



Transformed by His Love

by

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A 30-Day Bible Study

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Day One: A Covenant Relationship

“Therefore, know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.” Deuteronomy 7:9 NKJV

The Lord God Almighty, Yahweh, the One True God called the children of Israel to become a people devoted to loving and serving Him. In the Old Testament of the Bible, God called Abraham and his descendants, the children of Israel, to come into a covenant relationship with Him, an intimate union between God and His people. After many generations had passed, the children of Israel had found themselves in bondage to Egypt and its evil Pharaohs. Through God’s chosen servant, Moses, the children of Israel were delivered out of Egypt and into the land that the Lord had promised to give them.

In the book of Deuteronomy, found in the Old Testament, the Lord God Almighty once again called His chosen people back into a covenant relationship of love with Him. The One True God, Yahweh, was expounding upon the boundaries of their covenant relationship. He not only revealed the boundaries, but also warned them of potential bondage if they disobeyed. Like a loving father, our Heavenly Father displayed His great love for His people by giving them parameters for safety. He warned them of potential danger because His desire was and is for His children to dwell with Him in love, peace, joy, blessings, safety, and provision. Outside of the boundaries set by the Lord, they and we become sitting targets for the enemy of our souls to attack, steal, kill and destroy.

Because of His great love for the children of Israel, the Lord not only gave boundaries and warnings, but also revealed His heart to bestow blessings upon His people. Out of His deep, deep love for His people, He desired to bring them back into a covenant relationship, protect them, bless them, and make them a nation of kings and priests unto Himself. As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, we too may enter into a covenant relationship with our Heavenly Father. The Lord desires to make **us** His people too. It is His desire to bring us into a covenant relationship with Him, protect us, bless us, and make us kings and priests unto Him.

In Deuteronomy seven, He actually called His people, past, present, and future: *holy, chosen* and a *special treasure*. It is His deep, deep love for us that he has expressed to us by giving us His only begotten son, Jesus Christ, as our Savior and Lord. We are now able to love Him because He first loved us and called us to be His

own. It is His desire for us to be transformed by His love; to know the height, the depth, the width, and the breadth of His great love for us. Our identity and destiny are found in Him alone.

*“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. ⁷ The LORD did not set His **love** on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; ⁸ but because the LORD **loves** you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

*⁹ “Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who **love** Him and keep His commandments...” (Deuteronomy 7:6-9 NKJV)*

Reflection:

Think about your personal relationship with God. In what ways do you feel His great love in your daily life?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I stand in awe of Your great love for mankind and for me. Lord, I ask that you reveal the height, the depth, the width, and the breadth of Your great love to me. Lord, transform me by Your love! Lord, bring me into a covenant relationship with You! Lord, make me a king and priest unto you. Lord, transform me by Your love to become *holy, chosen, and a special treasure* unto You! In the name of Jesus, amen.

Deuteronomy 7 NKJV

A Chosen People

7 “When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, ² and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them *and* utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. ³ Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. ⁴ For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. ⁵ But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their *sacred* pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire.

⁶“For you *are* a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. ⁷The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; ⁸but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

⁹“Therefore know that the LORD your God, He *is* God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; ¹⁰and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face. ¹¹Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them.

Blessings of Obedience

¹²“Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers. ¹³And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flock, in the land of which He swore to your fathers to give you. ¹⁴You shall be blessed above all peoples; there shall not be a male or female barren among you or among your livestock. ¹⁵And the LORD will take away from you all sickness and will afflict you with none of the terrible diseases of Egypt which you have known but will lay *them* on all those who hate you. ¹⁶Also you shall destroy all the peoples whom the LORD your God delivers over to you; your eye shall have no pity on them; nor shall you serve their gods, for that *will be* a snare to you.

¹⁷“If you should say in your heart, ‘These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?’— ¹⁸you shall not be afraid of them, *but* you shall remember well what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: ¹⁹the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs and the wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm, by which the LORD your God brought you out. So shall the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. ²⁰Moreover the LORD your God will send the hornet among them until those who are left, who hide themselves from you, are destroyed. ²¹You shall not be terrified of them; for the LORD your God, the great and awesome God, *is* among you. ²²And the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you little by little; you will be unable to destroy them at once, lest the beasts of the field become *too* numerous for you. ²³But

the LORD your God will deliver them over to you and will inflict defeat upon them until they are destroyed.²⁴ And He will deliver their kings into your hand, and you will destroy their name from under heaven; no one shall be able to stand against you until you have destroyed them.²⁵ You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold *that is* on them, nor take *it* for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it *is* an abomination to the LORD your God.²⁶ Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it *is* an accursed thing.

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Day Two: A Man After God's Own Heart

"But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness." Psalm 86:15 NIV

Many generations after Moses delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt, the Hebrews established themselves as a nation and a people in their promised land. David, son of Jesse, was the king of Israel, chosen, appointed, and anointed by God. All through the book of Psalms, King David cried out to God, for mercy, protection, guidance, defense, and vengeance against his enemies. The character trait that set David apart from all others in Israel was his heart of love for God. He was known as *"a man after God's own heart"*. King David placed his love, faith, trust, and life solely in the hands of God. He was a man who truly worshiped God in spirit and in truth.

In Psalm 86, David mentioned the band of arrogant, violent men that were seeking his life. David understood his need for help to stand against his enemies in victory. This awareness drove him toward prayer in seeking the assistance of God. In this Psalm, we find a desperate man who put his faith in God while crying out in despair. David cried out in great need for God to hear and act on his behalf. He asked God to teach him how to unite his heart to fear and reverence God, so that he could glorify Him forever. David appealed to God's mercy and grace to deliver him.

In this Psalm, King David not only sought the support of God, but he also exalted God for who He is. David poured out his praise, adoration, gratefulness, glory, and worship on the Lord. He magnified the Lord God Almighty for His *love* and *faithfulness*. King David understood and experienced the love of God on a personal level. The intimacy he established with God through a lifestyle of worship and prayer, created an outpouring of God's mercy, blessings, faithfulness, goodness, and *love* throughout his life. David is an example to us of the intimate, loving relationship that God desires to have with every human being. God desires to have a loving, intimate relationship with you! He desires to express His *love* and faithfulness to you through a covenant relationship established by accepting His son, Jesus Christ, as your Savior and Lord.

Reflection:

In Psalm 86, David exalts the Lord and asks to be taught His ways. When you seek the heart of God, what do you most want to learn from Him?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I desire to know you in an intimate way as King David did. I desire to know the depth of love you have for me. I want to have a loving intimate relationship with You. Teach me how to unite my heart to love and reverence You, so that I may glorify Your name all my life, in the name of Jesus, amen.

Psalm 86 NIV**A prayer of David**

¹Hear me, LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. ²Guard my life, for I am faithful to you; save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God; ³have mercy on me, Lord, or I call to you all day long. ⁴Bring joy to your servant, Lord, for I put my trust in you. ⁵You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you. ⁶Hear my prayer, LORD; listen to my cry for mercy. ⁷When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me. ⁸Among the gods there is none like you, Lord; no deeds can compare with yours. ⁹All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name. ¹⁰For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God. ¹¹Teach me your way, LORD, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. ¹²I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever. ¹³For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths, from the realm of the dead. ¹⁴Arrogant foes are attacking me, O God; ruthless people are trying to kill me— they have no regard for you. ¹⁵But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. ¹⁶Turn to me and have mercy on me; show your strength in behalf of your servant; save me, because I serve you just as my mother did. ¹⁷Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame, for you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

Transformed by His Love

Day Three: Love and Faithfulness

*“Let **love** and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.” Proverbs 3:3-4 NIV*

In the Old Testament in the book of Psalms, King David was the king of Israel. He was the one described in the Bible as *“a man after God’s own heart”*. During his reign as king of Israel, David had several wives and concubines. After his adulterous affair with Bathsheba, David repented to the Lord and later married her. From his union with Bathsheba, a son named Solomon was born. The throne of David was passed to Solomon and he became known as *“the wisest man who ever lived”*. Solomon had prayed and asked the Lord for wisdom to rule the people of Israel. Rulers of many nations travelled far distances to hear the wisdom of King Solomon. He was recognized by all as having divine wisdom from God.

Most of the book of Proverbs was written by King Solomon. This book records his teachings to his son and to others. In Proverbs chapter three, King Solomon instructs his son in godly wisdom. He encourages him to know God, trust God, reverence God, and honor God. In verse three, King Solomon instructs his son to never let **love** and **faithfulness** leave him. He continues to tell his son to bind them around his neck and write them on the tablets of his heart. Solomon was encouraging his son to wear **love** and **faithfulness** like a garment or jewelry, treasuring and valuing them. He also instructed him to write them on the tablets of his heart, hiding them in the place of intimacy.

In Proverbs chapter one verse seven, the Word of the Lord tells us that *“the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”*. Reverential fear and respect for the Lord is wisdom. Respecting and reverencing the Lord because HE IS GOD, is what will draw us into His **love** and **faithfulness**. Trusting in Him will bring us into a deep, loving covenant relationship with Him that will bring long life, peace, prosperity, favor, and health. The promises and blessings of the Lord are an expression of His great love **for** us, poured out **to** us through the deep loving covenant He establishes **with** us through Jesus Christ, His Son.

The wisdom of King Solomon, which is the wisdom of God, opens the door to the love of God in our lives. In Proverbs chapter three verse fifteen, the Word states, *“My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline, and do not*

resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.” Just like a loving Father, the Lord disciplines those whom He loves, His sons and daughters. He disciplines them to bring them into safety, to correct them, and to help them mature. Love protects. Love corrects. Love disciplines. It is the heart of the Father to see His children mature into becoming the true sons and daughters for whom He sent His Son Jesus to die. It is only through an intimate loving covenant relationship with the Father that we will experience the depth of His great love for us.

Reflection:

Respect and reverence for the Lord draws us into His love and faithfulness. Take a moment to think about how you show respect to God and to others.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I desire to know You in a deep, intimate, loving covenant relationship. Lord, I desire to have the wisdom of God. I want to know You, know Your ways, trust You, and fear and reverence You. Lord, I give You all of me. I surrender my heart and life to You. Lord, bind Your love and faithfulness around my neck and write it in the tablets of my heart. I want to wear You like a garment and like fine jewelry. I want Your love and faithfulness inscribed in my heart. Let me never forget how much You love me. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Proverbs 3 NIV

Wisdom Bestows Well-Being

3 My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, **2** for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity. **3** Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. **4** Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. **5** Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; **6** in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. **7** Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. **8** This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. **9** Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; **10** then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine. **11** My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, **12** because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. **13** Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, **14** for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. **15** She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. **16** Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. **17** Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths

are peace. ¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her; those who hold her fast will be blessed. ¹⁹ By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place; ²⁰ by his knowledge the watery depths were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew. ²¹ My son, do not let wisdom and understanding out of your sight, preserve sound judgment and discretion; ²² they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck. ²³ Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble. ²⁴ When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. ²⁵ Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, ²⁶ for the LORD will be at your side and will keep your foot from being snared. ²⁷ Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act. ²⁸ Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back tomorrow and I'll give it to you"— when you already have it with you. ²⁹ Do not plot harm against your neighbor, who lives trustfully near you. ³⁰ Do not accuse anyone for no reason— when they have done you no harm. ³¹ Do not envy the violent or choose any of their ways. ³² For the LORD detests the perverse but takes the upright into his confidence. ³³ The LORD's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous. ³⁴ He mocks proud mockers but shows favor to the humble and oppressed. ³⁵ The wise inherit honor, but fools get only shame.

