itself, Divine grace follows after, unwearingly follows ever after, till the soul feels its pressure forcing it to turn to Him alone in that never-ending pursuit." J.F.X. O'Connor, S.J. ("*The Hound of Heaven*" is a 182-line poem written by English poet Francis Thompson 1859–1907).

God's love is so great for us, He never stops pursuing us, wherever we are He is there waiting for us to turn to Him in complete submission. King David realized this and pinned his thoughts about God's constant presence in his life in Psalms 139.

Lent is the **Christian season of preparation before Easter**. The Lenten season is a time when many Christians observe a period of fasting, repentance, moderation, self-denial and spiritual discipline. The purpose is **to set aside time for reflection on Jesus Christ—his love for us demonstrated by His birth, suffering, his sacrifice, his life, death, burial, and resurrection**.

This Lenten study will focus on God's love for us to confirm and dispel any doubts we may have. The lessons are designed to provide divine absolute proof so we will know without a doubt that He loves us in spite of ourselves. As we study the next six weeks, take time to remember, reflect and appreciate the grace, mercy and unwavering love God has for us. It is our prayer that this study will encourage your spiritual growth, faith, trust and dedication to God and others in love.

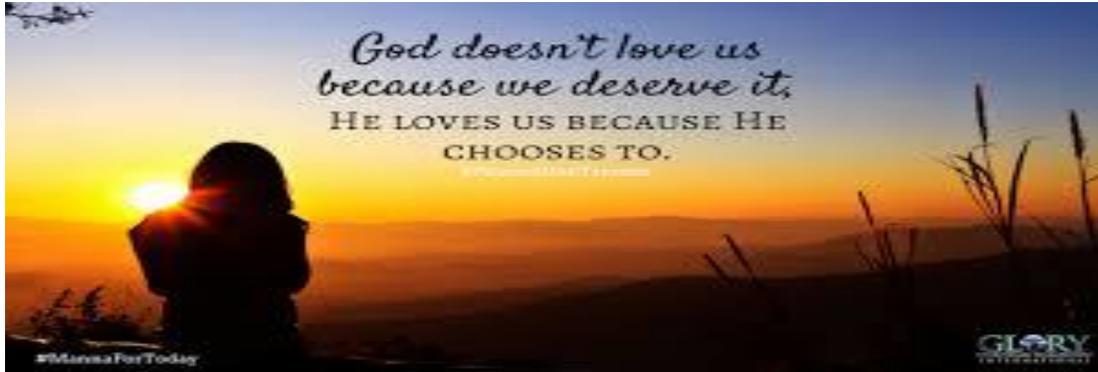


# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Lesson 1	Deuteronomy 7:9
Lesson 2	Psalms 86:15
Lesson 3	Psalms 136:2-3
Lesson 4	Romans 8:35-39
Lesson 5	I John 4:10
Lesson 6	John 3:16



# LESSON 1



## Words for Thought

The focus scripture says that God keeps his covenant of love to a thousand generations. The Hebrew plural of the word “generation” can be interpreted to mean “to all generations to come;” in other words, to everyone now and yet to be born. Imagine; God’s love was extended to us before we existed. When I think about God’s love that is available to the entire world, it’s not because we deserve it but because He chooses to love us because “God is love.” Love is a core aspect of God’s character, God’s Person. God’s love is, in no sense, in conflict with His holiness, righteousness, justice, or even His wrath. All of God’s attributes are in perfect harmony. Everything God does is done out of love.

None of us deserve the gift of God’s love because we have all sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23). God doesn’t desire that anyone should perish (II Peter 3:9). God wants all to have the gift of salvation available through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He doesn’t want us to forfeit the promise made in Deuteronomy 7:6-9, because we are His treasured possession and He chooses us, He continuously looks (*Hound of Heaven*) for His treasured people of all generations to live with Him in eternity. Isn’t that Good News?

## Lesson 1

### Lesson Overview

We will study, explore and discuss God’s love for the Israelites that was evident in their lives as He “chased them out of Egypt,” “chased them” during their forty years wandering in the desert, providing protection, provision, and direction to change their hearts and minds from a “stony heart” to a “heart of flesh” that loves God, while leading them to the promise land.

