



February 2017
DEVO: "God Is Love" #1
By: Pastor Jeremy Burnett

Many people, even non-Christians, think they know about love. They probably even think they know what God says about it and might even be able to quote John 3:16. They've almost certainly heard 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. They've probably spoken the words from Luke 6:31. But do they really know what love is? Is it even possible to understand what love is without understanding who the God who created us to love is?

The Bible says, "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love" (1 John 4:8). The end game of our devotion groups is to know God, so in order to do that, it makes sense that we must know how to love. And if we're struggling to love someone does that mean we're lacking in our attempt to know God? We're going to look at scriptures that speak about love as well as examples of men in the Bible that demonstrated God's love. From that, we will be able to learn how to love God's way, and by extension we will learn more about God. I know that sometimes men consider "love" to be a curse word because it means we need to get all gushy and be vulnerable with people! There are times where that is appropriate, for sure, but as a general rule we'll do the manly thing and just stick to the facts this week. Are you ready to take a good look at yourself and see if there is anywhere that you can improve as a man of God in the area of loving like God loves?

Scriptures (NIV) - Day #1

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

Luke 6:31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Questions - Day #1

1. Do you feel that you have a good understanding of what love is?
2. What areas could you see a need to improve?
3. Do you agree that knowing God better will improve your ability to love others?
How so?
4. What could you do to better to know God better and go deeper in His love?



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So, what does godly love look like? Jesus himself said that the most important commandments were "love the Lord thy God" and "love thy neighbor" (Matthew 22:37-39). Who am I to disagree with Jesus? But what does loving God look like? Any child in Sunday School can tell you that we love God by reading our Bible, praying, going to church, etc., but is it really that simple? I think there is much more to it than that. It is entirely possible to read (or listen to nowadays) a couple chapters of the Bible while getting ready or driving to work without giving God's Word the attention it deserves. You can recite canned or superficial prayers all day without sincerely speaking to God. You can even come to church every week without expecting to meet God there. But God wants an intimate relationship with you. He wants to be the most important thing in your day! When he said to "have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3) I think he meant it. It is Commandment #1 after all! God had created everything in the world but wanted something more, so he created man! Yes, we were created with free will but God's intention was to have a creature that could truly commune with him instead of just being! Don't just be...Be the man that God created you to be!

You do that by giving God your all. Read your Bible expecting to hear from God. Pray expecting answers and miracles. Go to church expecting God to speak to you. To be more like God and to become the man God wants you to be you need to seek him with all your heart and allow him to change your life!

Scriptures (NIV) - Day #2

Matthew 22:37-39 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

Exodus 20:2-3 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. "You shall have no other gods before me.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Questions - Day #2

1. Do you ever feel like you are going through the motions of Christianity?
2. What are you going to do to get back to where you know you need to be?

3. Do you believe that God still speaks today? How does he do it? How have you personally heard from God?

4. Are you living your life in the expectancy of miracles and answered prayers?



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DEVO: "God Is Love" #3
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Jesus said that the second most important commandment is "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). If the way you treat yourself is by eating whatever you feel like, sitting around all day and night without sleeping much or showering, or whatever other way you can think of to neglect your body, that isn't what God meant either! He expects you to treat your body as a temple of God, taking great care to make sure it is in great shape! That doesn't have to mean six-pack abs and no red meat ever, but you know what I mean. God expects you to care about his best creation, the one made in his image...YOU! He also commands us to love the rest of his best creations the same way. It's easy to sit here and say, "I am nice to everyone" but it's more than that. Luke 6:35 says to "love [even] our enemies" and "do good to them." It's more than just not being rude/mean/impolite, etc. It's more than being cordial to their face. It's legitimately showing them love. It's praying for them even when you don't feel like it. Whether it's a friend, coworker, neighbor, or enemy, we are called to do more than coexist on the same part of the planet. We are called to treat them like Jesus would. To speak to and about them like Jesus would. To love them like Jesus would. Does that sound like the life you've been living? God wants to help you to be more than the man down the street, or even the Christian down the street. He wants to help you love your neighbor as yourself and show them how much Jesus loves them by the way you treat them.