Transformed by His Love

Day Four: Love Covers All Sin

“Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins.” Proverbs 10:12 NKJV

In the Old Testament in the book of Proverbs, King Solomon wrote a collection of wise sayings to instruct his children and others. In Proverbs chapter ten, Solomon gave instructions in wisdom regarding **love**. Solomon explained that hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sin. When situations arise that cause us to become angry, our natural response or impulse is to respond in agitation, frustration, or aggravation. If we do not deal with this anger appropriately, then our anger can quickly turn to hatred. As hatred takes root in our hearts, we can easily fall into the trap of stirring up strife. Hence, hatred stirs up strife.

In Proverbs chapter ten, King Solomon also reveals that *love* covers all sin. When situations arise that cause us to become angry, instead of allowing ourselves to become filled with hatred, we can choose to forgive those who have hurt or betrayed us. Once we choose to forgive, then we can choose to bless them. By forgiving and blessing them, we choose to embrace and display the *love* of God. By displaying God’s love, we cover all sin. Hence, love covers all sin.

If we being mere humans can display the love of God and cover the sin of others; how much more does God Himself cover our sin with His great love for us? The deep, deep covenant love of our Heavenly Father was expressed to us through the gift of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. When Jesus suffered and died on the Cross of Calvary, He expressed His deep, deep love for us by taking the penalty of our sin upon Himself. No greater love has anyone than a man who lays down his life for a friend. Willingness to die in the place of another so that they might live is the ultimate expression of love. The love of Jesus Christ covers **all** our sin.

Because our Heavenly Father loves us, He forgives and blesses us. Because Jesus loves us, He shed His blood for us to pay the price of our sin. If we, being imperfect humans, give good gifts to our children; how much more does our Heavenly Father, being perfect, give us His good and perfect gifts? The God of all creation loves us! The God of all creation loves YOU! The Father loves you so much that He gave you His most precious treasure, His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus loves you so much that He willingly died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins. The Holy Spirit loves you so much that He pursues an intimate relationship with you, even when you do not

acknowledge or recognize Him. He is always pursuing your heart. There is a loving relentless pursuit of your heart and soul by the Lord. His eternal fiery love desires to penetrate your heart.

Reflection:

Which of Solomon's wise sayings in Proverbs 10 resonate with you the most? Why? How can these sayings be applied to modern day life?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for pursuing me with Your fiery love! Lord, come penetrate my heart and soul and pour out Your love on, in and through my life. Lord, I choose to forgive and bless all the people in my life who have hurt me. I choose to release all unforgiveness, anger and hatred from my heart and soul. Lord, heal all my wounded places and restore me with Your powerful, fiery love. Lord, cover all my sins with Your love. Let the blood of Jesus cover me, in the name of Jesus, amen.

Wise Sayings of Solomon

10 The proverbs of Solomon:

A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son *is* the grief of his mother. ²Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, but righteousness delivers from death. ³The LORD will not allow the righteous soul to famish, but He casts away the desire of the wicked.

⁴He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. ⁵He who gathers in summer *is* a wise son; He who sleeps in harvest *is* a son who causes shame.

⁶Blessings *are* on the head of the righteous, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked. ⁷The memory of the righteous *is* blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot.

⁸The wise in heart will receive commands, but a prating fool will fall.

⁹He who walks with integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will become known.

¹⁰He who winks with the eye causes trouble, but a prating fool will fall.

¹¹The mouth of the righteous *is* a well of life, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked.

¹²Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins.

¹³Wisdom is found on the lips of him who has understanding, but a rod *is* for the back of him who is devoid of understanding.

¹⁴Wise *people* store up knowledge, but the mouth of the foolish *is* near destruction.

¹⁵The rich man's wealth *is* his strong city; the destruction of the poor *is* their poverty.

¹⁶ The labor of the righteous *leads* to life, the wages of the wicked to sin.

¹⁷ He who keeps instruction *is in* the way of life, but he who refuses correction goes astray.

¹⁸ Whoever hides hatred *has* lying lips, and whoever spreads slander *is* a fool.

¹⁹ In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips *is* wise. ²⁰ The tongue of the righteous *is* choice silver; the heart of the wicked *is worth* little. ²¹ The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom.

²² The blessing of the LORD makes *one* rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.

²³ To do evil *is* like sport to a fool, but a man of understanding has wisdom.

²⁴ The fear of the wicked will come upon him, and the desire of the righteous will be granted.

²⁵ When the whirlwind passes by, the wicked *is no more*, but the righteous *has* an everlasting foundation.

²⁶ As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so *is* the lazy *man* to those who send him.

²⁷ The fear of the LORD prolongs days, but the years of the wicked will be shortened.

²⁸ The hope of the righteous *will be* gladness, but the expectation of the wicked will perish.

²⁹ The way of the LORD *is* strength for the upright, but destruction *will come* to the workers of iniquity.

³⁰ The righteous will never be removed, but the wicked will not inhabit the earth.

³¹ The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut out.

³² The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked *what is* perverse.

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Day Five: Becoming a Friend of God

“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.” Proverbs 17:17 NIV

In the Old Testament in the book of Proverbs, King Solomon had given godly wisdom on developing a person’s character. In Proverbs chapter seventeen verse seventeen, the Word states that a friend *loves* at all times. The word for “love” in this scripture is “ahab” in Hebrew, and the word “friend” in Hebrew is “rea” which mean the following:

ahab

To have affection for, love, beloved, lovely, loving, friend, human love for another, act of being a friend, God’s love toward man.

rea

An associate, brother, companion, fellow, friend, husband, lover, neighbor, intimate friend.

In this scripture, King Solomon was teaching that a friend loves at all times. In the natural realm, or earthly realm, we know that a true friend will always be there for us. A true friend will love us in good times or in bad times. We can always turn to a true friend to love us, believe in us, and support us no matter what. A true and faithful friend is hard to find.

The Word of God tells us that the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. The Word of God also tells us that as we grow in intimacy with the Lord, we can mature to a place where the Lord calls us His friends. Because God is perfect in all His ways, He alone is **the** friend that loves at **all** times. The Lord is our friend, our spiritual husband, and our constant companion. Whether we realize it or not, the Holy Spirit is our best friend! He leads us and guides us into truth. He is **the** friend that sticks closer than a brother. He loves us, comforts us, is our constant companion, is the lover of our souls, and is the One who brings us into intimacy with Jesus and the Father. He never leaves us nor forsakes us. He is the friend that loves at all times.

To be called a friend of God is an honor and a privilege. We become friends of God when we draw close to Him and OBEY Him. As we develop an intimate relationship with God through worship, prayer and reading the Bible, we draw closer and closer to Him. The more time we spend with Him, the more intimate we become with Him. The more we know Him, the more we love Him. The more we love Him, the more we desire to obey Him. When we obey Him no matter what the cost, we mature to the place of becoming a friend of God. The Holy Spirit is **our** dearest, closest friend from the beginning of our relationship with Him. Even when we are not obeying God, the Holy Spirit is still our best friend. However, we do not become **his** friend until we surrender to God and obey Him. Our Heavenly Father loves at all times. Jesus loves at all times. The Holy Spirit loves at all times.

Reflection:

To be called a friend of God is an honor and a privilege. What excites you the most about being a friend of God? How does it make you feel to learn that He is the friend who loves at all times?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I desire to know You more intimately. I desire to know You as my dearest friend. Holy Spirit, draw me into deeper relationship with You. Lord, reveal Yourself to me as my friend that loves me at all times. Lord, help me to know You, love You, and obey You so that I might become Your friend, in the name of Jesus, amen.

Proverbs 17 NIV

17 Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.

² A prudent servant will rule over a disgraceful son and will share the inheritance as one of the family.

³ The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the heart.

⁴ A wicked person listens to deceitful lips; a liar pays attention to a destructive tongue.

⁵ Whoever mocks the poor shows contempt for their Maker; whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished.

⁶ Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.

⁷ Eloquent lips are unsuited to a godless fool—how much worse lying lips to a ruler!

⁸ A bribe is seen as a charm by the one who gives it; they think success will come at every turn.

⁹ Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.

¹⁰ A rebuke impresses a discerning person more than a hundred lashes a fool.

¹¹ Evildoers foster rebellion against God; the messenger of death will be sent against them.

- ¹² Better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than a fool bent on folly.
- ¹³ Evil will never leave the house of one who pays back evil for good.
- ¹⁴ Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam, so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.
- ¹⁵ Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent—the LORD detests them both.
- ¹⁶ Why should fools have money in hand to buy wisdom, when they are not able to understand it?
- ¹⁷ A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.
- ¹⁸ One who has no sense shakes hands in pledge and puts up security for a neighbor.
- ¹⁹ Whoever loves a quarrel loves sin; whoever builds a high gate invites destruction.
- ²⁰ One whose heart is corrupt does not prosper; one whose tongue is perverse falls into trouble.
- ²¹ To have a fool for a child brings grief; there is no joy for the parent of a godless fool.
- ²² A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.
- ²³ The wicked accept bribes in secret to pervert the course of justice.
- ²⁴ A discerning person keeps wisdom in view, but a fool's eyes wander to the ends of the earth.
- ²⁵ A foolish son brings grief to his father and bitterness to the mother who bore him.
- ²⁶ If imposing a fine on the innocent is not good, surely to flog honest officials is not right.
- ²⁷ The one who has knowledge uses words with restraint, and whoever has understanding is even-tempered.
- ²⁸ Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues

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Day Six: Unfailing Love

“Many claim to have unfailing love, but a faithful person who can find? The righteous lead blameless lives; blessed are their children after them.” Proverbs 10:6-7 NIV

In Proverbs chapter ten, King Solomon is again giving gold nuggets of truth and wisdom to his children. In the scripture above, he states it is difficult to find a person who has the character traits of unfailing love and faithfulness. He continues that such a person is righteous and leads a blameless life. He also states that the same character traits of unfailing love, faithfulness, and righteousness are traits that are passed down to their children. These righteous people are blessed of the Lord and their children are blessed also.

Having the qualities of unfailing love, faithfulness, and righteousness are godly characteristics. These character traits can only be developed fully in one’s life when we know the Lord and allow Him to transform us into His image and likeness through intimacy with Him. Once we invite Jesus into our hearts and lives as our Savior and Lord, we then begin to draw closer to Him in relationship through reading the Word, worship, and prayer. As our relationship with the Lord progresses and we yield to the Holy Spirit, we begin to know Him more intimately. As we become closer to Him, we hear His voice and obey Him. As we die to our selfish ways and the ways of the world, we begin the character transformation process. It is through surrender, yielding, and obedience that we develop godly character.

Godly character is literally the character of God. It is His character, His nature, and His ways. The character, nature and ways of the Lord can only be found by spending time with Him in worship, the Word and prayer. God’s character traits include His great love for us, His faithfulness to us, and His righteousness. As we develop a deep intimate relationship with Him, His God-nature transforms our human nature. We will become more and more like Him. We will begin to operate in the deep, deep love of God. We will begin to operate in the faithfulness of God. We will also begin to operate in the righteousness of God through Christ Jesus. It is by the blood of Jesus that we are transformed into the image and likeness of Jesus. It is because of His great love for us that He has made a way for us to be like Him.

Reflection:

Knowing that unfailing love, faithfulness and righteousness are godly characteristics, take a moment to think about how you can begin to demonstrate these qualities in your daily life. Remember to forgive yourself if you do not meet your goal!

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your unfailing love for me. Lord, I ask You to take my life and transform me into your character, image, and likeness. Lord, help me to walk in Your great love. Help me to walk in Your faithfulness. Help me to walk in Your righteousness. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Proverbs 20 KJV

Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.

² A king's wrath strikes terror like the roar of a lion; those who anger him forfeit their lives.

³ It is to one's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.

⁴ Sluggards do not plow in season, so at harvest time they look but find nothing.