## Focus Scripture

### **DEUTERONOMY 7:6-9**

<sup>6</sup> For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. <sup>7</sup> The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. <sup>8</sup> But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh King of Egypt. <sup>9</sup> **Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.**

The first commandment God gave to the Israelites was to, “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deut 6:5). An expert in the law tested Jesus with this question: <sup>36</sup> “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” <sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with your entire mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22: 37-39). Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:5.

The Hebrew word for love is “*Ahavah*” – (a-ha-vah) אהבה; God the Father reveals Himself to us through the love of His only begotten Son. *Ahavah* is love that is affirmed by action, affection, care, giving, touching, protecting and giving of quality time. God showed and expressed all these qualities of love by freeing the Israelites from bondage (v.8) (Action), setting “His affection” on the Israelites (v.7) and cared for them in the wilderness (clothed them/supplied water/manna from heaven). God was giving, he gave the Israelites the land of their enemies and God surely touched the Israelites by interacting with them through Moses. God protected the Israelites from **all** their enemies and God gave His time – God was a cloud by day and a wall of fire by night (EX 13:22). *Ahavah* is not love as the Greek word *Agape* – unconditional love – but *ahavah* in a sense means, “I love you and am good to you and if you love me you would do right by me” (Reciprocate). <sup>31</sup> Do to others as you would have them do to you (Luke 6:31). We love because God first loved us (1 John 4:19). If we love God, we will not live in a way that is inconsistent with His Love – “***Ahavah***” the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength!” Just as God ***Ahavah*** you!

## Reflections & Questions

### Lenten Facilitator’s Reflection on Deuteronomy 7:9

God is like a *Hound* chasing our hearts as He tries to lead us to eternity. He has left us instructions (The Bible) so we do not have to “*wander*” through life as the Israelites wandered forty years through the desert. God does not want hearts of stone but hearts of flesh who will reciprocate His love back to Him and others by acts of kindness and generosity – a giving love that will reflect to others God’s giving Love. This Lent, let us pray the next forty days that God *hounds* our spirit to love Him and others and in doing so we draw others closer to God.

## Questions

- 1) After reading the above scriptures, what evidence is there of God's love?
  
- 2) Can you look back and see God's love in your generations? If so, what do you remember?
  
- 3) Can you recall a time when you knew for sure God loved you? What were the circumstances?
  
- 4) Was there ever a time when you felt that God did not love you? Explain.
  
- 5) Write a prayer thanking God for His enduring love for you and your family.
  
- 6) What response does this prayer evoke from you to God?

## LESSON 2



### Words for Thought

When I read and studied Psalm 86, I realized that the Psalmist has a relationship with God because he calls out to Him for deliverance. As I reflect on my life, I have to ask myself when I'm in distress, stressed or feel as if the world around me is crumbling out of control and I feel lost and confused, "who do I call on?" Who do I call out to? Do I call on friends or family? Or am I like David and cry out to God? Psalm 86 is written by someone who has stopped running from God and maybe has even looked back over their life and have seen the handprint, footprints of God in those moments when he wasn't sure of his next steps.

When I think about God's love and how He pursued me, I remember His love; His handprint and footprint that have surrounded me when I stopped running from Him and totally surrendered to Him. I can bask in the glow of His love knowing that He chose me. No matter what comes my way, my response should not rest on how I feel, but with whom do I have a covenant relationship of love with – God, who is and has been faithful to me. This reality gives me peace and resolve that moves me to the next phase of life – secure in the arms of my Father in heaven.

I can confidently say NEXT!

## Lesson 2

### Lesson Overview

We will study David's prayer to God, where he acknowledged his dependence on God and his humble petitions to God. What has David experienced that made him pen this Psalm to God? We will peel back the layers of David's Psalm to reveal the reasons for this Psalm.