Scriptures (NIV) - Day #3

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body,"

Luke 6:35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

1 John 4:7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

Romans 12:9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

1 John 3:16-18 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

Questions - Day #3

1. If the Bible says to "Love your neighbor as yourself," do you love yourself and look at yourself as God's creation, a son of God?
2. Do you need to take care of your body better? What has been stopping you and what steps are you going to take to start to get healthier?
3. Is there a person in your life that you haven't been loving the way Jesus loves them? If so; what can you do about it?
4. What things are you going to do to better show others the love of Christ?



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There are several examples of Jesus demonstrating love to people that he encountered. One such story is from John 4. Jesus meets a Samaritan woman near a well. Jesus engages her in conversation despite several reasons why he didn't really need to. First, Jews and Samaritans didn't get along. In fact, because 400 years of enmity between Jews and Samaritans, they didn't even associate with each other. Next, she was a woman, and men and women didn't associate together in public. Finally, Jesus would have known that this woman was a sinner, most likely shunned by her community. Nonetheless, he chose to seek this woman out and speak with her. He spoke into her life and offered her "living water" (John 4:10), which is the Spirit of God (John 7:39). This woman was important to him. Jesus could have passed by this particular well, avoiding the Samaritans altogether. He could have gone into the town and demanded to speak to the leaders and told them what they lacked, but he didn't. He chose to be obedient to God's leading and share with this woman.

You see, God isn't worried about your background. As the song says, "Red and yellow, black & white, they are precious in his sight!" As with this woman, he knows all that we've done but he loves us anyway. It doesn't matter if you are the president, a successful businessman, or a homeless man. He cares so much about you. He will take the time to meet with you and speak with you and has just what you need. He loves you with an unconditional, unchanging, unfailing love. If we are going to be more like Jesus, we need to try to see people like God sees them. We need to accept how much God loves us and try to show others that love as well!

Scriptures (NIV) - Day #4

John 7:37-39 On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

John 4:39-41 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers.

Ephesians 4:2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

1 Peter 4:8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Questions - Day #4

1. Do you ever feel like you aren't worthy of God's love? Do you have a favorite scripture that you go to when you feel this way?
2. What is the biggest barrier that you run into when it comes to seeing people the way God sees them?
3. Is there someone that comes to mind that you need to change your perception of?
4. What can you do to start seeing people through God's eyes?



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DEVO: "God Is Love" #5
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I'm sure you've heard the story about the miracle Jesus performed in Matthew 14. Five loaves of bread and two fish turned into enough to feed 5,000. It certainly was miraculous, but there was a lot more to the story of Jesus's love in this passage than filling their stomachs! What makes this passage so telling of the love Jesus had for the people is the phrase "When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place" (Matthew 14:13). Jesus had just found out that his relative and co-laborer in ministry, John the Baptist, had been beheaded. Though they were most likely not extremely close, Jesus knew of his work preparing the way for his ministry. John also baptized Jesus. He probably wanted a little time to process the news he had just heard. After all, he was fully man and had just found out that the most popular servant of God (besides himself) had been killed for God's work. Regardless of the reason behind the desire for solitude, it was interrupted by a large group of the same people he'd just retreated from! But instead of turning the boat around, he got out and greeted the crowd. He had compassion on them and healed their sick. He was willing to change his plans for those who needed him.

If that wasn't enough, he also resisted his disciples' suggestion to send the crowds away to get food because of the late hour and instead had the people sit. Then he looked up to heaven, gave thanks, broke the bread, and performed a miracle that left them with twelve basketfuls of leftovers! The Bible doesn't elaborate on "gave thanks," but I can see Jesus being thankful not just for the bread and fish, but for the people hungry for more of God and the opportunity that he had to minister. Like Jesus and this crowd, God never grows weary of us. We can never pray too much, worship too much, or spend too much time with him. No matter what our day or week or month has been like, no matter how needy we are, God loves us more than we can imagine and wants us to come to him to have all of our needs met!

Scriptures (NIV) - Day #5

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

1 Peter 4:8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

James 2:14-18 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.