⁵ The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.

⁶ Many claim to have unfailing love, but a faithful person who can find?

⁷ The righteous lead blameless lives; blessed are their children after them.

⁸ When a king sits on his throne to judge, he winnows out all evil with his eyes.

⁹ Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin"?

¹⁰ Differing weights and differing measures—the LORD detests them both.

¹¹ Even small children are known by their actions, so is their conduct really pure and upright?

¹² Ears that hear and eyes that see—the LORD has made them both.

¹³ Do not love sleep or you will grow poor; stay awake and you will have food to spare.

¹⁴ "It's no good, it's no good!" says the buyer—then goes off and boasts about the purchase.

¹⁵ Gold there is, and rubies in abundance, but lips that speak knowledge are a rare jewel.

¹⁶ Take the garment of one who puts up security for a stranger; hold it in pledge if it is done for an outsider.

¹⁷ Food gained by fraud tastes sweet, but one ends up with a mouth full of gravel.

¹⁸ Plans are established by seeking advice; so if you wage war, obtain guidance.

¹⁹ A gossip betrays a confidence, so avoid anyone who talks too much.

²⁰ If someone curses their father or mother, their lamp will be snuffed out in pitch darkness.

²¹ An inheritance claimed too soon will not be blessed at the end.

²² Do not say, "I'll pay you back for this wrong!" Wait for the LORD, and he will avenge you.

²³ The LORD detests differing weights, and dishonest scales do not please him.

²⁴ A person's steps are directed by the LORD. How then can anyone understand their own way?

²⁵ It is a trap to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider one's vows.

²⁶ A wise king winnows out the wicked; he drives the threshing wheel over them.

²⁷ The human spirit is^[a] the lamp of the LORD that sheds light on one's inmost being.

²⁸ Love and faithfulness keep a king safe; through love his throne is made secure.

²⁹ The glory of young men is their strength, gray hair the splendor of the old.

³⁰ Blows and wounds scrub away evil, and beatings purge the inmost being.

Transformed by His Love

Day 7: Love for Enemies

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?⁴⁷ And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Matthew 5:43-48 NIV

In the New Testament of the Bible, the book of Matthew is the first of four Gospels, or the Good News. The book of Matthew was written by one of the disciples of Jesus named Matthew. He was a tax collector by trade and was not well liked by the people. Jesus went to his house to sup with him, and his life was changed forever. In Matthew chapter five, he records the Sermon on the Mount which was preached by Jesus to His disciples and the multitudes in an open field on a mountainside.

When Jesus preached this message, He was encouraging all the people who were under the tyranny of the Roman government to have hope and faith in their God. The first portion of the Sermon on the Mount is the Beatitudes, in which Jesus declares that the people are blessed for all their trials and difficulties because of their humble hearts. The second portion of this teaching is where Jesus declares that the people are salt and light. The third portion of the teaching is where Jesus instructs the people to live by the laws in scripture. In the fourth portion of this teaching, Jesus is revealing that having anger against your brother is equal to murder. In the fifth portion, Jesus is equating that having lust in your heart is equal to committing adultery. In the sixth portion Jesus sets the bar high against divorce unless adultery was committed. In the seventh portion, Jesus tells the people not to swear or make any oaths at all; he said to let your answer be either a simple yes or no. In the eighth portion, Jesus teaches that you should go the extra mile to show kindness even to those who spitefully use you.

The last portion of the Sermon on the Mount was the instruction by Jesus to love your enemies. Jesus said, *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise*

on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Jesus repeatedly sets the bar of godly conduct high. The followers of Jesus are held to a higher standard of behavior than other people. The Word of God states that the people of the world will know that we are Christians by our **love**.

Although our natural, carnal instincts are to repay, retaliate, get even, or get revenge against those who have hurt us, Jesus tells us to repay evil with good. God’s desire is for our hearts to be so transformed by His love that our hearts are perfect. We are to be perfected by the love of God. In Matthew chapter five verse forty-six, Jesus states, *“If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the **tax collectors** doing that?”* In this verse Matthew, who was a tax collector, could relate to this word from Jesus. He was a tax collector who was hated by the people for taking their money. But even though Matthew made a living by overtaxing the people, he had love in his heart for his own family. Even though he had taken more money from the people than he should, Jesus said that His followers should love Matthew, tax collectors, or anyone who misused them.

The depth of this kind of undeserved love cannot be given by a heart that has not been perfected by the love of God. It is only when we continuously surrender and yield to the Holy Spirit that we may truly walk in the perfect love of God. Human love can only love those who love us. However, God’s love is perfect love. When our hearts are transformed by the love of God, then we are able to love others with the love of God instead of in our own ability. When our hearts are perfected by the Love of God, then we will truly be known as Christians by our love.

Reflection:

Think about what it means to love others, even your enemies, as yourself. How can you show love to those with whom you disagree?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I desire for you to transform my heart with Your perfect love. Lord, help me to always choose love in every situation. Help me to love others as I love myself. Help me to love those who hurt or misuse me. Help me to be a conduit of Your perfect love to others. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Matthew 5 NIV

Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount

5 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them.

The Beatitudes

He said: ³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Salt and Light

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

The Fulfillment of the Law

¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of

heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Murder

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

²³ “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

²⁵ “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I tell you; you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Adultery

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Divorce

³¹ “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³² But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Oaths

³³ “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ ³⁴ But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s

throne; ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. ³⁶ And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. ³⁷ All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

Eye for Eye

³⁸ "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' ³⁹ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. ⁴¹ If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Love for Enemies

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Transformed by His Love

Day Eight: Loving Thy Neighbor

“And Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: ³⁰And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. ³¹And the second is like, namely this, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.” Mark 12:29-31 KJV

In Mark chapter twelve, found in the New Testament, Jesus was teaching the crowds of people, His disciples, and the Pharisees and Sadducees. This book was written by Mark, a disciple who recorded the things he saw and heard while walking with Jesus. In this passage of scripture, Mark reflects on the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem during Passover, His teachings in the Temple of the Lord, and the great commandment to love the Lord with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves.

During the teachings of Jesus among the people, one of the scribes who was in the crowd came forth and asked Jesus a question. Many of the scribes and Pharisees tried repeatedly to trick Jesus with questions regarding scripture. However, Jesus was never stumped by their questions. Instead, He often made them look foolish with His wisdom and authority. In Mark chapter twelve verses twenty-nine through thirty-one, a certain scribe asked Jesus which was the greatest of all the commandments. Jesus answered him saying, *“...the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: ³⁰And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. ³¹And the second is like, namely this, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”*

When Jesus uttered these words, the scribe who had asked Him the question was well satisfied with His answer. The scribe replied, *“Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: ³³And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”* In this response from the scribe, we can see his humble heart. He not only agreed with Jesus. but received from Him. *“And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God...”*

Jesus had a way of speaking the truth in power and authority. He taught with clarity and presented the love of the Father with miracles and encounters of the heart. Jesus stated that the greatest commandment was to love the Lord our God with all our heart, understanding, soul, and strength. The word “love” in the scripture is the Greek word “agapeo” which means to love in a moral sense, beloved, well pleased, and to love dearly. So, Jesus was instructing them and us that the greatest commandment is to love God, to be well pleased with God, and to love God dearly. We are also instructed to love God with all our heart, with all our understanding, with all our soul, and with all our strength. That is an intense and all-encompassing love.

In Mark chapter twelve verse thirty, Jesus teaches us how to love God appropriately. The Greek word for “heart” in this scripture is “kardia” which means your thoughts and feelings. The Greek word for “understanding” in this scripture is “psyche” which means your life, mind, and soul. The Greek word for “soul” in this scripture is “dianoia” which means deep thought, imagination or understanding. The Greek word for “strength” in this scripture is “ischys” which means forcefully, with might, power, and strength. Jesus teaches us to love God the Father with every fiber of our being: all our thoughts, feelings, heart, understanding, life, mind, soul, deep thoughts, and imagination with all our power, force, might, and strength. This kind of love is a passionate, all-consuming love.

When we learn how to love God the Father in this manner, then we can begin to love ourselves and others. When we encounter and understand the love of God for us, then we will be able to respond to His great love for us by loving Him in return. It is only by inviting Jesus into our hearts to be our Savior and Lord that we are able to respond to His love. We love Him because He first loved us. When we understand how much He loves us, then we see our true value. We love ourselves because He loves us with an everlasting love. We then are able to love others in the same way. When His love is shed abroad in our hearts, then we can share His love with others.

Reflection:

We are commanded to love the Lord with all our hearts. How do you show Him your love?

We are also commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves. What are some ways you can demonstrate this type of love to those around you?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, open the eyes of my heart and my understanding to know how much You genuinely love me. Lord, reveal Your great love for me and fill me to overflowing with Your love so that I may appropriately love You, love myself and love others. Holy Spirit, help me to walk in godly love and live a life of godly love. Help me to love my enemies and pray for those who persecute me, in the name of Jesus, amen.

Mark 12 KJV

12 And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a place for the wine fat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

² And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.

³ And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.

⁴ And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.

⁵ And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.

⁶ Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.

⁷ But those husbandmen said among themselves, this is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.'

⁸ And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.

⁹ What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen and will give the vineyard unto others.

¹⁰ And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:

¹¹ This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?

¹² And they sought to lay hold on him but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him and went their way.

¹³ And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words.

¹⁴ And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?

¹⁵ Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, why tempt ye me? Bring me a penny, that I may see it.

¹⁶ And they brought it. And he saith unto them, whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's.

¹⁷ And Jesus answering said unto them, render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marveled at him.

¹⁸ Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying,

¹⁹ Master, Moses wrote unto us, if a man's brother dies and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

²⁰ Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife and dying left no seed.

²¹ And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise.

²² And the seven had her and left no seed: last of all the woman died also.

²³ In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? For the seven had her to wife.

²⁴ And Jesus answering said unto them, do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?

²⁵ For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.

²⁶ And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?

²⁷ He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

²⁸ And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, which is the first commandment of all?

²⁹ And Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

³⁰ And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

³¹ And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

³² And the scribe said unto him, well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

³³ And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

³⁴ And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

³⁵ And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, how say the scribes that Christ is the son of David?

³⁶ For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

³⁷ David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly.

³⁸ And he said unto them in his doctrine, beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces,

³⁹ And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts:

⁴⁰ Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

⁴¹ And Jesus sat over against the treasury and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

⁴² And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

⁴³ And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

⁴⁴ For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

Transformed by His Love

Day Nine: Entering the Kingdom of God

“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.” John 3:16 NIV

In the New Testament in the book of John, Jesus was instructing Nicodemus, one of the Pharisees who followed and questioned Him. Unlike the other Pharisees who were continuously trying to trap Jesus with difficult questions concerning scripture, Nicodemus genuinely pursued Jesus. Nicodemus was seeking truth. He recognized that Jesus had come from God and sought the wisdom of Jesus privately.

In John chapter three, Nicodemus asks Jesus how a man can be born again. The concept of a new birth experience seemed impossible because a grown man could never return to his mother’s womb. Nicodemus was thinking in the natural realm. He was in the flesh. He had no understanding of the spirit realm and the capacity for the spirit of man to have a new birth experience with the Heavenly Father. Nicodemus was trapped in a religious, limited mindset. He could only comprehend things based on his own intellect and earthly experiences. He was unaware of anything existing beyond what he could hear or see with his own eyes. He was spiritually blind.

When Jesus instructed Nicodemus that no man could be born again except by the spirit, He was revealing that all of mankind have a spirit, soul, and body. Most people in the world operate by what they see and hear with their natural eyes and ears only. They are earth-bound in their understanding of God. They do not have a real grasp of the One True God, who He is, and what He is like. Their reality is only of this earthly realm. Since God is a heavenly being, He cannot be known or understood by a natural mind. He can only be known by the spirit. It is only by an encounter with the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity, that we are able to have a new birth experience by the spirit.

