

God's **LOVE**
Compels Us



A Three-week Stewardship Emphasis

God's Love Compels Us

(A Three-week Stewardship Emphasis)



Weekly Themes:

Week One; "God Is Love"
Week Two: "God Loves Us and Meets Us at the Point of Our Need"
Week Three: "Because God Is Love, We Can Love"

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To Pastors and Stewardship Leaders:

I am pleased that your church is going to offer **God's Love Compels Us**. I am confident that the messages offered during these three weeks will enrich and bless your members.

About the author:

I have spent the past two decades developing Scripturally-based, grace-centered stewardship resources. My stewardship materials have been used by over a thousand different churches. I have authored two books, *Becoming Money Wise* and *Life at its Best: Living Wisely in an Unwise World*, several stewardship Bible studies, and many annual stewardship emphases. I serve currently on the Michigan District Stewardship Committee and as an elder at Our Shepherd Lutheran Church (LCMS) in Birmingham, MI. My wife, Phyllis, and I have three adult children along with their spouses. We are blessed with six grandchildren who live in Michigan and Texas.

I pray that God is honored and that the members of your church are drawn closer to Him through this stewardship emphasis, **God's Love Compels Us**.

Your Fellow Steward,
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Thanks to Pastor Evan Gaertner, Pastor Stephen Woodfin, and Pastor Michael Vieregge for their sermons.

Churches that purchase this emphasis are permitted to reproduce any of the materials in the binder or on the CD for use within your church.

Additional stewardship resources can be found at stewardshipadvisors.org.



“God’s Love Compels Us”

Leader Tips:

A Three-week Stewardship Emphasis:

- **Week 1: “God Is Love”**
- **Week 2: “God Loves Us and Meets Us at the Point of Our Need”**
- **Week 3: “Because God Is Love, We Can Love”**



Be prepared to find this stewardship emphasis a very rewarding, educational, and enjoyable program as we focus on true love that can only come from God. The Apostle John tells us *“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love”* (1 John 4:8). Love fittingly describes the nature of God; His love is revealed in the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. God expressed His unfathomable love by sending Jesus to live among us and to take upon Himself all the sins of mankind when He suffered and died on the Cross. By God’s grace in Jesus, we become people who commit our lives and blessings to His use. Acknowledging that all we are and have are gifts from God’s love, we become His faithful stewards who show our gratitude through faithful and generous giving.

Sunday Morning Bible Studies:

In order for your members to grow as stewards who understand, embrace, and share God’s love, it is important to spend time reading and studying His Word. The three Bible studies are available on the CD and printed in this binder. An answer guide is available.

Testimonials/ Lay reader talks

There are lay reader talks for each of the three weeks. Personal testimonials are more effective, but, if no member is willing to share his/her stewardship story with the congregation, these talks may be used. The talks may be given at the start of the service or during the time of the offering.

Trifold Brochures

There is a trifold brochure for each week. They could be inserted in the worship folder or handed out individually by the ushers. It is permitted to personalize or change the brochures. For example, you may be interested in replacing some of the pictures with pictures of your church.

Grandpa and Billy Video

This three-and-a-half-minute video can be played the Sunday preceding the emphasis or at the beginning of the first worship service of the emphasis

Emphasis CD

All the material in the binder and on the CD may be copied.

Newsletter Articles

There are three newsletter articles, which is one or two more than you probably will need. If you use all three, you could consider the possibility of using two prior to the emphasis and the third one during the month of the emphasis.

Commitment Sunday/Weekend

Members should be encouraged to make financial commitments. Commitment forms can be distributed with the bulletins/worship folders on Commitment Sunday (Commitment Weekend), which is the third week of the emphasis. (You may choose to make the Sunday/Weekend following the third week commitment Sunday/Weekend.) The commitment is a meaningful part of the service. It is suggested that you give members the opportunity to bring their commitments forward to the altar. Every effort should be made to make Commitment Sunday/Weekend a special and meaningful event. To show the joy and importance of making a commitment to the Lord, you may want to have balloons and/or other decorations in the church entrance. You could provide some special snacks. Some churches have found that inviting a special guest preacher is helpful. Some churches celebrate their commitments by having a lunch on Sunday.