Questions - Day #5

1. Are you seeking God to know him more or to have your needs met (or both)?
2. How do you think you are doing in your relationship with God? Identify specific areas where you can improve and reflect on how you are going to work toward those goals.
3. As Christians, we should demonstrate our faith in Christ by showing those around us God's love. How have you shown God's love to those you encounter?
4. How could you do better expressing God's love and how do you plan to improve?



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DEVO: "God Is Love" #6
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Today I want to look at a story that can help us reflect on ourselves a little. So, how does it affect God's love when we fail in our Christian walk? To do so, we'll look at arguably the most zealous and committed disciple, "the rock" that the church is built on (Matthew 16:18): Peter. Peter was willing to fight in the Garden of Gethsemane and chopped a guy's ear off protecting Jesus (John 18:10). He walked on water (Matthew 14:22-33). He was crucified upside down because he didn't feel worthy of dying the same way as Jesus. And Peter denied even knowing Jesus when the Savior he loved faced his most difficult trial! (Luke 22:54-60) Jesus had even warned Peter that it would happen, and Peter vowed to die with him rather than deny him (Matthew 26:31-35.) So, how did Jesus respond? When we choose ourselves over God, what can we expect from him?

John 21 picks up after the Resurrection. Jesus appeared to some of his disciples while they were fishing, they catch a huge amount of fish with Jesus's help, and then after having breakfast together Jesus talks with Peter. Many places title this passage "Peter Restored." In it, Jesus asks Peter if he loves him 3 times, one for each denial. After each time, Jesus told him to take care of his sheep. He reassures Peter that his position as "the rock" is still intact and encouraged Peter to continue to follow him. Whenever we miss the mark, whether by a little or by a mile, God still loves us. He still wants a relationship with him and wants us to serve him and show his love to the world. We are his children, and no matter what we do it won't change his love for us.

Scriptures (NIV) - Day #6

Romans 8:37-39 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 John 3:1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

Galatians 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

1 John 4:18-19 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.

Questions - Day #6

1. Have you ever felt like Peter? Like God had a plan for your life but you missed it?
2. If you ever begin to drift, what can you do to get back where God wants you to be?

3. It can be the hardest to love others when you don't feel like you deserve God's love? Share how you got through a tough season and what you read, heard, or realized that helped.

4. Do you know a spiritual drifter or prodigal? If so, pray and think about what you can do to help them come to spiritual restoration and a renewed faith in Christ.



February 2017
DEVO: "God Is Love" #7
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Whether we are talking how to love like God or seeking an example from the Bible, the best example of God's love is the salvation story itself. Man messed up, and God loved us enough to provide a way back to him. Jesus left heaven, knowing full well what awaited him on Earth: persecution, rejection, and death among other things. From the very start he knew he needed to be about his Father's business (Luke 2:49 KJV). He gave up his life to invest in people and love people who nobody else loved. His mission in life was "to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10). He set an example for everyone by the way he made himself available to people, talked with them, and showed sincere care and love for them. The Bible says, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). Now, there *are* some people in this world that I'd be willing to lay my life down for, but the list is relatively short. Jesus laid his life down not only for his friends and loved ones, but for the worst of sinners and those who hated him. Can you even grasp that? His love for God's creation was so great that he was willing to die to save it! He died for you to pay the price for your mistakes so that you could someday be with him in paradise. If you are unsure about that, please don't wait to ask a pastor or a friend more about what Jesus did for you.

If you know about "salvation" and what it means to be a Christian, it's time to live up to that name! Pray for God to transform your life. Study God's Word. Spend time in church, worshiping, learning, and serving! Invest in the people that God has put into your life. Reach out beyond these text groups to the men in your small group and strive to build relationships that matter. Show people you care and make a sincere effort to show them that Jesus loves them, too!

Scriptures (NIV) - Day #7

John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

John 15:9-17 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

Questions - Day #7

1. What steps are you taking to live up to the name "Christian?"
2. What challenges do you face in your journey to be more like Jesus?
3. Who has God put into your life that needs to know God loves them?
4. What can you do to represent God to the people you interact with?
5. What can you do to build a brotherly bond of love with the men in your Digital Discipleship Devotion group?