John chapter three verse five states, *“Jesus answered, ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So, it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”*

To be born again by the spirit means that deep within your spirit man you are awakened to the reality of the person of the One True God, Yahweh, your Heavenly Father. You become aware of the great and powerful love that the Father has for you. That great and powerful love of the Father is expressed to you through the life, death, burial, and resurrection of His Son Jesus. The Father gave us a free gift, His beloved Son Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Jesus paid the wages of our sin, which is death. He paid our debt with His life. He gave His life as a ransom for us all. The Old Testament prophets spoke of His coming. They described His life and death in great detail. He fulfilled everything that they foretold.

Jesus Himself even foretold of His death on the cross when He spoke to Nicodemus. In John chapter three Jesus stated, *“No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”* Jesus was talking about Himself being lifted up on the cross for our sakes. No greater love has anyone than a man who lays down his life for a friend. Jesus laid down His life for you because of His great love for you. He was willing to die in your place so that you may be born again into the Kingdom of God. The Father loves you so much that He gave you His most treasured gift, His Son Jesus. The scripture says, *“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. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”* Receive the free gift of the love of God through the new birth experience of receiving Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

Reflection:

The father loves you so much that He gave you His only son. Think about how much this means to you.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for giving Your most treasured possession to me as a free gift, Your Son Jesus. Jesus, thank You for dying on the cross for me so that I may be born again into the Kingdom of God. Holy Spirit, thank You for revealing the love of the Father and the love of Jesus to me. Come into my heart and life, in the name of Jesus amen.

John 3 NIV

Jesus Teaches Nicodemus

3 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

³ Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

⁴ “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So, it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

⁹ “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰ “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? ¹¹ Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still, you people do not accept our testimony. ¹² I have spoken to you of earthly things, and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

John Testifies Again About Jesus

²² After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. ²³ Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized. ²⁴ (This was before John was put in prison.) ²⁵ An argument developed

between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. ²⁶They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him."

²⁷To this John replied, "A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. ²⁸You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.' ²⁹The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. ³⁰He must become greater; I must become less."

³¹The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. ³²He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. ³³Whoever has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. ³⁴For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. ³⁵The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. ³⁶Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

Transformed by His Love

Day Ten: Keeping His Commandments

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.” John 15:9-10 NIV

In the New Testament, in the book of John, Jesus described one of the most beautiful portrayals of the intimate love of the Father with Jesus and the intimate love of Jesus with us, abiding in Him. In this passage of scripture, Jesus was instructing His disciples how to become and remain intimate with Him regardless of the distractions of this world: people, current events, life challenges and other obstacles. In the first portion of this scripture, Jesus described Himself as the vine, described all believers as branches, and described the necessity of every believer to abide in Him. In the second portion of this scripture, Jesus warned His disciples that the world will hate them because they love Him. In the third portion of this scripture, Jesus informed His disciples that the Holy Spirit will come to help them.

In the beginning of John chapter fifteen, Jesus described Himself as the vine and His Father as the gardener. He continued to define the intimate relationship His followers have with Him as “all who believe in Him are branches”. The vine supports and sustains the branches. All nourishment and life flows from the vine to the branches. Without the vine, the branches cannot live. Jesus then described how His Father, the gardener, prunes the branches, so that they can bear more fruit for His Kingdom. Next, He exhorted all believers, the branches, to remain or abide **in Him**, the vine. As believers, apart from Jesus we can do nothing. We must remain in Him and He in us. When we remain or abide in Him, we receive the life-giving flow of the Holy Spirit and we will bear much fruit to glorify the Father. This portrayal of intimacy as “the vine and the branches” was relatable to many people of that day because they were gardeners of olive and grape vineyards. They understood the concept of maintaining healthy branches to bear healthy fruit. They understood how the branches must abide in the vine. As believers in Jesus Christ today, we must learn to abide in Him to remain healthy, strong, and bearing much fruit.

As Jesus continued teaching on abiding in Him, He gave clear instructions to His disciples. Jesus taught His disciples to abide in His presence, abide in His words, and abide in His love. As the Father pours out His love upon Jesus, Jesus pours out His love on His followers. As we, His followers, receive His love, we are able to

reciprocate by pouring our love out on Him. Through an intimate loving relationship with Jesus, we are able to abide in Him. Jesus further explains, *“If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.”* The secret of abiding in Jesus is clinging to Him, loving Him, and obeying Him. Through worship, the Word and prayer, we are able to know Him more intimately and abide in Him. By obeying His Word, the Holy Bible, we will remain in His love.

In John chapter fifteen verses nine through seventeen, Jesus is still speaking these words to those who have ears to hear. He is calling to His own, to the ones He has chosen for Himself. He is calling out to you. The Father deeply loves Jesus, and Jesus deeply loves you. He is calling **you** to enter into His love, to become a branch grafted into Him, the vine. He is calling you to love Him, to be completely His. There is no greater joy than to love and be loved by Jesus. There is no greater love than to abide in Him and He in you.

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.”

Reflection:

Sometimes it may seem difficult to stay focused with all the distractions of the world. Think about the steps you take to remain disciplined when it comes to your personal responsibilities. Similarly, we must be disciplined and faithful to pursue and remain in His love.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, teach me how to abide in your love. Holy Spirit, reveal to me the mystery of the branch life. Jesus, I want to abide in You and You in me. Help me to cling to You, love You and obey You. Father, prune away everything in my life that is preventing the flow of Your love and life to me. Help me to bear much fruit for the glory of my Father. In the name of Jesus, amen.

John 15 NIV

The Vine and the Branches

15 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁹ “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

The World Hates the Disciples

¹⁸ “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. ²¹ They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they

have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'

The Work of the Holy Spirit

²⁶ "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

Transformed by His Love

Day Eleven: Peace and Hope

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8
NIV

In the New Testament in the book of Romans, the apostle Paul was writing to the church in Rome which consisted of both Jewish and Gentile believers. Paul was teaching the early church that all people were unrighteous, both Jew and Gentile. He continued to instruct them that the only One who is righteous is Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God. In his letter to the church in Rome, Paul taught that God’s love for all people created a way for us to be reconciled back to Him while we were yet in sin through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus. In Romans chapter five, Paul described that we all have been justified by having faith in Jesus as our Savior and Lord. He also described that persecution because of our faith in Jesus produces godly character. In the book of Romans chapter five verses three through five, Paul wrote, *“...we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope.⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”* It is through our suffering and persecution because we love Jesus, that our character is transformed into His image and likeness.

In the book of Romans chapter five verse three, Paul wrote that we are transformed from a state of suffering to a state of hope. He continued to explain that hope does not put us to shame. Instead of shame resulting from persecution, the Holy Spirit will give us hope. The Holy Spirit will pour out the love of God in our hearts so fully that we will encounter His hope, His character, His nature, and His glory. In verse three, the Greek word “perseverance” is “thlipsis” which means “pressure, affliction, anguish, burdened, tribulation, persecution, and trouble. In verse four, the Greek word for “patience” is “hyponome” which means patience, endurance, and patient waiting. The Greek word for “character” is “dokime” which means experience, trial, trustiness, and proof. The Greek word for “hope” is “elpis” which means expectation, confidence, faith, and hope. When persecution and trials come because we believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit will pour out the love of God so fully in our hearts that we are transformed from shame to **patience**, endurance and patient waiting. Then we are transformed from patience through **trials**, experiences. and trustiness producing **godly character**. Then we are transformed from godly character to having an expectation, confidence, and **faith** in the miracle working power

of God's love. The love of God fills us to overflowing and transforms us so that we will love and believe in our God with great assurance and **hope**.

Our Heavenly Father so loved every person in the entire world past, present and future, that He gave His most beloved Son Jesus to die on the Cross of Calvary in our place to pay the penalty for our sins. He loved us while we were yet sinners, those who did not know or love Him in return. Jesus loved the world so much that He willingly died for us before we knew or loved Him. He died for us while we were yet unbelieving, scoffing sinners. He did not wait until we loved Him. He loved us fully and perfectly, taking our sin upon Himself. He took our unrighteousness upon Himself and made His righteousness available to us even before we loved Him. Then the Holy Spirit was made available to all who believe in Jesus. The Holy Spirit pours the love of the Father and Jesus into our hearts. He fills us with His love and transforms our hearts so that we may be filled with the hope and glory of God. *"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."* John 15:12-13 NIV

Reflection:

The **love** of God fills us to overflowing and transforms us so that we will love and believe in our God with great assurance and **hope**. What feeling does hope give to you?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I desire to be filled with Your great love. Lord, I desire to know the height, depth, width, and breadth of Your love for me. Holy Spirit, transform my life by the love of the Father. Lord, let Your great love change my heart, character, nature, and life from the shame of persecution to having great faith and hope in You. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Romans 5 NIV

Peace and Hope

5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

⁶You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Death Through Adam, Life Through Christ

¹²Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

¹³To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

¹⁵But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ¹⁶Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. ¹⁷For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

¹⁸Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. ¹⁹For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

²⁰The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ²¹so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Transformed by His Love

Day Twelve: Sincere and Sacrificial Love

“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.” Romans 12:9-10 NIV

In the New Testament in the book of Romans, the apostle Paul was writing to the church in Rome. The church of Rome consisted of some Jewish believers in Jesus and many Gentile believers in Jesus. Because of the cultural, religious, and traditional differences between the Jews and the Gentiles, they needed instruction on how to come together as the church and function as one. Paul was teaching them to sincerely love one another, cling to what is good, be devoted to one another in love, and honor one another. Adapting this communal attitude of love was difficult due to their extreme differences.

In the book of Romans chapter twelve verse nine, Paul wrote that the foundation of the church of Jesus Christ in Rome was to be built on **love**. In this scripture, the Greek word for “love” is “agape” which means affection, benevolence, charity, and to dearly love. The Greek word for “sincere” is “anypokritos” which means sincere, without hypocrisy, and unfeigned. The word “hate” in Greek is “apostygeo” which means to utterly detest or to abhor. The Greek word for “evil” is “poeros” which means vicious, evil, lewd, grievous, malicious, wickedness. The Greek word for “cling” is “kollao” which means to stick together, to glue together, or to join oneself. The word for “good” in Greek is “agathos” which means benefit and good things. In verse nine, Paul was instructing the Roman church to dearly love and have genuine affection for each other with sincerity and charity toward one another. Paul instructed them to utterly detest and abhor evil, maliciousness and wickedness. He also told them to cling or stick like glue to good things.

In Romans chapter twelve verse ten, Paul continues to exhort the believers in the church of Rome. In this scripture, the Greek word for “devoted” is “philostorgos” which means to cherish one’s kindred, especially parents and children, and to be kindly affectionate. The Greek word for “love” is “philadelphia” which means kindness, brotherly love, and affection for the brethren. The Greek word for “honor” is “time” which means value, highly esteem and to consider one precious. In verse ten, Paul was encouraging the church in Rome to be devoted and kindly affectionate to one another, cherishing each other dearly. He instructed them to love each other with kindness, affection, and brotherly love. He also told them to honor, value, and highly esteem

one another. All in all, Paul was instructing the Jewish and Gentile believers of the church in Rome to love one another as they love themselves and to prefer the other person above oneself. This kind of love is a sacrificial love. Because the Father loved us so much that He sacrificed His Son for us, because Jesus sacrificed His own life for us on the cross, and because the Holy Spirit sheds the sacrificial love of God abroad in our hearts; now, we can give sacrificial love to others.

Jesus is the Sacrificial Lamb! His great love for us empowers us to love as He loves.