The commitment forms need to be available on Commitment Sunday/Weekend. It is suggested that you mail the letter from the pastor and a commitment form just prior to the start of the emphasis. This will act as a reminder for members to think and pray about their commitments. If they fail to bring their commitment forms with them, it won't matter because there will be another form for them on Commitment Sunday.

The word "Grace" is written in a large, elegant, cursive script. The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent 'G' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'e'.

After Final week

You are encouraged to send reminder letters to members who failed to return their commitment forms. A letter is available on the CD. A bulletin message to thank members for turning in their commitment forms is available on the CD.

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Compels Us

Coming Soon:

“God’s Love
Compels Us”



Bulletin messages (preceding emphasis)

Coming Soon: “God’s Love Compels Us”

CHRISTLIKE LOVE DIMINISHES THE FOCUS WE HAVE ON OURSELVES AND SHARPENS OUR FOCUS ON THE NEEDS OF OTHERS.

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:11).



Second and third week prior to emphasis

Coming Soon: “God’s Love Compels Us”

Our stewardship theme for this year is **God’s Love Compels Us**. The Apostle John tells us, “*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love*” (1 John 4:7-8). God’s nature is love, and His love within us overflows from us to others. Even when people are not loveable and would rather hurt us than love us, we can love. Martin Luther King, Jr., a name sake of our renowned reformer, wrote, “We love men not because we like them, nor because their ways appeal to us, nor even because they possess some kind of divine spark. We love every man because God loves him.” Because God loves, we can love.

Week prior to emphasis:

God’s Love Compels Us

Next week, we begin our three-week stewardship emphasis **God’s Love Compels Us**. Through faith, we understand that we are not saved by our love for God but by the love of God for us in sending Christ to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. God’s love for us achieves its purpose in us when it causes us to love others. Kenneth Kremer in his book *Embracing Godly Character* writes, “Our attitudes, activities, and general focus in life reflects the power of Jesus’ love working in our lives and through us into the lives of others. The connection between faith and love is almost seamless. In their union, we begin to perform like one would expect a child of God to perform.” Let’s pray that this emphasis helps us to understand better how much God loves us and that His love compels us to share His love with others.

Bulletin message following the emphasis

Thank You for your Commitment

We received many Commitment Forms last Sunday. If you have not yet had a chance to turn in your Commitment Form, find copies in the narthex. Please complete the form and place it in the church office.

Your faithful and generous giving is appreciated. Your church staff and church leaders will do everything possible to be faithful stewards of the money that you've given. God bless us as we strive, by God's grace, to grow as disciples, who give faithfully and generously.

*Thank
You*

Newsletter article (one-month preceding stewardship emphasis)

Love as Jesus Loved

In the coming weeks, we will be starting our stewardship sermon series, **God's Love Compels Us**. Through faith, we are able to begin to comprehend God's unfathomable love for us. As recipients of God's love, our hearts are changed, and we seek to return His love by loving and serving our neighbors.

So how well are you doing in your love for others? Are you seeking the highest good for those you love? If you were to rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 on your ability to obey God's command to love your neighbors as yourself, what score would you give yourself? Perhaps you think you deserve a score of 7 or 8. You may even see yourself as a loving person but think some of your family members or friends could be more loving.

How you rate yourself on your loving scale will likely drop when you read what Jesus says. "*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another*" (John 13:34). We are told to love "*just as I have loved you.*" Jesus loved us so much that He was willing to go to the cross for us. He loved us enough to give His very own life. His love for us has no limits. There is no scale that can measure the depth of Jesus' love for us. His love is a new standard.

In the Apostle Paul's letter to the Colossians, he lists virtues that ought to be seen in our lives as Christians. He tells us that we are to "*put on compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another*" (Colossians 3:12-13). Over all these virtues, Paul concludes, "*And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony*" (verse 14). Love is the crowning virtue in every Christian's life, the one without which all the others cannot even exist. The love that crowns all Christian virtues finds its perfect example in Christ. It is love extended even to the unloving and the unlovable.

