



## Love Abounding Leader Guide

**NOTE TO LEADER:** There are a multitude of additional Bible references which speak of the love of the Father and the Son toward us, and the work of the Holy Spirit in us, as well as the love we are to show to our neighbor. The Bible speaks of God’s love from Genesis to Revelation (both mentioned in this study).

**NOTE, TWO:** In the article “Love for the Vineyard” (*The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 1810), the author writes: *God has grafted us into the true Vine, Jesus, at our Baptism. Watered by His Word, nurtured by His body and blood, and filled with His Spirit, we live for Him rather than for ourselves. He has shown us what love looks like by His sacrifice on the cross. That same self-giving love becomes the motivation for how we treat others in our lives—family, friends, strangers, and enemies. We depend exclusively on Jesus Christ and Him crucified for our salvation. In Him we bear much fruit.*

**Opening Prayer:** *Love is patient and forbearing, Clothed in Christ’s humility, Gentle, selfless, kind, and caring, Reaching out in charity. Love in Christ is strong and living, Binding faithful hearts in one; Love in Christ is true and giving. May His will in us be done.*<sup>1</sup> Amen.

**Introduction:** Recently, a police officer made the front page of our area newspaper — the lead television news story, as well. His action? He had bought lunch for a homeless man and was sitting down in public view, eating lunch with him. Why do you think this was considered such important news? **Answers will vary.**

### Remembering God’s Love

*For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord!* (Psalm 117: 2). Luther described [the Hebrew] *chesed* as “goodness in action.”<sup>2</sup> How do the following passages illustrate God’s love for us?

Exodus 34:1–10a **Moses makes two new tablets and goes alone to Mount Sinai. God again gives the Ten Commandments, responds to Moses’ plea for forgiveness to himself and his people, and renews the covenant with Israel. God has worked with humankind throughout the ages through both Law and Gospel.**

<sup>1</sup>The Lord said to Moses, “Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. <sup>2</sup>Be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to me on the top of the mountain. <sup>3</sup>No one shall come up with you, and let no one be seen throughout all the mountain. Let no flocks or herds graze opposite that mountain.” <sup>4</sup>So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first. And he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand two tablets of stone. <sup>5</sup>The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. <sup>6</sup>The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,<sup>7</sup>keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.” <sup>8</sup>And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped. <sup>9</sup>And he said, “If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin,

and take us for your inheritance.”<sup>10a</sup> And he said, “Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation.

**Deuteronomy 7:6–9 The Lord loves His chosen people Israel (now including us); redeemed them from slavery; is faithful to keep His promises.**

<sup>6</sup>“For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. <sup>7</sup>It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, <sup>8</sup>but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. <sup>9</sup>Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations,

**Joshua 21:43–45, 22:5 God gives to Israel all the land He had promised to their fathers, having given all their enemies into their hands. Joshua reminds the people to respond in faith, to: love ... walk ... keep ... cling ... serve (TLSB, 373).**

<sup>43</sup>Thus the LORD gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. <sup>44</sup>And the LORD gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands. <sup>45</sup>Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass. [Joshua advises]: <sup>22</sup><sup>5</sup>Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

**Psalm 107:8–9 God has delivered His people from trouble and they are encouraged to thank Him for His steadfast love and wondrous works. He satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with good things.**

<sup>8</sup>Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! <sup>9</sup>For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.

**Psalm 146:5–9 The loving deeds of the Lord include: creation; faithfulness; justice for the oppressed; feeding the hungry; setting prisoners free; opening the eyes of the blind; lifting up those who are bowed down; loving the righteous; watching over the sojourners; and, upholding the widow and fatherless.**

<sup>5</sup>Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, <sup>6</sup>who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever; <sup>7</sup>who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; <sup>8</sup>the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. <sup>9</sup>The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

**Isaiah 55:3–7 Keeping God’s everlasting covenant with David that his house will continue forever — through his descendant, the Messiah, Jesus Christ — Israel will call other nations (us!) to salvation because of the Lord’s deeds. He is compassionate and will pardon the penitent.**

<sup>3</sup>Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. <sup>4</sup>Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. <sup>5</sup>Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. <sup>6</sup>“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; <sup>7</sup>let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

**1 John 4:7–12 God is love; He loved us and sent His Son. We are to love one another**

<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup> In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

Even as Adam and Eve are being sent from Eden, God in His love provides the promise of a Savior (Genesis 3:15). *God's unwavering devotion to the salvation of His people finds its fulfillment in the cross of Christ.*<sup>2</sup>

NOTE TO LEADER: Genesis 3:15 <sup>15</sup> I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

## Redeeming Love

Love has been described as unconditional concern for the ultimate well-being of another. How do we see this illustrated in the words and actions of Christ, our Redeemer?