Reflection:

Paul taught the church in Rome to be devoted and kindly affectionate to one another, cherishing each other dearly. What does devotion and kindly affection look like to you?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your sacrificial love for me. Jesus, thank You for Your sacrificial love for me. Holy Spirit, thank You for filling me with the sacrificial love of the Father. Lord, help me to love like You love. Help me to love with kindness, honor, and preference to others. Help me to pour out Your love to others through my life. Help me to be a living sacrifice of love. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Romans 12 NIV

A Living Sacrifice

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

Humble Service in the Body of Christ

³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give

encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Love in Action

⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.

Transformed by His Love

Day Thirteen: Demonstrating His Love

“On the contrary: If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”²¹ Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.” Romans 12:20-21 NIV

The book of Romans was written by the apostle Paul to the people in the church at Rome. In Romans chapter twelve verses twenty through twenty-one, Paul was encouraging the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ to love the way that God loves. He encouraged the people to become a living sacrifice placing themselves on the spiritual altar (not literal) to love and serve the Lord. Paul was encouraging the believers to humbly serve the Lord with the gifts the Holy Spirit had given to them, through the grace and power of God. Finally, Paul taught the believers in Jesus put their love into action by loving, serving, giving, and preferring others; thus, demonstrating that their love was sincere.

Even though Romans chapter twelve verses twenty through twenty-two do not mention the word “love”, these verses describe love as “good that overcomes evil”. In this scripture the Word states, *“**Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.** ¹⁵ **Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.** ¹⁶ **Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.** ¹⁷ **Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.** ¹⁸ **If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.** ¹⁹ **Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.** ²⁰ **On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”** ²¹ **Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.”***

In Romans chapter twelve verses twenty through twenty-one, Paul was instructing the church in Rome how to practically walk and live in the love of God. He told them to bless others, rejoice, live in harmony, and to not be conceited or proud. He instructed them not to repay evil with evil, to be careful, to do what is right, to live at peace, to not take advantage, to feed the hungry and to give drink to the thirsty. In doing so they, and we, will overcome evil with good displaying the love of God to others.

It is virtually impossible to demonstrate the love of God scripturally every single day of our lives. In our fallen nature, we simply do not have the capacity to walk in the supernatural love of God. Our flesh simply gets in the way. We need the power and grace of the Holy Spirit to fill us to overflowing each day. As situations arise that try, tempt, and test our love, we must choose to yield to the Holy Spirit, choosing to respond with the love of God instead of our natural instincts and impulses. The Holy Spirit is our best friend. He leads us and guides us into all truth. He gives us the grace and power to walk in and live in the love of God.

Reflection:

Think about the ways Paul taught the Roman church how to walk and live in the love of God. While it is impossible to practice this perfectly, what steps do you take to align your actions to these ideals?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, please forgive me of all the ways I have not demonstrated Your great love to others. Holy Spirit, help me to walk in the love of the Father. Holy Spirit, fill me to overflowing with Your power and grace. Flood my heart with the love of God. I choose to yield to You. I choose to surrender to Your love and Your ways. I place myself on the altar as a living sacrifice, loving and serving You and others. I choose to love with the love of God. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Romans 12 NIV

A Living Sacrifice

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

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¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.

Transformed by His Love

Day Fourteen: Love is a Law Maker

“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.” Romans 13:8 NIV

In the book of Romans chapter thirteen, the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the believers in the church in Rome. In chapter thirteen, Paul first instructs the people to submit to those who are in authority over them. Next, he teaches the church to love because love fulfills the law of God. Lastly, Paul tells the church to prepare for the day of salvation, to put off the deeds of darkness, and to clothe themselves with the armor of light. There is an interesting pattern established in the Word of God to produce the powerful love and glory of God in our lives: **submit, love, and cloth** yourselves with the armor of light.

In Romans chapter thirteen verses eight through ten, Paul explains that allowing the love of God to work through you will fulfill all the law. *“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.”⁹ The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.”*

When we as believers allow the love of God to fill us, overflow in us, and spill out in the lives of others, then we will fulfill all the law and the commandments. When the love of God rules our hearts and our lives, then we will be perfected in our spirits, our souls (mind, will and emotions), and in the outward expression of love in our bodies. As the love of God perfects us, then we will automatically live a life free from sin and fulfill all the laws of God. We no longer live to satisfy the lust of the flesh, the lust of the world, and the pride of life. We love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and we love our neighbors as ourselves. The love of God fulfills the law.

Reflection:

As the love of God perfects us, then we will automatically live a life free from sin and fulfill all the laws of God. Take a moment to enjoy this idea!

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, fill me to overflowing with Your powerful love. Lord, let Your great love overflow in me and touch the lives of all in my sphere of influence. Lord, help me to love others as I love myself. Lord, let Your great love work through me to fulfill all the law. Let Your love be the law maker and the law keeper in my life. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Romans 13 NIV**Submission to Governing Authorities**

13 Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.² Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.³ For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended.⁴ For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.⁵ Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.

⁶This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing.⁷ Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

Love Fulfills the Law

⁸Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.⁹ The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.

The Day Is Near

¹¹And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹²The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

Transformed by His Love

Day Fifteen: Definitions of Love

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” I Corinthians 13:4-7 NIV

In the New Testament in the book of I Corinthians, the apostle Paul was writing a letter to the people in the church at Corinth. In chapter thirteen of the book of I Corinthians, Paul was instructing the believers how to love with the love of God. He described in detail the godly characteristics of love; what it looks like, sounds like, and feels like. Paul was teaching the church how to walk and live out a life of godly love toward one another.

In I Corinthians chapter thirteen, Paul reveals to the believers in Corinth that no matter how spiritual we are, if we do not operate in and express love to others, we have nothing. Then he describes what true love looks like. He states that, *“Love is **patient**, love is **kind**. It **does not envy**, it **does not boast**, it **is not proud**. ⁵**It does not dishonor others**, it **is not self-seeking**, it **is not easily angered**, it **keeps no record of wrongs**. ⁶**Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth**. ⁷**It always protects**, **always trusts**, **always hopes**, **always perseveres**.”*

Love is one of the most complex of all emotions. When we love with human love, we love with an imperfect love. Our love is filtered through an imperfect soul; our mind, will and emotions. As our souls receive healing and deliverance from past hurts and wounds by the power of the Holy Spirit and the blood of Jesus, we are able to love with a more perfected love. When we allow the Holy Spirit to look deep inside our hearts and we give Him permission to unearth negative feelings and emotions, we then make room for the powerful love of God to overflow within our hearts. From the place of being healed and filled with the love of God, we are able to love others as we love ourselves. Learning to yield to the voice of the Holy Spirit, enables us to not only love those who love us, but also love our enemies. It is only through intimacy with the Holy Spirit that we are able to love with the perfect love of God.

Reflection:

Remember how love is described in I Corinthians 13. Let this be your guide to perfect, Holy love.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, please forgive me for all the times I have not loved others the way that You love. Please forgive me for being impatient, unkind, envious, boastful, and proud. Please forgive me for dishonoring others, being self-seeking, being easily angered and remembering wrongs. Please forgive me for any way that I have not walked in Your love. Holy Spirit, I give You permission to shine the light of God into my heart, unearth all hurts and pains, heal my broken heart, and fill me to overflowing with Your powerful love. Holy Spirit, help me to yield to Your love in every situation in my life. In the name of Jesus, amen.

1 Corinthians 13 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. ² 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. ³ 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.

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

⁸ 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. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² 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.

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

Transformed by His Love

Day Sixteen: The Greatest Gift

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” I Corinthians 13:13 NIV

In the New Testament in the book of I Corinthians chapter thirteen, the apostle Paul was writing a letter to the believers at the church in Corinth. The entirety of chapter thirteen is a teaching on “the love of God”. Not only does the love of God have greater value than all the spiritual gifts, but love is the chief character attribute to be desired above all others. Paul teaches that if we operate in all the spiritual gifts, but we do not have love; then we are nothing. Without the love of God flowing through us to others, we are resounding gongs, we are clanging cymbals, we are nothing, and we gain nothing. No love equals nothing of any value.

In the second portion of this scripture, Paul describes to the believers in Corinth what the love of God should look like when it manifests in our lives. Paul reveals in this passage, *“Love is patient, love is kind...It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”* The Greek word for “patient” in this scripture is “makrothymeo” which means long spirited, forbearing, longsuffering, and patiently enduring. The Greek word for “protects” is “stego” which means to roof over, to cover, to bear, to protect or preserve. The Greek word for “trusts” is “pisteuo” which means to have faith in, to believe in, to commit to, or to put trust in. The Greek word for “hopes” is “elpizo” which means to expect, to have confidence in, to have faith in, or to trust in. The Greek word for “perseveres” is “hypomeno” which means to bear, to have fortitude, to abide, to endure, or to remain. Hence, the love of God demonstrated by us should appear to be longsuffering, patiently enduring, and forbearing all things. We should protect, preserve, and cover over the ones we love. We should have faith in, believe in, and put our trust in God for those we love. We should have hope, good expectations, and confidence that God will work everything for good for those we love. We should also persevere, endure, and have fortitude in our faith and prayers for those we love. In short, we demonstrate the love of God by never giving up on those we love.

In the last portion of this scripture, the apostle Paul concludes that every gift of the Holy Spirit and all prophecy will pass away with this world. He exhorts all believers to mature in Christ and to put away childish things. Then he concludes by stating, *“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”* Paul was stating that the most important godly attribute to acquire is love. Without love, we are nothing.

Reflection:

Take a moment to reflect on what you've learned about love so far. How has your perspective changed since Day One of the study?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your great love for me. Holy Spirit, baptize me with Your love and fill me to overflowing. I desire to walk in Your great love more than operating in gifts and prophecy. I desire to be filled daily to overflowing with Your love for You and for others. Holy Spirit, help me to yield to the love of God every day. In the name of Jesus, amen.

1 Corinthians 13 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. ² 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. ³ 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.

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. The Greek word for "patient" in this scripture is "makrothymeo" which means long spirited, forbearing, longsuffering, and patiently enduring.

⁸ 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. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² 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.

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

Transformed by His Love

Day Seventeen: Being Courageous in Love

“Do everything in love.” 1 Corinthians 16:14 NIV

In the sixteenth chapter of the first book of Corinthians, the apostle Paul is addressing the believers in the church of Corinth. In the first portion of this scripture, Paul is instructing the church how to take a collection of money to support the ministry. In the second portion of this passage of scripture, Paul is addressing the personal requests and needs of various people in the churches in different cities. Finally, Paul gives a salutation and a goodbye to all the believers in the church at Corinth.

In the first book of Corinthians chapter sixteen verses thirteen and fourteen, Paul writes, *“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. ¹⁴ Do everything in love.”* In this scripture the Greek word for “guard” is “gregoreo” which means to keep awake, to be watchful, and to be vigilant. The Greek word for “stand firm” is “steko” which means to stand firm, to persevere, to persist, and to keep standing. The Greek word for “courageous” is “andrizomai” which means to act manly, to show oneself a man, to be brave. The Greek word for “strong” is “krataioo” which means to increase in vigor, to be strengthened, and to grow strong.

Because of great persecution of the Christians in the first church, Paul was instructing the believers in Corinth to be on guard, be awake and be vigilant. He also instructed them to stand firm, persevere, persist, and keep standing in their faith, even in the face of persecution. He told them to be courageous, to act manly, and to be brave, even during great trials. He encouraged them to be strong and increase in vigor, in spite of tribulation. As they increased in strength, courage, and faith. They were to do everything in love. They were to be led by a heart perfected by the love of God. They were to demonstrate love to all people, believers, and unbelievers alike. They were to demonstrate the character and nature of God with a heart overflowing with the love of God.