### Focus Scripture

#### **PSALMS 86:15**

#### **A prayer of David.**

<sup>15</sup> But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

David, as in the majority of his Psalms (Songs), makes petitions to the Lord God for deliverance out of any and all troubles he faced and could face. David understood that obedience and love towards God placed you in favor with God and that the likelihood of deliverance would be afforded. Oppositely, David understood that a disobedient servant and one that lacked love for God stood the likelihood of not being answered by God and that their fate would be imminent. David understood God's love for him and reciprocated God's love back to the people of God. God's deliverance of David was shown by David's and Jonathan's love for one another, we read: **"As soon as David had finished speaking to Saul, Jonathan and David became bound together in close friendship, and Jonathan began to love him as himself."** Jonathan gave David his own fighting gear, including his bow—quite a gift, for Jonathan was a renowned archer. What is more, Jonathan and David made a covenant, a solemn agreement, which bound them together as friends who would support each other (1 Sam 18:1-5).

David always petitioned God out of sincere obedience and love towards God this placed David in favor with God and by loving God and others God will place someone there for you in times of need, without love for others one stand a chance of not being delivered. We must love all people, we never know who it might be that could help us. <sup>8</sup> Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins (1Peter 4:8).

## Reflections & Questions

### Lenten Facilitator's Reflection on Psalms 86:15

We can learn from David's Psalms that we must pray and petition God out of a loving and sincere heart. In many of David's psalms, he didn't only pray for himself but for the provision, protection, success and deliverance of all God's people which is what we are to do. When we love God we must love people, "Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. <sup>2</sup> Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it" (Hebrews 13:1-2). This Lent I ask that we pray the next forty days that God gives us a true penitent heart that cries out for our betterment and the betterment of others.

### Questions

- 1) How does David approach God?
- 2) What is his supplication to God?
- 3) What is David's understanding of who God is?
- 4) Why does praise glorify God?
- 5) What emotions does this Psalm evoke in you? Why?
- 6) Using the Psalm above as your model, write your own Psalm to God.

## LESSON 3



### Words for Thought

What is love? How does one show love to others? What's love got to do with it? People have pondered love and have written songs, poems, and essays about the word love. Let me share my thoughts on love.

Thoughts:

Love makes you do what you wouldn't think of ever doing.

Love makes you, laugh, sad, cry, smile, and run away.

Love makes you happy, gives you peace, gives you security and contentment.

Love makes you lay down, sit down, drive you to your knees or stand up.

Love makes you say yes, say no, or say wait.

Love makes you seek that which is lost and celebrate when the loss is found.

Love makes you shout.

Love makes you look up.

Thank you Lord for your everlasting love!

As I was writing about love I realized that what I expressed is the results of knowing that God loves me.

I'm smiling and crying thinking about the glorious impact of knowing how much God loves me, has touched me and framed the inner core of my being.

## Lesson 3

### Lesson Overview

Thank God for His written Word to encourage us and remind us of whom God is and His promises to us that show the love God has for His people, the Israelites and us. We are the generations to come and have come according to His promises in our Deuteronomy 7:9 study. Psalms 136 recants God's steadfast love from creation to the time the Psalm was written.

The refrain, "for His steadfast love endures forever," was sung in Solomon's temple (2 Chronicles 7:3 and 7:6) and by the armies of Jehoshaphat after their victories (2 Chron. 20:21).

This Psalm contains nothing but praise. It is tuned to rapture and can only be fully enjoyed by a devoutly grateful heart. As we read and study this Psalm we should take note of the movement of the Psalms. The movement points us to a God who loves us.

### Focus Scripture

#### **PSALMS 136:2-3**

<sup>2</sup>Give thanks to the God of gods. ***His love endures forever.***

<sup>3</sup>Give thanks to the Lord of lords: ***His love endures forever.***

This Psalm is a praise of God's love as exhibited by His magnificent greatness in the things God has done, the things God can do and the things God will do. Psalms 136 is a praise song for God in His role as the creator and that God's creation was out of love. The Psalmist wants us to see that God loves everything He created-especially us! Therefore, God is due praise, honor and glory for His benevolence. The Psalmist saw and experienced God's love for him and all His creation and therefore sees it obligatory to love God and all His creation.

Psalms 136:1-3 Calls the community to offer thankful praises to God.