We know we can never fully love as Jesus loves us, but He has commanded us to try and love others in the same way. May our prayer be that we don't try to love in our own strength but seek Jesus' help to love others as He has loved us. And we pray that God will bless our stewardship emphasis, **God's Love Compels Us**, which will be offered in a few weeks.

God Is Love

In a couple of months, we will begin a stewardship series focusing on God's love in Jesus. Pastor Rick Warren, a noted author and speaker, wrote, "God is love. He didn't need us, but He wanted us. And that is the most amazing thing." Pastor Warren's Scriptural basis comes from 1 John 4:8, which reads: "*Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.*" Love is not merely an attribute of God; it is His very nature and character. God is not only loving; He is fundamentally love. God alone loves in the completeness and perfection of love.

Thus, if God is love and we, His followers, are made in His image, then we will also love. "*We love because He first loved us*" (1 John 4:19). Because of sin, the image is marred, and our love is far from perfect. Yet, by His grace, we are empowered to love because we have received love from Jesus, Who loved us first. St. Augustine wrote, "God loves each of us as if there were only one of us." God's love within us overflows from us toward God and others.

God's love is referenced throughout the Old and New Testaments. However, in the Apostle John's first letter, we find love mentioned more often than in the other books of the Bible. For example, in 1 John 4:7-21, John uses the word "love" 24 times. The entire passage speaks of God's loving nature. These 14 verses teach us how to show God's love to others, to our friends, family, and even our enemies. God's love is unconditional; His love is very different from the human love we experience with one another because it is not based on feelings. He doesn't love us because we please Him. He loves us simply because He is love.

God's love is a gift. God's love is a life-giving, energizing force. This love was demonstrated in Jesus Christ: "*But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). When we receive God's love, we are enabled through that love to love others. In the words of Francis of Assisi, "Lord, grant that I might not so much seek to be loved as to love." May God use us all as His instruments of love.

Coming Soon: “God’s Love Compels Us”

This year’s stewardship theme is **God’s Love Compels Us**. This will be an exciting and beneficial three weeks of sermon messages and Bible studies. We will focus on God’s amazing and unconditional love for us and the privilege and joy we have as we share His love with others. God’s love is much more meaningful than any of the common uses of the word love in today’s language. God’s love is so profound that He is willing to give us the most inexpressible gift, His Son. This is the love that God had and has toward us. *“God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16). Jesus gave His life for us, and He keeps on giving. His love is sacrificial, and no one is excluded.

God’s love is not common. From our human perspective, we find it very difficult to love someone we believe does not deserve our love. God’s love overcomes barriers that each of us has as we try to love others. He loves us even though we are unworthy of His love. This is the difference between God and us. Our love insists that people deserve and return our love. God’s love insists on loving those who do not love in return and are not loveable. The Apostle Paul writes, *“God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). We are all sinners, and Christ died for us all.

God takes love seriously. He loves us, and He commands us to love one another. Jesus said, *“Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another”* (John 13:34). We express our love to Jesus when we serve those around us. Serving communicates love. *“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many”* (Mark 10:45).

The love that Jesus places in our hearts can be the fuel that makes a difference not only in our lives, but in the lives of those around us. It is important to express verbally our love as we thank God for His abundant grace, mercy, and blessing, but our words must be supported through the greater expression of our love as seen through our giving and serving as God gives us grace to do. *“Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth”* (1 John 3:18). Love compels us to carry out actual deeds for the benefit and blessings of another.

Letter (to be sent prior to start of emphasis)

Dear Member,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

I am excited to inform you that this year's stewardship emphasis, **God's Love Compels Us**, begins on ____ (Date) _____. Love describes the nature of God. All of God's actions are love. In his letter the Apostle John tell us "*God is love*" (1 John 4:8). God's amazing love is revealed in the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ.

The three weekly themes are as follow:

- "God Is Love": We are redeemed by the love of God, which transcends and persists regardless of circumstances. God gathers us by His love. This love is a gift.
- "God Loves Us and Meets Us at the Point of Our Need": The love we have in Christ embraces each person. We meet people with the love of God. God has given us the gift of love that we share with each other.
- "Because God Is Love, We Can Love": Because we have been loved by God, we can bring this love into the world. God's love in us overflows through us to others. Thus, God's love is released into the world.

