

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Study Guide

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

LESSON 6: EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module entitled Our Relationship with God. This series of lessons examines the relationship we have with God. It begins by understanding our identity in Christ which is a result of our becoming a child of God. This series of lessons looks at the attributes of God, how we learn about God and know Him better, and how we develop this personal relationship. Understanding ourselves in God's eyes, and having a clearer picture of who God is, will help us live the life that God designed for us.

The Student's Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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LESSON 6: EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

We hear that God is love, but what does that mean? And how can a Christian experience this for themselves? This lesson explores how we can know God's love.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

While love is a complicated topic, everyone longs to feel loved. It isn't enough to be told we are loved by someone, we need to know it in our heart, not just our head! God wants us not to just know His love, but experience feeling loved. Think about how our lives would be different if we had a deep secure sense that God loves, cherishes and desires friendship with us? Exploring God's love through this lesson will begin to reveal this love to you – a love that can change our life.

GETTING STARTED

1. What does the word love mean to you? How do we use the word *love* in everyday conversation?

2. How do you know if someone loves you? What is the difference between knowing someone loves you and experiencing their love?



STUDY

❖ **WHAT IS LOVE?** Love can be described many ways. It is an emotion we feel towards others – we desire the others best before our own, we accept them, care about them, appreciate their qualities, and look for ways to serve them. We like the feeling of being near them. Love can also be an action, decision or choice we make. The Bible reminds us over and over that God loves us, and that God himself is love. If we have been Christians for any length of time, we have probably come across verses such as John 3:16 which tell us that God loved the world and 1 John 4:8 which states God is love.

➤ Read the following verses and write down how they illustrate what love is.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8	
Romans 12:10	
Song of Solomon 8:6-7	
John 13:34-35	

Love, according to the Bible desire the best for someone else. It is the choice to relate to someone and treat them as something valuable. Love is something that we feel strongly, beyond reason or other emotions. Love is also central to Christianity – knowing God’s love and loving others is at the very core of our faith.

❖ **HOW DOES GOD LOVE?** B We may know what love is, but we should ask ourselves if we have encountered the life-changing love of God? The Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesian Church, and in his letter he ached for them to be *“rooted and grounded in love... having strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge”* (Ephesians 3:17-19). In order to experience the love of friends or family, we need to see them love us and hear that they love us. Do we know in our heads and in our hearts that God loves us?



- Look up the following verses and write down how God tells us and shows us of His love.

God Tells us He Loves Us	God Shows Us He Loves Us
1 John 4:19 Exodus 15:13 Psalm 100:5 Zephaniah 3:17	1 Peter 2:9-10 Psalm 68:35 Psalm 103:4 Galatians 2:20

God not only tells us that He loves us in His Word, but He demonstrates His love, but rescuing us, being merciful to us, protecting us, knowing us, blessing us. Our God doesn't just tell us about His love, every good thing in all creation is a gift from Him and a demonstration of how He feels!

- What are some other ways that we can know God loves us?

❖ **PICTURES OF LOVE:** The Bible gives us pictures of different relationships to help us understand the love God has for us.

- For each set of verses, write down the picture of the Love God has for us in them, and what you learn about God's love:

Genesis 2:7 Isaiah 64:8	
Psalm 23 John 10:11-15	
James 2:23 John 15:13-15	



Ezekiel 34:11-12 Isaiah 46:3-4	
John 1:12 Romans 8:15 1 John 3:1	
2 Corinthians 11:2 Ephesians 5:25-27 Isaiah 62:5	

God loves us in many ways, His love is like a potter who loves working with his clay, like a shepherd who tenderly loves and cares for his sheep, like a friend loves a friend, like a hero loves those in danger who he comes to the rescue of, like a father loves his child and like a groom adores his bride!

- What does this tell you about God’s love for you?

❖ **EXPERIENCEING GOD’S LOVE FOR OURSELVES:** Knowing all these things about God’s love is important, but we must also experience it emotionally. If you have read about God’s love but still have not experienced this relationship for yourself, here’s what you can do:

- **Become Dissatisfied:** Choose to be dissatisfied with only a partial experience of God. Pursue a deeper understanding of God’s love (Psalm 107:9).
- **Repent of Sin:** If there is sin in your life that you are not repentant of, it can hinder your relationship with God and your experience of His love. (Psalm 66:18)
- **Make your Relationship a Priority:** Choose to set aside time alone with God. Feast on His word, the Bible. Pray at all times throughout the day and become aware of God’s presence in your life.
- **Fix your Eyes on Jesus:** Read the words of Jesus, meditate on His encounters with the people around Him and how He loved them. Because of Jesus’ love, He calls everyone to



repentance, – not just the holy, the perfect and the powerful, but also the lost and needy!

- **Cultivate Gratitude:** Develop a habit of looking for evidence of God’s love in your life. When God chastises us, it is in love. When God blesses us or brings us through trials, it is because of His love. Perhaps a journal (where you record what you are thankful to God for and how He is working in your life) will help you see His love for you.
 - **Preach the Gospel to Yourself:** Remind yourself of the sinner that you were, and your inability to please God on your own. Do you remember regularly what Jesus has rescued you from? What have you been given since becoming His child?
 - **Pray:** Ask God to give you a new experience of His love. We can pursue this during our entire lifetime as we continue to understand the fullness of His love!
- ❖ **HOW SHOULD IT CHANGE OUR LIFE?** Experiencing God’s love is something that will change us. Because God loves us, we do not have to work to earn our salvation and we no longer need the world’s approval. And when we know how much we are loved by God, it gives us the freedom to love others sacrificially.
- How can you pursue an experience of God’s love this week?

IN SUMMARY

- ❖ Love desires the best for someone else, and attributes value to someone else.
- ❖ We know God loves us because he tells us in His Word, and demonstrates His love for us in many ways.
- ❖ The Bible gives us various pictures of the way in which God loves us, including as a dear friend, a parent who loves a child, and man who loves his bride.
- ❖ In order to experience God’s love for ourselves, we need to look for it. This can happen through repentance of sin, making our relationship with God a priority, fixing our eyes on Jesus, cultivating gratitude, reminding ourselves of the Gospel and being faithful in prayer



- ❖ Knowing that God loves us should change our life – we do not need to work to earn anyone’s approval, we can rest in the love of God.
- ❖ The proper understanding of God’s love gives us the freedom to love others sacrificially.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How can experiencing God’s love change the way we live our daily lives?

2. How has God shown His love for you in this past week?