Psalms 136:4-9 Should move us to Praise God who spread out the earth and water, made great light for the day and the night.

Psalms 136:10-22 Should motivate us to praise God for His wonderful deeds for His people at the beginning of their history.

Psalms 136:23-25 Should motivate us to Praise God for His mercy and protection.

Psalms 136:26 Is the call for us to praise God and be thankful to Him continuously.

## Reflections & Questions

### Lenten Facilitator's Reflection On Psalms 136:2-3

Psalms 136 should be self-evident, it is reflective of Psalms 150 – “Praise the Lord, let everything that have breath praise the Lord!” God loves the praises of His people because praise exhibits honor, respect, reverence, love and glorification to the creator of all things including us! This Lent I ask that when we pray these next forty days that we truly **“PRAISE”** God in our prayers for who He is – “I AM,” just “Being.” God is the origin of the verb “TO BE,” He just “IS.” Praise God – Praise Him!

### QUESTIONS

- 1) Why do you think David wrote this Psalms?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) What is David telling us about his relationship and understanding of who God is?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) What feelings does this Psalm invoke in you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) How many times does **“His love endures forever”** appear and Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5) How does God expect us to respond to **“His love endures forever?”**

## Concluding Words

“Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so!” Do you know that God loves you? Grasping this concept that He loves us no matter how we feel about ourselves may be difficult. We may feel that we have to perform well for God to love us more, or we try to accomplish something to earn His loving hand and approval.

But God’s love for us should never be in doubt. We do our works and deeds for God because we have a love relationship with God, not because we are trying to **earn** more of God’s love. He loved us first and demonstrated His love through His presence in the Old Testament toward the Israelites and when He sent His only son Jesus Christ to die for us, we have all fallen short and do not deserve such a love, but God gives it freely in spite of our failures.

Based on God’s Holy nature, adoration, trust and love for us—a relationship with Him is what He longs for us in return. No amount of words, works or deeds could compare to the love He has for us, and we should praise and give thanks to Him daily. The greatest commandment is to love Him with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength and the second is to love others as you love yourself. You need not feel alone—ever, because the Lord is your rock to stand on, the strength you require and the comfort in times of trouble. His love covers all of your needs faithfully. Do you know? Do you really know and believe that God loves you with an enduring everlasting love—forever, until eternity?

AMEN!

## LESSON 4

### Words for thought

As we begin this season of Lent for the year 2020, I ask the family of “believers” that we take a sincere and in depth look within our mind, spirit and soul to reflect on God’s goodness and love for us. Look to see where He has brought us as individuals and as a church family. Think of the great sacrifice of God’s love by sending His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, to die for not only your sins but the sins of all humanity. As we learn of God’s great love for us, let us also learn to love others as God and Jesus have unconditionally shown love for us by both making sacrifices-God sending His only Son to die for us and Jesus willfully laying His life down for us by death on a cross. So, let us make sacrifices for God and Jesus by committed sacrifices of prayer, fasting and acts of love. Finally, let us remember that love is not a one-way thing, it is reciprocal and that is what makes God’s love so great-we are allowed the chance to give back to God and others in true and unconditional love. “Teacher which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with your entire mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matthew 22:36-40).

### Lesson Overview

We will study, explore and discuss in depth the expression of God’s “Love,” to love and to be loved – what could be more important? I believe that the key to learning and choosing [to] love is tapping into [God’s] divine “Love.” This lesson is an attempt to help [“believers” relate to God’s love], to “the God who is there,” not the gods we have created [and loved] (Gary Chapman, *The Love Languages of God: How to Feel and Reflect Divine Love*; pgs. 14-15, 2002).

### Focus Scripture

<sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;  
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered” (Ps 44:22).

<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height or depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:35-39).

“Christ’s love is not a memory. It is a moment-by-moment action of the living Son of God.”