Like the early church, the Lord has called us to live a life filled to overflowing with the love of God. We must be strong, courageous, and on our guard being vigilant against the evil one and standing firm in our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As trials, tribulations and persecutions come to us simply because we believe in Jesus, we

must stand firm in our faith and stand in love. Love is the chief thing. In first Corinthians chapter sixteen verse fourteen, Paul states, *“Do everything in love.”*

Reflection:

Think of a time you stood up for yourself or someone else. This same courage is required to remain steadfast in God’s love.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your great love for me. Holy Spirit, help me to stand, be courageous, be strong, and be vigilant even in the face of persecution. Help me to be brave in my faith no matter what opposition I may face. Holy Spirit, help me to stand in my faith and to walk in love. Help me to do everything in the love of God. In the name of Jesus, amen.

1 Corinthians 16 NIV

The Collection for the Lord’s People

16 Now about the collection for the Lord’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. ² On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. ³ Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴ If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.

Personal Requests

⁵ After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you—for I will be going through Macedonia. ⁶ Perhaps I will stay with you for a while, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. ⁷ For I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you if the Lord permits. ⁸ But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹ because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.

¹⁰ When Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am. ¹¹ No one, then, should treat him with contempt. Send him on his way in peace so that he may return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers.

¹² Now about our brother Apollos: I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers. He was quite unwilling to go now, but he will go when he has the opportunity.

¹³ Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. ¹⁴ Do everything in love.

¹⁵ You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord's people. I urge you, brothers and sisters, ¹⁶ to submit to such people and to everyone who joins in the work and labors at it. ¹⁷ I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. ¹⁸ For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.

Final Greetings

¹⁹ The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house. ²⁰ All the brothers and sisters here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

²¹ I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand.

²² If anyone does not love the Lord, let that person be cursed! Come, Lord!

²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.

²⁴ My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen

Transformed by His Love

Day Eighteen: By Grace

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.” Ephesians 2:4-5 NIV

In the New Testament, the book of Ephesians was written by the apostle Paul, most likely while he was imprisoned in Rome for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This book was written as a letter to the believers in the city of Ephesus. Paul most likely circulated this letter to several small churches within the city. At that time believers were under heavy persecution and were meeting in private homes with small gatherings to protect themselves from the Roman government and the Jewish leaders.

In the book of Ephesians chapter two, Paul was reminding the believers that the church was founded by God for His eternal purpose through the redemption of Jesus Christ. Paul also contrasted the conduct of the believer to his former way of life, referring to his spiritual life as “in the heavenlies” through the power of the Holy Spirit. Through this letter, he also describes that through the power of the Blood of Jesus all believers are brought near to the Father, made a new man, established in peace, and built as the temple of the Holy Spirit.

The Word of God in Ephesians chapter two verses four through five states, *“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.”* The Greek word for “love” is “agape” which means benevolence, charity, affection, and good will. The Greek word for “mercy” is “eleos” which means compassion, mercy, kindness, and good will. It is interesting that both the Greek words for “love” and “mercy” can mean **good will**. It is God’s **will** to do **good** to those who love Him and believe in His Son Jesus Christ. Our heavenly Father is compassionate, merciful, kind, good, benevolent, and loving toward us. He made us **alive** with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions or sins. The work of salvation for us was completed by Jesus on the cross before we knew Him and while we were **dead** in sin. How great is the love of God! He loved us before we loved Him.

Reflection:

It is God’s **will** to do **good** to those who love Him and believe in His Son Jesus Christ. Meditate on what this means to you.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your great love for me. Lord, thank you for Your compassion, mercy, goodness, kindness, and good will toward me. Thank You that You loved me before I ever knew You or loved You. Lord, transform my life. Help me to walk in Your love, peace, holiness and as a new man in Christ. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Ephesians 2 NIV**Made Alive in Christ**

2 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Jew and Gentile Reconciled Through Christ

¹¹ Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)—¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you

who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

¹⁹Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²²And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Transformed by His Love

Day Nineteen: Immersed in God's Love

"...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." Ephesians 3:17-19 NIV

In the New Testament of the Bible, the apostle Paul was writing to the believers in the city of Ephesus. In this letter, Paul's focus was to the Gentile believers, those who were not Jewish by birth. In Ephesians chapter three, Paul is revealing God's marvelous plan for the salvation of the Gentiles, revealing the manifold wisdom of God, and revealing the boundless riches of Jesus Christ in the heavenly realms.

In Ephesians chapter three verses fourteen through nineteen, Paul is praying specifically for the believers in the church in Ephesus. He had given his life to preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and continued to teach them, encourage them, and pray for them even through persecution and imprisonment. Paul humbly proclaimed that his sufferings were for the glory of the believers in the church at Ephesus. In humility, he bowed before the Lord and prayed: *"For this reason, I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."*

In Ephesians chapter three verses fourteen through nineteen, Paul prayed that the believers in Ephesus would be strengthened in their inner most being by the power of the Holy Spirit. He prayed that Christ would dwell in their hearts through faith. He prayed that they would be rooted and established in the **love** of God. He prayed that they would have the power of God. He prayed that they to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the **love** of Christ. He prayed that they would know the love of God which surpasses all understanding. Finally, he prayed that they would be filled with the fullness of God.

In Ephesians chapter three, Paul earnestly prayed to the Father on behalf of the church in Ephesus. The overwhelming theme of his prayer was that the believers would truly know the **love** of God. Paul wanted their souls (mind, will, and emotions) to be overtaken by the love of God. He desired for them to be immersed in the love of God, surrounded by the love of God, and transformed by the love of God. He prayed that they would be filled to overflowing with the love of God for the Lord Himself and for others as well.

Paul's singular focus in prayer was that the love of God would collide with the hearts of all the believers in Ephesus. It is interesting that Paul did not pray for financial gain for the believers. He did not pray for healing and health for the believers. He did not pray for social justice in the lives of the believers. He did not pray for favor for the believers. Instead, Paul prayed that they would **know** the **love** of God. Because this entire prayer zeros in on the love of God, we can conclude that knowing the love of God is of the utmost importance in the life of all believers. The love of God is the primary thing. It is only by embracing the love of God that we may receive the fullness of God. His great love is the primary thing that leads us to the fullness of God. We must all seek after and obtain the love of God in our hearts and lives.

Reflection:

How well do you know the love of God? How are you learning more?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for loving me before I ever knew You. Thank You for Your great love for me. Holy Spirit, fill me to overflowing with the love of God. I want to know the height, the depth, the width, and the breadth of Your great love. I want to be rooted and grounded in Your love. I want Your love to flow in me, around me and through me. Holy Spirit, fill me with the power and the fulness of God. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Ephesians 3 NIV

God's Marvelous Plan for the Gentiles

3 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

²Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. ⁴In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. ⁶This mystery is that

through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

⁷I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. ⁸Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, ⁹and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. ¹⁰His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹²In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. ¹³I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

A Prayer for the Ephesians

¹⁴For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Transformed by His Love

Day Twenty: Walking in Unity

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called...” Ephesians 4:2-3 NIV

In the book of Ephesians chapter four, the apostle Paul continues in his instruction to the believers in the church in Ephesus. In this passage of scripture, Paul was teaching the believers how to become mature believers and how-to walk-in unity with the body of Christ. He was instructing them how to attain the whole measure of the fullness of Jesus Christ. Paul gave them the instructions for how to live the Christian life.

In Ephesians chapter four, the apostle Paul urged all believers to live a life worthy of the calling to become a Christian. Since many of the believers in the church were not of Jewish decent, their customs, backgrounds, and cultures were different. They had come out of idol worship and false religions. They had come out of a culture that did not honor and revere the One True God. Their education, religion and social practices did not agree with teachings from the Bible. They were diamonds in the rough and needed to be smoothed and refined by the truth of the Word of God.

In Ephesians chapter four verses two through three, Paul stated, “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” In this scripture, the Greek word for “humble” is “tapeinophrosyne” which means humility, lowliness, and modesty. The Greek word for “gentle” is “praotes” which means gentleness, humility, and meekness. The Greek word for “patience” is “anecho” which means to endure, forbear, and suffer. The Greek word for “peace” is “eirene” which means tranquility, harmony, quietness, and rest.

In this passage of scripture, Paul was instructing the Gentile believers to walk in humbleness, humility, lowliness, and modesty. He told them to be gentle, have humility, and have meekness. He also told them to be patient, to endure, to forbear, and to be willing to suffer. Paul taught them to make every effort to keep the bond of peace with other believers by yielding to the Holy Spirit. Unity with other believers was more important than getting your own way. Unity with other believers was more important than being right. Unity with other

believers was more important than satisfying your flesh. In other words, the old way of selfishness and worldliness had to die with the old nature. The new nature of God in all believers was to walk in love and unity. They will know we are Christians by our love.

Just as in the days of the first church, there are people accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord who come from various backgrounds and religious experiences that do not agree with the Word of God. In spite of our differences, the body of Jesus Christ must come together in the unity of God allowing the Holy Spirit to transform us by the love of God. We must yield to the Holy Spirit, permit Him to transform our character and nature into the image of Jesus, and reveal the love of God to others. As stated by the apostle Paul, *“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”*

Reflection:

Meditate on the definitions of humble, gentle, and patient.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your great love for me. Lord, take my heart and my life and transform me into the image, likeness, character, and nature of Jesus Christ. Lord, I desire to walk in humbleness, humility, gentleness, patience, peace, and the love of God. Lord, pour out Your powerful love on me, in me, and through me. Holy Spirit, help me to love God with all my heart and to love others as I love myself. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Ephesians 4 NIV

Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ

4 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. **2** Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. **3** Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism; **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. **8** This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.”

⁹ (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) ¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Instructions for Christian Living

¹⁷ So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

²⁰ That, however, is not the way of life you learned ²¹ when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶ “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold. ²⁸ Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and

slander, along with every form of malice.³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Transformed by His Love

Day Twenty-One: Clothing with Heavenly Garments

“And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” Colossians 3:14 NIV

In the New Testament in the book of Colossians chapter three, the apostle Paul was writing a letter to the believers in the church in Colosse. Colosse was a city about one hundred miles east of Ephesus. Paul was writing a letter to the church in Colosse to give them instructions on living the Christian life. He encouraged them to set their minds on heavenly things, to put to death their old nature, to clothe themselves with the character of God, and to let the peace of God rule their hearts.

In this **passage** of scripture, Paul was also giving them instructions for how to live the Christian life in their homes. He taught husbands and wives how to relate to each other in a godly manner. He taught children to obey their parents. He taught fathers not to embitter or discourage their children. He also taught servants to obey their earthly masters as unto the Lord. Having a godly household created an atmosphere for the peace of the Lord to flow throughout the home.

In the book of Colossians chapter three verses twelve through fourteen, Paul was teaching the believers, *“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”* In this passage the Greek word for “clothe” is “endyo” which means to sink into a garment, array, put on, clothe, or endue. Paul was instructing the believers in Colosse to wear the character and nature of God like clothing. He was teaching them to clothe, array, put on, or sink into the garments of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. He told them to bear with each other’s shortcomings and to forgive each other as the Lord had forgiven them.

In this passage of scripture, the Lord was teaching the believers in Colosse to not only wear the character and nature of God like clothing, but also to put on love as an over garment. Love was to be worn over all the other virtues like an overcoat. Love was to cover all the other garments of godly character, and love was to bind them all together in perfect unity. The Greek word for “bind” in this scripture is “syndesmod” which means to join or

tie, a uniting principle, bond, or that which binds together. So, love is the unifying character trait the joins, unites, ties, and binds all the other godly character traits together. Without love, we are nothing. The love of God flowing through us binds us together in perfect unity. Love is the chief thing!