Matthew 22:34–40 **Christ fulfilled both of these great commandments — impossible for us. The first commands we place our love for God above everything else. In the second, Christ commissions us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Thankfully, God does not respond to our failures as we deserve (death). He sent us His Son, our Redeemer, Who kept the Law perfectly, yet willingly paid the price for our sins upon the cross for our ultimate good.**

<sup>34</sup> But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. <sup>35</sup> And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. <sup>36</sup> “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” <sup>37</sup> And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Mark 10:13–16 **Jesus includes children in His kingdom and suggests we receive the kingdom like them. He held them and blessed them.**

<sup>13</sup> And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup> But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. <sup>15</sup> Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” <sup>16</sup> And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

Luke 6:27–31 **We are to love our enemies, doing good to those who hate us, blessing those who curse us, praying for those who abuse us. We are to turn the other cheek, give even more than is taken, and give to those who beg — to treat others as we would wish to be treated. This is love on a challenging level, as we are called to love the ungrateful, the unpleasant, the immoral.**

<sup>27</sup> “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. <sup>29</sup> To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. <sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. <sup>31</sup> And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

Luke 24:36–49 **Jesus appears to the disciples, speaks peace, shows them His scarred hands and side — even eats a piece of fish — proving Himself the resurrected Christ. Surely His presence among them, His word of peace, His discussion of Scriptures, His fulfillment of all written about Him in the Law, Prophets and the Psalms, must have calmed their fears. He sends them, His**

witnesses, to proclaim salvation to all nations, promising to equip them with the Holy Spirit. He sends us, too, to love our neighbor and to share the Good News.

<sup>36</sup> As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” <sup>37</sup> But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. <sup>38</sup> And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? <sup>39</sup> See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” <sup>40</sup> And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. <sup>41</sup> And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” <sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup> and he took it and ate before them. <sup>44</sup> Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, <sup>46</sup> and said to them “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, <sup>47</sup> and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

**John 13:12–17 Christ demonstrates humility, self-sacrifice, and love in washing His disciples’ feet, a task usually performed by the lowest of servants.**

<sup>12</sup> When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you? <sup>13</sup> You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. <sup>14</sup> If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. <sup>15</sup> For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. <sup>16</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

**John 15:7–13, 35–36 Walking in faith, in prayer, in worship, in Word and Sacrament, we bear fruit. Abiding in Him and His Word, we are able to do good, to show much love and mercy to one another, even to loving our enemies or giving our life for a friend.**

<sup>7</sup> If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. <sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. <sup>12</sup> “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. <sup>35</sup> But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. <sup>36</sup> Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

**1 Corinthians 11:23-26 Paul reminds the Corinthians of Christ’s institution of the Lord’s Supper. In receiving the sacrament (Word joined to element), we receive the very body and blood of Christ and forgiveness of sins, and experience the union of the body, the church, gathered.**

<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” <sup>25</sup> In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

<sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

**Galatians 3:25–29 Christ has made all who are baptized into Him one — including Gentile (us), Jew, Greek, slave, free, male, female — all children of God, all heirs through faith to the promise to Abraham.**

<sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, <sup>26</sup> for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. <sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is

neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. Titus 3:3–7 **God's love and mercy have been poured into our hearts through Baptism and the renewal of the Holy Spirit. While we were still sinners (and still are!), Christ died for us (Romans 5:7). His death and resurrection saved us — not works — according to the goodness, mercy, and loving kindness of God. Justified by God's rich grace through our Savior, we are heirs and have the hope of eternal life.**

<sup>3</sup>For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. <sup>4</sup>But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup>he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup>whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup>so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

1 John 3:16–18 **We are God's children. We know His love, because in spite of our sinfulness, Christ laid down His life, taking our punishment, for our salvation. We ought to lay down ours (to use ours) for the brothers and use our worldly goods to help a brother in need. We are to love in deed and truth (not just talk).**