And now, from today’s passage – Romans 8:35-39 – in verse 35: “who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” The answers are so plain and so wonderful. Paul lets us supply them and rejoice in them. Verse 31: No one can be successfully against us. Verse 32: God will supply everything we need-even when all seems lost. Verse 33: No one can make a charge stick against you in the court of heaven-no matter who accuses us. Verse 34: No one can condemn

us. And today's verse 35: No one and nothing can *separate us from the love of Christ*. And what makes this text so relevant are the everyday evils we face is what Paul spells out-the kinds of things that cannot separate us from the love of Christ, and they are the sort of things that happen on a daily basis. "Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" The reason Paul chose to mention so many terrible things is to make sure we know he is not saying: well, there are some things so horrible that they really could or might separate us from the love of Christ. No. *Nothing can separate us from Christ's love* (Excerpt by John Piper 9/8/2002, edited and revised by Lenten Facilitator).



**Asbury Bible Commentary View:** The central thought of [vv.31-39](#) is this: Since **God is for us, who can be against us (v.31)**? God has done the harder thing-giving His own Son for us; surely He will do the easier thing-give us all the blessings He has promised. He is the only one, who can justify, and He has already justified us; **who can bring any charge against us?** The judge himself, **Christ Jesus, died**, was resurrected, and now is **interceding for us**. Surely no one will condemn us. God loves us so much. Surely nothing can **separate us from the love** God has for us in **Christ**.

In the space below, write your own **"brief commentary"** on Romans 8:35-39.

## Reflections & Questions

### Lenten Facilitator's Reflection on Romans 8:35-39.

I believe for a “believer” to reach that level of maturity in love, one have to make sacrifices. And I speak primarily concerning cancerous character traits that infects love and kills love growth. I use the term cancerous character traits to be whatever negative emotions, feelings and dislikes that we have attained over time and allow those negative traits to flow towards others and therefore stunting the growth of love for God and others. We must humble our self and pray sincerely to God and ask Him to give us His Spirit of love in our heart, mind and spirit.

Remember the words of John: God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the Day of Judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister (1 John 4:16-21).

This Lent I challenge myself and all “believers” to read Romans 8:35-39 for the next forty days of Lent and to pray for the next forty days that God would put His unconditional love in your heart and watch what will come over you. Remember the instructions from Rev. Demetrius K. Williams, “Love is not a feeling or emotion, love is a principle.” Let us as “believers” grow to a maturity of love that is the *imago Dei*-Latin (image of God) and become rooted in love for Jesus and others that “*Allow no one or nothing to separate us from God.*”

### Questions

- 1) How can “believers” begin to work towards the goal of “loving like God?”
- 2) If God commanded us to love, why do so many people choose not to love?
- 3) Explain why a “believer” should love?
- 4) Can anyone have the ability to not just love on the surface but to love “unconditionally” on the inside; namely, spiritually?

## LESSON 5

### **Words For Thought**

Think of when you were a baby, you didn't know love, you grew to love your parents because as you grew you experienced the nurturing, care and love your parents expressed and showed you by their gentle, tender nurturing care. Likewise, if a child has not been taught that God is love then all the child would know is *filial* (Latin) love. Once a child is taught that God created them; loves them and sent His Son called Jesus to die for their sins the child has the opportunity to choose whether or not to "believe." If the child chooses to "believe" they can make the connection that mommy and daddy are their earthly parents and that God and Jesus are their creator and spiritual parents-so to speak-Jesus did call God-"Father."

Deuteronomy Chapter 11 emphasizes that the Israelites are to "Love and Obey" the Lord. <sup>18</sup> Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>19</sup> Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. <sup>20</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, <sup>21</sup> so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth (Duet 11:18-21). Now the child (I use child now as a "child of God") must grow to love God by understanding that it has been God who has truly nurtured them and that the parents were obeying what Deuteronomy Chapter 11 instructed parents to do. Now the "believer" should grow to maturity in God's love and understands through God's Word that God loved them before he/she loved Him. Now that the "believer" understands God's great love for them the "believer" should willfully reciprocate that love back to God and others thus experiencing God's *Agape* love moving away from *filial*, *Phileo* (Greek), *eros* and *philautia* (excessive self) the lesser spiritual and fleshly loves.