Enclosed is a commitment form for you to return on Commitment Sunday which is ____ (Date) ____.

Let us pray that the stewardship emphasis will help our love for Jesus and others to grow. May God's blessings be with us as we faithfully steward the many blessings that God has entrusted to us.

Serving Christ together,

Pastor _____

Letter to members who have not turned in a commitment form

(To be sent about two weeks after Commitment Sunday.)

Dear Member,

The Apostle John in his first letter wrote, *"We love because He first loved us"* (1 John 4:19). All love comes from God, Who is love for us and to us. We are able to love one another only because we have received love from God through Jesus. Jesus demonstrated His unconditional and amazing love by offering Himself on the Cross. In response to His love, we proclaim the love of the Gospel here and in the mission field, both in word and in deed.

During our recent stewardship emphasis, **God's Love Compels Us**, we learned that God's love within us should overflow from us to others. *"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another"* (John 4:11). With transformed hearts, we express our faith in the way we love and serve others and in giving our resources to advance God's kingdom as well as to help those in need. Through faith, we are God's stewards each and every day. We commit our lives, our gifts, and our resources to serving the Lord.

How shall we respond to God's love and faithfulness to us? Are you willing to make a commitment to Him? Your commitment card has not yet been received. Perhaps you're still praying about it; maybe you've forgotten it; maybe it's been lost. We are enclosing another commitment form and ask that you complete it and either mail yours or return it to the church office at your earliest convenience. In order to carry on the ministry that Christ has commissioned to us ____ (Name of Church) ____ (Matthew 28:19-20), we need your support.

Thank you and may God continue to help you be the steward that He has created you to be.

In Christ,

Pastor _____



GOD IS
LOVE

“God’s Love
Compels Us”

Week 1:
“God Is Love”

Bulletin messages (Week 1)

“God is Love”

We are redeemed by the love of God, which transcends and persists regardless of circumstances. God gathers us by His love. This love is a gift.

God’s Love Compels Us

GOD’S LOVE FLOWS OUT OF HIS NATURE AND CHARACTER.

“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 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” (1 John 4:8-9).



God’s Love Compels Us

GOD LOVES US UNCONDITIONALLY, AND HIS LOVE IN US OVERFLOWS THROUGH US TO OTHERS.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples. If you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).



“Forgive and give as if it were your last opportunity. Love like there is no tomorrow, and if tomorrow comes, love again” (Max Lucado).

“God loves each of us as if there were only one of us” (St. Augustine).

“The great thing to remember is that though our feelings come and go God’s love for us does not” (C. S. Lewis).

“Lord, grant that I might not so much seek to be loved as to love” (Francis of Assisi).

Worship Helps: Week 1

Grandpa and Billy Video (to be shown during this service or the service prior to the start of the emphasis)

Hymns:

“When I Behold Jesus Christ” 542

“Great Is Thy Faithfulness” 809

“Rejoice, My Heart, Be Glad and Sing” 737

Readings:

Old Testament: Lamentations 3:22-32

Epistle: 1 John 4:7-21

Gospel: John 11:28-37

Stewardship Litany: (Psalm 103)

Pastor: Heavenly Father, we know that You are merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

People: Lord, we thank You for the privilege of being Your stewards. Help us to share Your love.

Pastor: Father, as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is Your steadfast love toward us who fear You.

People: Lord, we thank You for the privilege of being Your stewards. Help us to share Your love.

Pastor: Father, we know that Your steadfast love is from everlasting to everlasting to those who revere You.

People: Lord, we thank You for the privilege of being Your stewards. Help us to share Your love.

All: “Bless the Lord, all His hosts, His ministers, who do His will. Bless the Lord, all His works, in all places of His dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul!”

Almost daily we use the word “love.” If you have a spouse or children, you tell them that you love them. When you enjoy a meal, you may say, “I loved my dinner.” We often say that we loved a movie. The word love has different meanings among them are affection and desire. We often go beyond just telling our loved ones of our love. We express that love by spending billions of dollars each year on birthdays, anniversaries, or Valentine’s Days buying cards, flowers, and chocolates.

