

LESSON ESSENTIALS

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

LESSON 6: EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

How can you tell that someone loves you? How does it feel when someone loves you? If you had to explain to someone else what it felt like to be loved, what words would you use? How would you describe the experience of being loved? While some would point to special words spoken, others would comment on acts of kindness. Still others might talk about gifts received or time spent together. How would you answer that question?

God the Father loves His children, and He makes sure that they know and experience His love in many ways. Do you know the love of God? Have you experienced it? Read on to learn how to recognize the love of God in your life!

God tells us He loves us in His Word.

Jeremiah 31:3 says it plainly, “the Lord appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.” And in Isaiah 43:4a, the Lord says, “...you are precious in my eyes, and honoured, and I love you.”

We all like to know we are loved. Did you know that God loves you an incredible amount? When it comes to the love of God, we have many, many ways to count His demonstrations of love towards His children.

First, God tells us He loves us in His Word. Jeremiah 31:3 says it plainly, “the Lord appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.” And in Isaiah 43:4a, the Lord says, “...you are precious in my eyes, and honoured, and I love you.” A simple word search in the Bible turns up so many examples of the Lord declaring His love for His people. If you are the Lord's, then these declarations are for you!

Also, He displays His love through acts of kindness. Of course, we all have days when our life's circumstances are so wonderfully pleasant that we can rejoice in the kindness of the Lord towards us. But even when trials come, or when a day is difficult, God's kindness is still abundantly evident through our relationship with God through Christ. The Word of God says, “Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” (Romans 2:4) He desires that all people come to repentance so that we can be in right relationship with Him and live with Him forever. If you are leading a life of repentance and reconciliation through Christ, then you are experiencing God's love through His kindness.

God also expresses His love for us, His children, as He invites us to spend time with Him. John 15:9 says, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.” Imagine! The God of the Universe is inviting you to abide in His love. Unlike false gods who remain aloof and disinterested, God the Father invites us to come to Him. Both the Old Testament and the Gospels hold accounts of the Lord beckoning the people to come to Him when they are weary (Matthew 11:28), when they are thirsty (Isaiah 55:1), when they are feeling purposeless (Mark 1:17), and more. He draws us near and welcomes us into His presence because He loves us.

Not only does He want to spend time with His people, but He shows His love by being very close to His people. He desires to be so close to them that He dwells within them by His Spirit! “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?” (1 Cor. 6:19). The disciples walked with Jesus. Adam and Eve walked with God in the cool of the Garden. We have the confidence to say that we have the Spirit of God dwelling in us!

That is a nearness to God that comes only by His love for His children.

Finally, He gives us good gifts. Psalm 84:11 reassures us of the Lord's love and good gifts. "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favour and honour; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless." Do you see that? He withholds no good thing from His people. If a gift is good for you, He will give it to you in His love and favour for you. Look around you and consider the blessings in your life. The Bible says that, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father."

And of course, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the best evidence of all that God loves His children! Remember, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8). Can there be any doubt of God's love? No matter what you 'feel' on a particular day, you can look at the objective displays of affection that the Lord has lavished on you, and you can rejoice saying, "I am loved!"

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IN REVIEW

- During the times that we don't 'feel' the love of God, we can still experience it by noticing all the ways that God tangibly demonstrates His love for us.
- We can experience the love of God in many ways including reading His Word and noticing the good gifts He gives us.
- Above all else, the sacrifice of Christ is the strongest most irrefutable demonstration of God's love that we can experience and remember.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- How do you like to show love to the people in your life? Can you see examples of God showing love to you in the same way?
- What in your life right now is making it difficult for you to experience the love of God? Are you able now to look at the circumstance and see how God is still showing you love through the difficulty?
- Spend time praising God for His great gift of grace and the sacrifice of Christ which allows you to spend eternity with the God who loves you.

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