Reflection:

In Colossians 3, we are given practical instructions for daily Christian life. How do your daily interactions compare to those written in this passage?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your great love for me! Holy Spirit, I ask You to clothe me with Your heavenly garments. Holy Spirit, please clothe, array, put on, and help me to sink into the garments of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Help me to forgive all who have sinned against me or hurt me. Clothe me with Your cloak of love and bind the character of God to my heart in perfect unity with You. Help me to walk in love with everything I think, say, and do. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Colossians 3 NIV

Living as Those Made Alive in Christ

3 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2** Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. **3** For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. **4** When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. **5** Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. **6** Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. **7** You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. **8** But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. **9** Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices **10** and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. **11** Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. **13** Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. **14** And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Instructions for Christian Households

¹⁸ Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

²¹ Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

²² Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. ²⁵ Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.

Transformed by His Love

Day Twenty-Two: Loving Deeply

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

In the New Testament in the book of First Peter, the apostle Peter was writing a letter from his imprisonment in Rome. He had been under great persecution for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This letter was written shortly before his execution. The general theme of this letter to the church was the suffering and persecution of the saints for their faith. Much of their suffering came from the pagans around them. In this letter, Peter was encouraging the believers in the church to allow the Holy Spirit to amplify the grace of God in their lives through their suffering.

In First Peter chapter four, the apostle Peter was encouraging all believers to live their lives free from sin and according to the will of God. He encouraged them to be alert, soberminded, and pray. He also encouraged them to love because love covers a multitude of sins. Peter explained to the church that suffering and persecution comes to everyone. Those who suffer because of sin are reaping what they have sown. Those who unjustly suffer for Christ's sake will be rewarded by their heavenly Father.

Peter was preparing the church to remain steadfast in their faith in spite of suffering and persecution. He encouraged them to remain in an attitude of love for each other. He told them, *“The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. ⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. ⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen”*

In First Peter chapter four verse eight, Peter instructed the believers to “above all” **love** each other deeply. He continued to say that **love** covers a multitude of sins. Peter taught the believers what love looks like as we live and work together as a body of believers. He instructed the church to be hospitable to each other, to use their gifts to serve one another, to speak with the words of God, and to give God praise through their lives and

attitudes. The importance of family and unity within the body of believers was most perfectly expressed through the love of God flowing through them.

Reflection:

There will be times that require you to amplify God in spite of your suffering. Think about the significance of love in these situations.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your great love for me! Lord, help me to yield to the Holy Spirit in all things. Help me to yield to Your love in all situations and with everyone. Fill me to overflowing with Your great love and transform my life so that I may love You with all my heart love others. Holy Spirit, help me to always agree with love and not hate. Help me to demonstrate Your love to all believers through service, hospitality, giving of my talents and gifts, and even through my suffering and persecution. Holy Spirit, empower me with the grace of God to live a life filled with love. In the name of Jesus, amen.

1 Peter 4 NIV

Living for God

4 Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. ² As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. ³ For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. ⁴ They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you. ⁵ But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶ For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

⁷ The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. ⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. ⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Suffering for Being a Christian

¹² Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

¹⁹ So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

Transformed by His Love

Day Twenty-Three: Lavish Love

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.” 1 John 3:1 NIV

In the New Testament in the book of First John, the apostle John was writing to the believers in the early church. John was the disciple who referred to himself as “the one whom Jesus loved”. He is also known as the “Apostle of Love”. He was the one to whom Jesus gave the charge to take care of His mother, Mary. John wrote five books of the New Testament: The Gospel of John, I John, II John, III John, and Revelation. In his writings, John clearly illustrated having intimacy with God as abiding in Him like branches on a vine. He described the Christian life as a lifestyle of yielding to God and preferring others in love. He was the one who revealed Jesus Christ as our glorious Bridegroom King.

In the book of First John, the apostle John was reminding the believers in the early church of the great love of God that was lavished on all the children of God. He also was reminding them not to sin. In this scripture, John was describing the difference between love and hate. He also was instructing them how to know that they belong to the truth and how they and we can set our hearts at rest in God’s presence.

In First John chapter three verse one, the apostle John was exclaiming to all the believers, “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Dear friends, now we are children of God, and **what we will be**, has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, **we shall be like him**, for we shall see him as he is. ³All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.” This is our great hope...that we will see Him, and we will be like Him!

In this scripture, John was encouraging the early church to draw close to God, live a righteous life and to **love!** Because the Lord has lavishly poured out His extravagant love on us, the world will not know us. They will not be able to relate to us. When the extravagant, lavish, powerful, glorious love of God is poured out on us, it will transform us! We will be changed forever when we encounter His love! We will never be the same! We will be unrecognizable! We will be like Jesus! When people see us, they will see Jesus. When people hear us, they

will hear Jesus. When people are near us, they will feel the love of Jesus. His love transforms us into His image and likeness.

Reflection:

Imagine going through an extreme makeover, transformed by God's lavish love! How do you look now?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your great love for me. Lord, overwhelm me with your extravagant, lavish love. Lord, transform me into Your image and likeness with Your great love. Let me not be recognizable to all those around me. Let everyone who sees me, see Jesus. Let everyone who hears me, hear Jesus. Let everyone who comes near me, feel the deep deep love of Jesus. Let my life overflow with Your love so that I may bring You glory. In the name of Jesus, amen.

1 John 3 NIV

3 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. **2** Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be, has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. **3** All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

4 Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. **5** But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. **6** No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. **8** The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. **9** No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. **10** This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.

More on Love and Hatred

¹¹ For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. ¹² Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil, and his brothers were righteous. ¹³ Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵ Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

¹⁹ This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: ²⁰ If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹ Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God ²² and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. ²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. ²⁴ The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

Transformed by His Love

Day Twenty-Four: Love in Action

“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. ¹⁷ 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? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.” 1 John 3:16-18 NIV

In the New Testament in the book of First John, the apostle John was writing a letter to the church. He was teaching the believers how to walk in the love of God with each other. In the first portion of this chapter, John explained why the world does not know those who believe in Jesus Christ. In the next portion of this scripture, John explained that sin is lawlessness and that all believers should desire to be pure. In the third portion of this scripture, John was explaining the differences between the sinner and the righteous. In the last portion of this scripture passage, John was giving more in depth teaching between love and hatred.

In First John chapter three, the word “love” is mentioned nine times. John, “the apostle of love” and “the one whom Jesus loved”, was teaching on the subject that he understood better than most. He was teaching on “love”. John was giving detailed instructions on how-to walk-in love because many of the believers were still walking in the natural man or the flesh. In First John chapter three verses sixteen through eighteen, John wrote, *“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. ¹⁷ 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? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”*

In this scripture John was instructing the believers in the church of Jesus Christ to function like a family. If anyone in the church family had a need, then another believer in the church family should be willing to give from their abundance. Giving from our abundance to those who are without is an outward expression of a heart that has been transformed by the love of God. Our heavenly Father is a giver. He gave us His only begotten Son. Jesus is a giver. He gave us eternal life. The holy Spirit is a giver. He gives us spiritual gifts. We, as sons and daughters of our Father, should be known as givers, too. In this scripture, John was instructing the believers to not only express God’s love to others in words or speech, but to express the love of God with actions. Actions

speak louder than words. When the powerful, glorious, love of God transforms our lives, we will become hilarious givers! It will be our greatest joy to give, give, give. We will not give out of compulsion, rather we will give out of a heart of joy that has been transformed by the power love of God.

Reflection:

Giving from our abundance to those who are without is an outward expression of a heart that has been transformed by the love of God. What is your favorite way to give?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for giving me Your most extravagant gift, Your Son Jesus. Jesus, thank You for laying Your life down for me. Thank You for Your extravagant love and life. Holy Spirit, refine my character so that I will be transformed into the image and likeness of Jesus. Holy Spirit, help me to love others the way You have expressed Your love to me. Fill me to overflowing with Your extravagant love. Transform my life and make me a hilarious giver. In the name of Jesus, amen.

1 John 3 NIV

3 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. **2** Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. **3** All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

4 Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. **5** But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. **6** No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. **8** The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. **9** No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. **10** This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.

More on Love and Hatred

¹¹ For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. ¹² Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. ¹³ Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵ Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

¹⁹ This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: ²⁰ If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹ Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God ²² and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. ²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. ²⁴ The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

Transformed by His Love

Day Twenty-Five & Twenty-Six: Love in Us and Through Us

“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” 1 John 4:7-8 NIV

“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. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.” 1 John 4:9-12 NIV

In the New Testament in the book of First John, the apostle John was writing to the believers in the church of Jesus Christ. In First John chapter four, John was teaching the believers how to discern between the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of falsehood. John was teaching the believers to “test the spirits”. Next, John was instructing the believers on the meaning of God’s love **in** us and God’s love **through** us. He taught them that God **is** love. John taught the believers how they could know if the Spirit of God dwelled within them or not. Lastly, John continued to teach more fully on the love of God.

In First John chapter four verses seven through eight, the apostle John was describing in greater detail the love of God. He stated, *“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”* In this scripture, John stated that “God is love”. God the Father not only loves us with an everlasting love, but **He is love!** Love is not just something He does or an emotion He feels, but it is who He is! **Love is a person!** Love is His nature, His character, His way of being and doing, His heart toward us, and the essence of His very being. His being is made of His supernatural love. This kind of love is a supernatural love. It is far beyond human love and far beyond our earthy experience and understanding.

In First John chapter four verses nine through twelve, John continues, *“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. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us,*

and his love is made complete in us.” John states that the love of God was demonstrated to us by Him sending His Son Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins. John defines love as originating from God. He also teaches that the love of God is made complete in us. The completion of the love of God is when we express that love to others. The flow of the love of God is as follows: God is love. God loves us. (Gift of Jesus on the cross.) We love God. (Intimate, loving, covenant relationship with God.) We love others with the love of God. Because the Holy Spirit lives within us as believers in Jesus Christ, we can know and comprehend the love of God, we can be assured that the love of God dwells within us, and we can rely on the love of God in us. As we yield to the Holy Spirit within us and the love of God in us, we are overtaken by that love. We can fully rely on the powerful love of God manifesting in us and through us to the lives of others.

Reflection:

God the Father not only loves us with an everlasting love, but **He is love!** Meditate on this for a moment. Write down any thoughts or revelations that come to mind.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I am so grateful for Your great love for me. Lord, shed Your powerful love abroad in my heart so that I may love You fully and love others in You. Lord, give me a revelation of the love of Jesus expressed to me on the cross. Help me to understand and comprehend Your incomprehensible love. Holy Spirit, help me to yield to You and to Your love within me. Help me to fully rely on Your love. In the name of Jesus, amen.

1 John 4 NIV

On Denying the Incarnation

4 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. **2**This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, **3**but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

4You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. **5**They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. **6**We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

God's Love and Ours

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

¹³ This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

Transformed by His Love

Day Twenty-Seven: Perfect Love

“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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.” 1 John 4:16-18 NIV

In the New Testament in the book of First John, the apostle John was writing to the believers in the church of Jesus Christ. In First John chapter four, John was teaching the believers how to discern between the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of falsehood. John was teaching the believers to “test the spirits”. Next, John was instructing the believers on the meaning of God’s love in us and God’s love through us. He taught them that God is love. John taught the believers how they could know if the Spirit of God dwelled within them or not. Lastly, John continued to teach more fully on the love of God.