God’s love is evident throughout the Old and New Testaments. The 13th chapter of First Corinthians is referred to as the Bible’s love chapter. This passage is not talking about loving a meal or a TV program; it is talking about Christian love. The Apostle Paul, who wrote the letter to the Corinthians, exalts love as the supreme gift. In the beginning verses, he tells the Corinthians (and us) that love is more important than prophesying, knowledge, faith, and generosity. In verses four through eight, he presents Christian love in a personal way: *“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”*

As mentioned above, the word love is used to mean different things. For us as Christians the inspirational meaning of love is found in what is perhaps the most widely known Scripture verse, John 3:16. *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”* Love in this sense is sacrificial. It expresses a commitment of love so profound that God was willing to let His Son suffer and die on the cross because of His unconditional love for us.

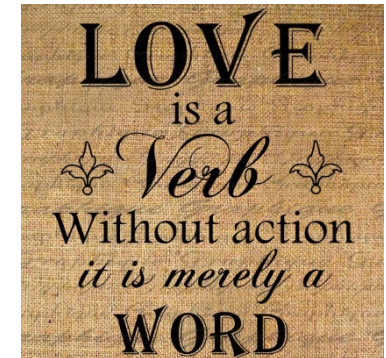
God love for us is special and unique because we are undeserving of His love. Paul tells us, *“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly... God shows His love for us that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:6-8). When the time was right, God rescued us from our sins and death.



God Is Love

In his letter, the Apostle John wrote, *“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love”* (1 John

4:8). Because God is love, all love has its origin in Him. Love describes the nature of God. All of God’s actions are loving. God’s love for us is unconditional. It is not that we loved God but that He loved us.



God’s amazing love is described in the words from the hymn, “When I Behold Jesus Christ.” Stanzas two and four are as follows:

“For me You gave all Your love. For me You suffered pain; I find no words, nothing can Your selflessness explain.

What love is this? Greater love no one has ever known. My life with God—this I owe to You, and You alone.”

God’s love rescues us from our sinful and rebellious state. No matter who we are or what we’ve done, God’s love seeks us. Jesus took upon Himself all of our past and future sins. By grace through faith, we understand that we are saved not by our love for God but by the love of God shown to us in sending Christ to be the sacrifice for our sins.

Love One Another

God has put us on earth to do two things. We are first to love God and then love our neighbors. *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself"* (Matthew 22:37-40). Loving God and others is what matters most in life. There is nothing that is more insisted upon in the Bible than love for God and others. The Apostle John tells us, *"We love because He first loved us"* (1 John 4:19). All love comes from God, and we are able to love because we have received His love through Jesus.



God's Word is clear that loving others is not an option. Loving one another is central to the New Testament message. Jesus said, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you love one*

another" (John 13:34-35). As we love one another, we will also grow in unity with Jesus and others. Jesus' sacrificial love sets a far higher standard than anything before. *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father Who is in heaven. For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?"* (Matthew 5:43-46).

Through faith that comes from the Holy Spirit working through God's Word and Sacraments, we are empowered to love others. When we are obedient to God's Word and love others, many good things happen. We worship and praise God. We provide some kind of benefit to our neighbors, and we receive God's peace. When we live as faithful and loving followers of Jesus, we give evidence that the Holy Spirit lives in us. Jesus taught that people would recognize His followers by their love for one another.

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God's Love Compels Us



(Week 1)

***"Beloved, if God so loved us,
we also ought to love one
another" (1 John 4:11).***

Loving Others

This is the first week of our stewardship emphasis, **God's Love Compels Us**. Because God is love, it is His nature to love, and because God is love, we can love. Francis of Assisi wrote, "Lord, grant that I might not so much seek to be loved, as to love." Jesus tells us that the greatest commandment is to love God and the second is to love our neighbors as ourselves. God's love is to flow through us to others.