### **Lesson Overview**

We will discuss how wonderful it is to find out that we are loved. Think of how a young man or woman must have felt when a beautiful woman or a handsome man came to the opposite sex and told them that they have loved them for so long and they never knew that man or woman loved them. That's exactly how it was for us before we became "believers" of God through Christ Jesus. Before God drew us to Christ, we truly didn't know just how much God loves us. In this chapter we will explore and discuss why and how God loves us so much!

### **Focus Scripture**

<sup>10</sup> This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 4:10).

I love using John; you may see a lot of John just as I used a passage of John in chapter 4. John is so important because John expresses love more than any of the other Gospels; not surprisingly, John's Gospel is known as the "Love Gospel." John emphasizes that he was the

disciple “Whom Jesus loved” (John 19:26, 13:23, 21:7, 21:20). John is also the disciple who leaned his head on Jesus because of the great love he had for Jesus and Peter asked him to ask Jesus who was the person that would betray Him (John 13:23-24).

The word “love” appears 57 times in the [Gospel of John](#), more often than in the [other three gospels](#), combined. Additionally, it appears 46 times in the [First Epistle of John](#).

John emphasizes in 1 John 4:10 that Godly love is not something which originated with man. Rather it comes from God to us. It was God who loved us first, as a result, and *only as a result of this*, we can love God. God’s love provides us the opportunity to be born of Him, to know Him, and to love others.

God’s love is not simply a feeling, emotion or an opinion it is a “*PRINCIPLE*.” John teaches that “love” needs to be acted out,<sup>18</sup> Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth (1 John 3:18). This “love in action” can only be done through the will of God and the “believer” must not just follow God begrudgingly but must live by God’s example. God sent Jesus to our world to die for our sins:<sup>9</sup> This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him (1 John 4:9). Here was God’s purpose sending Jesus: for the “Propitiation” of our sins. The word “propitiation” is a payment/sacrifice to cover the cost of our sins.

Under the Mosaic Law, the Jews offered ongoing sacrifices for their sins, but Christ provided the single sufficient payment, once and for all, to cover the sins of the world. Hallelujah, this should be the joy and hope of all “believers,” free entry into heaven because Jesus paid our way! Oh Father, bless His Holy Name! This was due to the **FACT** that Jesus was the only “*Perfect*” sacrifice out of “love” because He alone was “without sin” (Heb 4:15).



**Asbury Bible Commentary View:** Love for God must show itself in love for a tangible human being. This shift not only recognizes the finite difficulty of loving a reality **not seen, i.e., God** but the importance of showing love towards those who need love. In a word, love for God will show itself in self-sacrificing love for others. They are inseparable truths.

Use the space below to write your own “**brief commentary**” on John 4:10.

## Reflections & Questions

### Lenten Facilitator's Reflection on 1 John 4:10.

I love all of God's Word from "In the beginning God created..." to, He who testifies these things say, "Surely I come quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus (Rev 22:20). Loving God and others are emphasized by God from the Old Testament through the New Testament ending with Revelations. We should be ecstatic to know that God loved us before we even knew Him and how much He loves us! God knew us and loved us before creation-that should be a wonderful feeling deep down inside. <sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: <sup>4</sup> according as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love (Eph 1:3-4). John emphasizes love in all his writings and teaches us to draw on God's love and to express that love to others. I challenge myself and all "believers" to fast today for four hours (according to your ability) and to put this passage in their prayer over the next forty days of Lent to honor God for loving us unconditionally even before the world was created: From birth I was cast on you; from my mother's **womb** you have been my God (Ps 22:10).

### Questions

- 1) Can you write three points of interest about love that you learned from John? (You should be able to).
- 2) How do you truly feel about God loving you "before the foundation" of the world? Can it help you to love God and others better?
- 3) Christ died for us "While we were yet sinners," what makes it difficult for you to love others as Christ has commanded?
- 4) Have you ever met anyone that was difficult/easy to love? What made it difficult/easy?

## LESSON 6

### Words For Thought

Grace is a gift from God. Grace is the freely unmerited divine favor and love from God applied to us by His Son Jesus Christ death on the cross.

<sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Eph 2:8-10). Again, Paul uses “in advance” before the “foundation of” creation (Eph 1:3-4). How do we know that God loves us? He has showed us by creating us, loving us enough to sacrifice His only Son—for us—and by freely giving us eternal life with Him and His Son. What more could we ask for? I know it is enough for me and I thank God. God did not send Jesus into the world to condemn and destroy the world but rather through Jesus and His death on the cross all have the opportunity to be eternally saved from sin and death. <sup>32</sup> And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” <sup>33</sup> He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die (John 12:32-33).

The “lifting up” upon the cross renders it probable that Jesus spoke of the heavenly exaltation He was to attain by the crucifixion. <sup>14</sup> Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness (num 21:4-9), so the Son of Man must be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him” (John 3:14-15). The “Lifting up” includes death and the victory over death; the passion itself is regarded as Jesus’ resurrection and glorification. “And when I am “lifted up” υπερυψω/Huperupsoo (Greek: to exalt beyond measure; to exalt to the highest place) from the earth. Jesus was saying, When I am exalted from this earth to my glory all people (not just the Jews) will have the opportunity for salvation and eternal life (ref Phil 2:9-11). Satan and the rulers he influenced, like the Scribes and Pharisees, Judas Iscariot, Roman kings and Princes and others who rejected Jesus didn’t know nor understood God’s divine plan. <sup>8</sup> None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. <sup>9</sup> However, as it is written: “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived (Isa 64:4) the things God has prepared for those who love him”—(1 Cor. 2:8-10).

Nailing Christ to the cross and the Romans lifting Him up was the end of Jesus’ work, “It is **finished**.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit (John 19:30). We as “believers” should all thank God for Jesus’ beautiful last Words. First thank God for sending Jesus who was faithful and able to “finish”/“complete” God’s work on earth, and secondly, “It is finished” sealed our redemption, salvation, reconciliation and eternal life with God. Somebody say Hallelujah!

## **Lesson Overview**

Let us approach this chapter lesson like high school chemistry students excitedly dissecting a frog. This upcoming focus scripture is the most widely use verse in the Bible, especially for “believers” who love to witness for God to others. Let us begin dissecting this Bible verse from the most in depth of its words and its meaning for us and all of humanity. When I think of Christ being “Lifted,” I think of the song *Love Lifted Me*, truly Christ was “lifted up” out of the love God has for us and when Christ was “Exalted” we were “exalted”-<sup>18</sup> But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2Cor. 3:18).

## **Focus Scripture**

<sup>16</sup> **For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.** <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son (John 3:16-18).

We will discuss John 3:16-18 but will focus on **John 3:16**. Why is this Bible verse so popular? Why is this verse so widely used by “believers”? John 3:16 is a widely quoted Bible verse that summarizes the cornerstone Christian belief that their God sacrificed His Son for the salvation of humanity (Religion Dictionary.com). We as “believers” have become familiar with these words, but they were first spoken to Nicodemus (John 3). The words of John 3:16 reveals to a “believer” that they must come to the knowledge, wisdom and understanding of the true unconditional love nature of God, and that understanding must be **the ground of our love to God and others**. This is what Jesus was trying to get Nicodemus to see.

God loves you so much that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be born on earth and die on a cross. Why? We are all sinners and the Bible says the consequence of sin is death, eternal separation from God. There is nothing we can do to make us “good enough” for heaven. But God made a way. Christ lived a perfect, blameless life and provided the perfect sacrifice for our sins. He died in our place. It is only by God’s grace, His undeserved mercy, that we can have eternal life with Him and Jesus in heaven. All we have to do is have faith that Jesus Christ died for us and ask Him to forgive us our sins. You think it stops there? No, you have to be obedient to all God’s commands, foremost the command God and Jesus gave that we are to love others! Don’t you like the assurance that Jesus stated to Nicodemus that “Whosoever believes in Him (Jesus) will have everlasting life,” and that you’re guaranteed you’re going to heaven? Scripture never states if Nicodemus understood the true nature of God’s unconditional love by sending His only Son Jesus; however, “believers” of today should have that understanding and the nature of God and Jesus unconditional love for them and others.