In First John chapter four verse sixteen, Paul states, *“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.”* In this scripture the Greek word for “know” is “ginosko” which means to know, to perceive, to understand, to become known, to become acquainted with, and it also is a Jewish idiom for sexual intimacy between a husband and a wife. The Greek word for “rely on” is “pisteuo” which means to have faith in, to respect, to entrust (as in one’s spiritual well-being to Christ), to commit oneself to, to believe in, and to be persuaded of. The Greek word for “love” is “agape” which means affection, benevolence, charity, good will, brotherly love, and a feast of charity. The apostle Paul was stating that we can know and be known, perceive, understand, become acquainted with, and have a deep, loving, intimate, bridal covenant relationship with God through His love for us. Not only can we know the love of God deeply and intimately, but we can rely on, have faith in, respect, entrust, commit ourselves to, believe in, and be fully persuaded of His love for us. When we live and abide in this deep, intimate, bridal covenant love, then we are abiding in Him and He is us.

In First John chapter four verses seventeen through eighteen, Paul continues, *“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. ¹⁸ 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.” In this portion of scripture Paul is saying that This is how the love of God is made complete in us. It is through deep, loving, bridal intimacy with Jesus. We are completed by our loving Bridegroom King. We are made perfect, complete, and whole (lacking nothing) by His love. Paul continues to state that in that place of God’s perfect love, this deep bridal intimacy, there is no fear, only faith and trust in God. His perfect love in us drives out any and all fear far from us. When we abide in Him and He in us, then His powerful, glorious, extravagant, overshadowing love so overtakes and overwhelms us that we are consumed by His love. Like a tidal wave of His glory, His indescribable, incomparable, unspeakable love floods us, transforms us, and irradicates all fear from us. Then we are like Jesus.

Reflection:

We rely on God’s love to make us complete and drive out all fear. What fears do you need God to irradicate?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your great love for me. I cannot thank You enough for saving me. Lord, I ask You to overtake me, overwhelm me, flood me, and transform me with Your amazing, glorious, extravagant supernatural love. Lord, I want to know You and rely on You and Your great love for me. I desire to abide in You and You in me through a deep, loving, intimate, bridal covenant with You. Lord, I desire to live in Your love. Lord, let Your great love for me drive out all fear. In the name of Jesus, amen.

1 John 4 NIV

On Denying the Incarnation

4 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. **2** This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, **3** but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. **5** They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. **6** We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit^[a] of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

God's Love and Ours

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

¹³ This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

Transformed by His Love

Day Twenty-Eight: Receiving and Giving His Love

“We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.” 1 John 4:19-21 NIV

In First John chapter four verses nineteen through twenty-one, the apostle John was instructing the believers in Jesus Christ in the love of God. John was delineating the attributes and characteristics of the love of God and how it is reflected in the lives of believers. In order for us to love with the love of God, we must understand that it is impossible for us to truly love as God loves until we have received His love first. The Word of God teaches that we love God and others out of the overflow of the love we receive from God. God loves us **first!** Once we have an encounter with the love of the Father through the Cross of Jesus Christ and the powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we are changed. We then have the love of God flowing in us transforming us into the likeness and image of Jesus Christ. As we are filled and being continually filled with the love of God, then we are able to love others with God’s love pouring out through us.

In this scripture, John was explaining, *“...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.”* This is a strong saying. However, God knows the heart of man better than man knows himself. The Word of God states that our hearts are deceitfully wicked above all things. Our human nature is to love only those who are good to us. Our human love toward others is conditional upon their performance. However, God loves us with an unconditional love. He loved us before we knew Him or loved Him in return. He expressed His unconditional love to us by giving us a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die in our place on the Cross of Calvary. Until we receive the gift of salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ, we are not able to receive the fullness of the love of God.

Without the love of God, we will only be able to operate in our natural human love for others, which is limited and conditional. We will not be able to operate in the fullness of the love of God toward all humanity. When we have the love of God flowing in us and through us, our entire beings are transformed. It becomes impossible for us to hate anyone. We are able to love others with God’s love in us.

Once we have accepted the love of God into our hearts through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, we receive the love of the Father through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Then we are being continually transformed into the character and nature of Jesus. When the powerful transforming love of God perfects our hearts, the fruit of the Holy Spirit erupts in our lives. We are overflowing with goodness, patience, kindness, gentleness, peace, faithfulness, joy, self-control, and **love**. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. As we draw near in intimacy with the Lord and give our lives to Him completely, we are able to truly obey His command, *“And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.”*

Reflection:

We love because He first loved us. We are learning how to **love** like He does. Think about all you’ve learned about **love** in the last twenty-eight days.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I ask You to baptize me afresh and anew with the powerful love and fire of the Holy Spirit. Lord, pour out Your immense, immeasurable love into my heart and transform my life. Lord, please perfect my heart and life with Your holy, perfect love for me. Transform my life by shedding your love abroad in my heart. Holy Spirit, I yield my heart and life to You. Cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in me. Lord, let Your love flow in me and through me to touch the lives of others. In the name of Jesus, amen.

1 John 4 NIV

On Denying the Incarnation

4 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

⁴You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. ⁵They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit^[a] of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

God's Love and Ours

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

¹³ This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

Transformed by His Love

Day Twenty-Nine: Greeting to the Called

“Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ: ² Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.” Jude 1:2 NKJV

In the book of Jude in the New Testament, the apostle Jude was writing to the church of Jesus Christ. Jude was the brother of the apostle James, and both were most likely brothers of Jesus. In this book of the Bible, Jude was instructing the church in wisdom and discernment concerning false prophets, false teachers, and *“...ungodly men who turn the grace of our God into lewdness... Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.”* Jude compared these apostates to Sodom and Gomorrah, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh who would suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. He warned the church to guard against them.

In the first chapter of the book of Jude, Jude also instructed the believers in Jesus to contend for stronger faith in God, remain in the love of God, pray in the Holy Spirit, and look for the mercy of the Lord. In Jude chapter one verses twenty through twenty-three, the Word states, *“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. ²² And on some have compassion, making a distinction; ²³ but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.”* In this portion of scripture, Jude makes a distinction between the sinner and the sin. He clearly instructs the believers to pull the sinner from the fire of hell, which is love in its truest form. However, he instructs them to hate the sin-stained garments of the sinner.

Our godly love for people does not condone their sin. Instead, our godly love for people convicts them of their sin and rescues them from hell. Also, our godly love for people simultaneously hates sin. We must have compassion on some, and rescue others with the fear of the Lord abiding in us. We must learn how to love the lost without allowing their sin to entice us. We must walk humbly before our God seeking His face and presence always. We must guard our hearts against all deception and sin. Walking in the love of God will produce a desire in us to live a holy life unto the Lord. Walking in the love of God will produce a desire in us to obey the Lord. Walking in the love of God will produce a desire in us to save the lost.

Reflection:

We are learning that being transformed by and walking in the love of God will awaken many Holy desires. What are you beginning to desire most?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, please forgive me for any time I have listened to false teachers or those caught up in sin. Lord, forgive me for any agreement with any teaching on false grace. Lord, strengthen and increase my faith in You. Lord, I am contending for more of Your love and mercy in my life. Lord, help me to rescue the lost of this world with compassion and in the fear of the Lord. Keep me close to You. Help me to have discernment. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Jude 1 NKJV**Greeting to the Called**

¹Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ: ²Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

Contend for the Faith

³Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. ⁴For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Old and New Apostates

⁵But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. ⁶And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; ⁷as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

⁸Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. ⁹Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against

him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" ¹⁰ But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. ¹¹ Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

Apostates Depraved and Doomed

¹² These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving *only* themselves. *They are* clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; ¹³ raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

¹⁴ Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, ¹⁵ to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

Apostates Predicted

¹⁶ These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling *words*, flattering people to gain advantage. ¹⁷ But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: ¹⁸ how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. ¹⁹ These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.

Maintain Your Life with God

²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

²² And on some have compassion, making a distinction; ²³ but others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

Glory to God

²⁴ Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, ²⁵ To God our Savior, who alone is wise, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.

Transformed by His Love

Day Thirty: Pursuing His Love

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” Revelation 3:19 KJV

In the book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, the apostle John was taken to heaven where he received the revelation of Jesus Christ as God the Son. He also received the revelation of the last days of planet Earth and the end-time events that will unfold before Jesus returns for His Bride. In the third chapter of the book of Revelation, the apostle John scribes the words he heard spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ to His church. In Revelation chapter three, the Lord addresses three of the seven churches: the church of Philadelphia, the church of Laodicea, and the church of Sardis.

In Revelation chapter three verses fourteen through twenty, Jesus was addressing the church of Laodicea.

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

¹⁵ I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

¹⁶ So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

¹⁷ Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked

¹⁸ I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

*¹⁹ As many as I **love**, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

In Revelation chapter three verse nineteen, John revealed the words of Jesus to the church of Laodicea, *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”* In this scripture, the Hebrew word for “rebuke” is “elegcho” which means to admonish, to convict, to convince, to tell a fault, to rebuke, or to reprove. The Hebrew word for “chasten” is “paideuo” which means to train up a child, to educate, to discipline, to chastise, to instruct or to teach. The Hebrew word for “zealous” is “zeloo” which means to have warmth of feeling for,

to affect, to covet, to desire, or to be jealous over. The Hebrew word for “repent” is “metanoeo” which means to think differently, to change one’s mind, to reconsider, to feel moral compunction. Jesus was warning the church of Laodicea that they had grown cold in their love for Him. They had received many natural blessings and were prosperous in the affairs of life. However, spiritually, they were bankrupt. This was the state of the **believers** in Jesus Christ. They had lost their first love and were no longer seeking the heart and presence of the Lord.

In this scripture, Jesus said that as many as He loves, He rebukes, convicts, admonishes, reproves, exposes a fault to and convinces His church that they need to change. He also said that as many as He loves, He chastens, trains, educates, discipline, chastises, instructs, and teaches. Jesus also presses the church to be zealous, affectionate, desirous, jealous for and even covetous of Him. Jesus desires for us to love Him with the same passion that He loves us. He strongly encourages His church to repent, to think differently about their lifestyle and pursuits, to reconsider, change their minds of their lukewarmness and coldness, and to desire Him above all things.

Out of Jesus’ intense passionate love for His Bride, He warned the church of Laodicea and warns us as well, to pursue a deep intimate loving relationship with Him at all costs. His desire is to provoke us to become desperately in love with Him and walk with Him in deep bridal intimacy all the days of our lives. He is longing for a people who will love Him, pursue Him, desire Him, and be passionate to know Him. The true riches in life are the heavenly riches given to us by the Holy Spirit as we pursue intimacy with the Lord. The tangible riches of this world will only corrupt our desire for Him. The Lord Jesus loves us with such a fervor that He chastens us with a warning to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. His desire is for us to be one with Him and rule and reigns with Him throughout all eternity! Hallelujah! Our God reigns!

Reflection:

Think about how you can remain open to Holy discipline. Think about what it means to remain passionate about pursuing intimacy with the Lord.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, please forgive me for allowing myself to become lukewarm and/or grow cold toward You. Lord, stir my heart. Make me hungry and thirsty for You! Help me to fall deeply in love with You and pursue You with all that I am. Help me to cling to You forever! Transform my heart and life with Your power, overwhelming, passionate, bridal covenant love. Transform me into Your holy Bride. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Revelation 3 KJV

3 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

³ Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

⁴ Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

⁵ He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

⁶ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

⁷ And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

⁸ I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

⁹ Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

¹⁰ Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

¹¹ Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

¹² Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

¹³ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

¹⁴ And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

¹⁵ I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

¹⁶ So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

¹⁷ Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

¹⁸ I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

²¹ To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

²² He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

A Word from the Author

Dear Reader,

As I developed the curriculum for this 30-day study, I felt compelled to represent the Scripture as authentically and accurately as possible. I wanted **love** to be the shining theme. I studied and researched every word presented here. My hope is that you've received new revelations about **love** along your journey.

In His Love,

Mary Greene

Sources

Old and New Testament Bible verses from Bible Gateway. *biblegateway.com*

Greek definitions from Blue Letter Bible. *blueletterbible.org*