Loving others is shown in this story of two Christian brothers who decided to buy a farm together and live on the farm. Their plan was to share everything equally so when they harvested their corn, wheat, and soybeans each brother would have a pile for his half of the harvest. One of the brothers had a large family and the other brother was single. After awhile the single brother thought that, since his brother had a wife and children to provide for, his brother needed more than he did. In the middle of the night, he got up and wheel-barreled some of his crop over to the brother's pile. At the same time, the brother with the family thought his single brother would have no one in his later years to take care of him, so he got up in the middle of the night to wheel-barrel some of his crop to his brother's pile. This hauling of grain to the other brother's pile went on for a period of time until one night they met, and they saw what each brother was doing for the other. This brought the brothers to tears and hugs of joy as they realized how much brotherly love they had for each other.

Faith prompts demonstrations of love for all people. In the words of the Apostle John, "*Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another*" (John 4:11). Jesus taught that people would recognize His followers by his love for one another. "*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*" (John 13:34-35). Jesus asks all of His followers to imitate His love for us as we love one another. Filled with the Holy Spirit, we are able to reflect Christ's love. May God's love within us overflow to all the people that God puts in our midst.

Children's Message: Week 1

Hello boys and girls. Thank you for being here today!

Today in the sermon we're going to be talking about love.

Which is better: To like or love? For example, "Do you love your bike?" or "Do you like your bike?" "Do you love chocolate ice cream?" or "Do you like chocolate ice cream?"

Your parents love you all the time. But at times do they like what you do? Everyone here has done things that our parents have not liked. For example, say you don't do your chores around the house. What's going to happen? Your parents will not like your behavior. Even though your parents may not like what you do, they still love you. Nothing you do will stop your parents from loving you.

In a much bigger way, our Heavenly Father loves us and His love for us never changes. He doesn't love us because of what we do or don't do. God is love, and His love for us will never stop.

Let's pray. Dear Father, thank You for Your amazing and wonderful love for us. Thank You for always loving us even when we don't act the way we should. Help us to love others as You love us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Sermon for First Week:
“God Is Love”
Text: 1 John 4:16

Let’s pray, May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, my Rock and my Redeemer. Amen.

Today we begin our annual stewardship sermon series. We will be talking about stewardship for a three-week period. Our sermon text for today is found in 1 John 4:16: *“So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him (and in her). ”*

When we talk about stewardship, three words often come to mind. If I asked for a response, most of you would probably know which three words that I’m thinking about. Stewardship is often referred to as time, talents, and treasures. These are good words, and they would make a good sermon. However, stewardship is more than time, talents, and treasures, so, how do we define stewardship? Webster’s Dictionary gives us a good definition: “Stewardship is the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care.” It’s a very good definition because it doesn’t say anything about things you own or have. It doesn’t say anything about our ownership. There is great theology in this definition because it talks about things entrusted to you. What does God entrust to you? Time, talents, and treasures would fit because they have been entrusted to us. But God gives us even more than that. Life, breath, food, shelter, all that we are and have, relationships, etc. But our focus is on something even more important and that is “love.” Love has everything to do with stewardship. God has entrusted us with His love. Because it has been entrusted to us, we are responsible for the management of it. We are stewards of the love that God gives to us. Love has everything to do with stewardship. We learn from the text that *“God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in Him”*

Because of God’s love for us, He has entrusted us with His greatest gift. That gift is faith. The gift of faith in Jesus is above all others gifts. We may have knowledge or know about Jesus but, more importantly, we have faith in Him and in His promises. Faith in what Jesus has done for us. What have we done to receive His gifts? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. God’s love for us is incomprehensible. Because God has given us faith, we can embrace His love and share that love. God’s amazing love for us has achieved its purpose in us when it causes us to love others. The faith that God gives us prevents the world, Satan, and our flesh from placing doubts in our minds that God is love and that He loves us unconditionally. God creates and sustains our faith.

Faith, hope, and love. The greatest of these is love because love never ends. In any wedding that we’ve attended we hear that love is *“patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way...love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”* (1 Corinthians 13). What Jesus asks of us is to reflect His love to others. What a deal that is. We receive all of God’s love and all we are asked is to love others. How do we understand what love is? From our Scripture verse for today, we learn that God is love. *“God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8).