<sup>16</sup> By this we know love, that he [Jesus] laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. <sup>17</sup> But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? <sup>18</sup> Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

Christ continues to demonstrate love, forgiveness, and mercy from the cross (John 19:25–27; Luke 23:34a and 43). *We thank our Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world, for [His] salvation and ask Him to empower [us] to share His gift with others.\**

NOTE TO LEADER: John 19:25–27 **From the cross, caring for His mother Mary (into the care of the disciple He loved.)** <sup>25</sup> but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” <sup>27</sup> Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

Luke 23:34a and 43 **From the cross: forgiving those who crucified Him; proclaiming mercy to the thief.**

<sup>34</sup> And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

<sup>43</sup> And he said to [the thief], “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

## **Responding in Love**

The Greek *agape* describes *self-giving, sacrificial concern for another person. ... Those loved by God show love toward others.*<sup>4</sup> We are loved! We love!

2 Corinthians 9:7 **We are to give cheerfully.**

<sup>7</sup> Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Ephesians 2:4–10 **By grace, through faith, we are created in Christ for good works which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**

<sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—<sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of

works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

**Philippians 2:1-4 In humility, we should consider others more significant than self, looking to their interests as well as our own.**

<sup>1</sup> So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, <sup>2</sup> complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

**Colossians 3:11–17,23–24 We are to put on compassionate and forgiving hearts, treating all with kindness. Whatever we do should be done in the name of the Lord and we should work heartily. We are serving our Lord Jesus Christ.**

<sup>11</sup> Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. <sup>12</sup> Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup> And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

<sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, <sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

**Hebrews 13:1–3 We are to show hospitality to strangers and to remember those in prison, as well as those who are mistreated.**

<sup>1</sup> Let brotherly love continue. <sup>2</sup> Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. <sup>3</sup> Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

**James 1:22,25–27 We are to be doers of the word (not just hearers), visiting orphans, widows.**

<sup>22</sup> But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. <sup>25</sup> But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. <sup>26</sup> If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. <sup>27</sup> Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

**1 Peter 4:8–10 We must keep loving; show hospitality without grumbling; and use the gift each has received to serve one another.**

<sup>8</sup> Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup> Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. <sup>10</sup> As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

**Revelation 1:4b–6 We are to praise the eternal God. Jesus Christ is the faithful witness, firstborn of the dead, ruler of kings on earth — who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood.**

<sup>4b</sup> John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, ... <sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood <sup>6</sup> and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Blessed to be loved by our Lord with everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3b) and thankful for our redemption, we want to spend our lives in loving service to Him and to others. *God calls us to*

*self-sacrificing love. We pray for wisdom and patience [and strength] as we put God's ways into practice.*<sup>3</sup>

*NOTE TO LEADER: Jeremiah 31:3: I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.*

**Closing:** When our family lost a beloved sister-in-law and aunt, a note arrived quickly from a dear friend, closing: "May fond memories bring back times of love and laughter, as well as the promise of being reunited on the last day. May you always remember that Jesus Christ — our Risen Lord and Savior — continues to walk beside you and will never leave your side." That's love in deed indeed! *NOTE TO LEADER: The last sentence refers both to our Lord and my friend.*

**As Time Allows:** Research additional examples of God's love and/or Christ's love in action. *Answers will vary, but may include: Adam and Eve, Moses, Noah, Israel, Jonah, Mary and Martha, Lazarus, Paul, Thomas, Peter, woman of Samaria, feeding the crowd, healing the sick, miracles, urging His followers to serve others, and many more.*

**Closing Prayer:** *Love in Christ abides forever, Fainting not when ills attend; Love, forgiving and forgiven, Shall endure until life's end.*<sup>1</sup> Lord, lead us to love, forgive, and serve according to your Word and example. Amen.

**Closing Hymn:** Sing the opening and closing prayers to the tune of *LSB 427; LW 101; TLH 354.*

<sup>1</sup>*Lutheran Service Book*, 706, verses 2,1,3    <sup>2</sup>*The Lutheran Study Bible (TLSB)*, page 843

\*adapted, *TLSB*, 1915    <sup>3</sup>adapted, *TLSB*, 1721    <sup>4</sup>*TLSB*, 1903