Jesus died in our place so we could have a relationship with God and be with Him forever. “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). But it didn’t end with His death on the cross. He rose again and still lives! “Christ died for our sins. ... He was buried. ... He was raised on the third day, according to

the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Jesus is the only way to God. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through me” (John 14:6) [Some excerpts from *peacewithgod.net* were included in my descriptions]. Do not dear “children” of God, who are “believers” in Christ Jesus allow anyone or anything to deter you from your salvation-Jesus is the only way, there is no other way to heaven or to the Father-God-except through Jesus! Don’t look for Jesus on the cross and don’t look for Jesus in the grave, Jesus and God’s love should be found in you!



**Asbury Bible Commentary View:** Though God is quick to act on behalf of his people and bless them physically, he is never content to leave them unchallenged spiritually. The physical blessings of the previous unit lead inevitably to the need for renewal and cleansing (Zech [13:1](#)). After God gives them a new gracious spirit, the people will realize the gravity of their actions in rejecting God’s representative (Jesus). Because they have pierced the Shepherd-King, the people—royalty, priests, Pharisees, Sadducees, Roman kings and princes and common citizens—will all mourn bitterly. The apostle John saw Jesus’ death as the fulfillment of this prophecy ([Jn 19:37](#); [Rev 1:7](#)).

In the space below, write your own “**brief commentary**” on John 3:16

## Reflections & Questions

### Lenten Facilitator's Reflection on John 3:16

I pray that my fellow brothers and sisters ("The believers") can see just how much God Loves us. "For God so loved the world." God took every divine step to secure His creation of man and earth. <sup>14</sup> May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. <sup>15</sup> Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation, <sup>16</sup> Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—to the Israel of God (Gal 6:14-16). <sup>12</sup> The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name (Rev 3:12). Then, I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea (Rev 21:1, ref Isa 65:17).

<sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. <sup>11</sup> Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives <sup>12</sup> as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. <sup>13</sup> But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. <sup>14</sup> So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him (2 Pr. 3:10-14). "He gave His only begotten Son." <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Cor. 5:17)

By accepting Jesus we are recognizing and accepting God's love for us, those who reject Jesus, rejects God's love. We are God's "New Creation" through our "love" for God, Christ Jesus and others. God is preparing us for God's New Creation. Only those who are "New Creations" in Christ Jesus will be a part of the "New Jerusalem" and the "New Heaven and Earth." I challenge myself and all "believers" to fast and pray this whole Lent that God sacrificing His only Son will move us to love Him and others more which fulfills us as "New Creatures" in Christ.

### Questions

- 1) What do you think Jesus was attempting to get Nicodemus and us to understand?
- 2) Based on this Lenten study series, would you say that you love more, less or the same?
- 3) God can not lie. Jesus says, "All who believe in Him have eternal life," based on God's Word of love how do you view death?

## Concluding Words

I truly prayed and consulted God that He would allow the Holy Spirit to speak to me and guide me while preparing this Lenten study. I desire not to “half do” for God or His people—the “believers.” I truly hope that this Lenten study was enriching and edifying, I found myself truly blessed as I studied through God’s Word and learned way more than I thought I knew about God and His love. Let us not wait for Lent to pray, fast and love but let us do it throughout the year and the years God bless us with. God desires to see us grow and with His love for us and our love for Him and others we should be able to reach a mature level of true love for God and others. <sup>34</sup> “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34-35).

If we fail to reach a level of love that God and Jesus shows and commands us we will not be complete as new creatures—love is what created “The heavens and the earth,” love sustains life, love will create a “New heaven and earth,” then love will be complete and love will last through all eternity. I can’t end this Lenten study of love without giving mention to 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, better known as the “Love Chapter.” God bless us richly as we grow in faith and in love for Him and others.

### 1 Corinthians 13 New International Version (NIV)

**13** If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

<sup>8</sup> Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup> but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. <sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became [an adult], I put the ways of childhood behind me. <sup>12</sup> For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

<sup>13</sup> And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH OF GREATER MILWAUKEE