We are going to focus on love for three weeks so I thought it would be beneficial for us to understand better how God's Word shares four unique or different forms of love: When you and I refer to love, we use one word: love. However, in scripture, love is communicated through four Greek words: Philia, Storge (pronounced STOR-jay), Eros, and Agape. These different types of love are characterized by brotherly love, family love, romantic love, and God's divine love.

- Philia love is the type of intimate and affectionate love in the Bible that most Christians practice toward each other. It is friendship type of love. It is communal love. This friendship was seen between Jonathan and David.
- Storge love refers to family or familiar love. Love for others because you have something in common. Love comes from common circumstances, common beliefs, common values, or common blood. The love that exists between parents and children, and brothers and sisters. It was the love that Mary and Martha had for their brother Lazarus. It was the love that Jacob had for his sons.
- Eros love refers to sensual or romantic love. It refers to sexual desire. The intimate love shared between married man and woman. It is the most selfish love. It can be very intoxicating. It was the love that David had for Bathsheba. We know what happened to Bathsheba's husband.
- Agape love is the highest of the four types of love in the Bible. It is divine love. This term defines God's immeasurable, incomparable love for mankind. It is the divine love that comes from God. Agape love is perfect and unconditional. John 3:16 tells us: *"For God so 'agaped' the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."*

Let me give you an example how the different forms of love were used. Following Jesus' resurrection in the 21st chapter of John, Jesus and Peter were having a conversation. This conversation was after Peter had denied Jesus three times. To reinstate Peter, Jesus asked Peter three times, paralleling the three denials, if he loved Him (agape love). Jesus was trying to broaden Peter's love. Three times they go back and forth, Peter wasn't getting it and neither do we. God's love is selfless. We struggle to love because we have a self-serving love.

1. Jesus asked: *"Simon son of John, do you love Me?"* The love word that Jesus was using was "agape." He was asking Peter if he loved him unconditionally and no matter the circumstances. Peter said, *"Yes, Lord, You know that I love you."* His word for love was not the same as what Jesus used but one that meant something like, "I hold you as a dear and trusted friend." The word that he used was Philia or brotherly love.
2. For the second time, Jesus asked the identical question with the same agape love, *"Simon, Son of John, do you love Me?"* Peter answered the same way, in a philia love. He didn't boast. He didn't object. He simply depended on Jesus knowing that Peter held Him dear.
3. When Jesus sadly questioned Peter the third time, He changed the Greek word for love (agape) to match the one Peter was using (Philia). It's as if he was saying, "Okay, Simon, I won't insist on a full-blown, godlike, sacrificial love. Do you hold me as a dear friend, as you claim?"

Jesus was trying to broaden Peter's understanding of love, but Peter didn't get it. We don't get it either. We struggle to love in a self-less way. We do well in a self-serving way.

The light has come into the world but people love the darkness rather than the light. God fully loves us but we foolishly and selfishly choose the darkness.

Once again, the definition of stewardship: “The careful and responsible management of things entrusted to us.” From the beginning of time, God has entrusted people with the management of His things. What a wonderful blessing it is that God has called us to be His stewards to manage His creation. God not only calls us to be His stewards but, through faith, He equips us to be His stewards. Through faith, we understand that God is the creator and owner of all things. Since He has not relinquished His ownership to us, He is the owner, and we are the stewards.

In the next couple of weeks, we will share more about how God’s love is an important part of our stewardship. In closing, I want to share a wonderful hymn that is not referred to as a stewardship hymn but really conveys what stewardship is all about. The hymn that I’m referring to is “*When I Survey the Wonderful Cross*.” We normally only sing this during Lent. Listen to these words,

“When I survey the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died, My richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride...See from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down. Did ever such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown? Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a tribute far too small; Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all!”

That is stewardship.

May God’s love within us overflow through us to others and may God’s love compel us to be the stewards that we were created to be. Amen.

God's
Love
Never
Fails



“God’s Love
Compels Us”

Week 2:

“God Loves Us and
Meets Us at the
Point of Our Need”

Bulletin messages (Week 2)

“God Loves Us and Meets Us at the Point of Our Need”

The love we have in Christ embraces each person. We meet people with the love of God. God has given us the gift of love that we share with each other.

God's Love Compels Us

FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT, WE REFLECT GOD'S LOVE TO OTHERS.

“For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another” (1 John 3:11).



God's Love Compels Us

GOD DESIRES OUR LOVE AND OUR WORSHIP. WE SHOW OUR LOVE FOR GOD BY OUR ACTIONS.

“But if anyone has the world's good and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?” (1 John 3:17).

**Jesus Taught
us how to
Serve Others**

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Worship Helps, Week 2

Hymns:

“Forgive Us Lord, for Shallow Thankfulness” 788

“Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace” 844

“Almighty God, Your Word Is Cast” 577

Readings:

Old Testament: Exodus 17:1-7

Epistle: 1 John 4:7-12

Gospel: Luke 15:11-32

Stewardship Litany:

Pastor: Dear Father, out of unfathomable love You made heaven and earth. You have honored us with the privilege of being Your stewards to care for Your creation.

People: Help us, Lord, to carry out our stewardship tasks faithfully and responsibly.

Pastor: As Your stewards, we pray that You will fill us with Your wisdom and strength so that we may use our time, talents, and treasures in ways that glorify You.

People: Lord, we thank You for the opportunity of being Your stewards. Help us to be instruments of Your love to others.

Pastor: Dear Jesus, in Your ministry here on earth, You became our model for stewardship. You lived the perfect life of stewardship in our place. Because of Your love, sacrifice, and obedience, we are delivered from the requirements of the Law to stewardship motivated by grace.

People: Lord, we pray that what we do as Your stewards will give You honor and praise.

Pastor: Help us, Lord, to be faithful channels through which You work. Through our hands and feet, You bring love and care to the needy; through our lips, You tell others of Your life-saving Gospel; and through our minds, hearts, and checkbooks, You support the work of Your Church.

People: Lord, help us to respond to Your love and grace with thankful and grateful hearts.

The Greatest Story of Love

In his book, *A Martyr's Faith in a Faithless World*, Bryan Wolfmueller tells us "The Bible is a love story. God is love. You are the beloved. This is particularly astonishing when we consider how unlovely and how unlovable we are." Since the very beginning of the Bible, God has shown His love. God promised a redeemer who would come to earth to save mankind. *"But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all"* (Isaiah 53:5-6). Many stories in the Old Testament are used as examples to help us understand the love of God through Jesus Christ.

The sacrifices of the Old Testament were to point people to the ultimate sacrifice—Jesus Christ. While man has sinned, he can be made righteous in God's sight through an atoning sacrifice on his behalf. This sacrifice was Jesus on the cross. The cross was the fulfillment of God's unwavering devotion for the salvation of His people.

Jesus' death on the cross in the place of sinners guarantees the salvation of those who come to him in faith and with

repentant hearts seeking forgiveness for their sins. This forgiveness can be had as a free gift. *"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 6:23).

The greatest story of love in the Bible can be summed up in perhaps the most well-known Scripture verse, John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."* God not only sent His Son to live among us and to live the perfect life on our behalf, but Jesus also became our atoning sacrifice. God's Son was given to all. As Pastor Wolfmueller wrote, "The Bible is a love story." Because of what Jesus endured for each of us, it truly is the greatest story of love that is possible.

Love Filled the Need

The word "love" is used in many different ways: "I just love pecan pie!" "I love my car." "I love to play basketball." The word is thrown around so carelessly that its meaning has deteriorated.

If we want to know what love truly means, we can go to God's Word. There we learn that *"God is love"* (1 John 4:8). We understand what that means only as we continue to delve into Scripture. We find that, since God is

love, He acts in love. Everything He does, He does out of love for us, His creation. He doesn't give us everything we want; He does give us everything we need.



What do we need? We need a Savior, for we are sinners, condemned to die eternally for our sins. *"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,"* the Apostle John states positively, but his following words demonstrate what God's love does: *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:8-9).

That's love. Because of love, Jesus did not remain in Heaven but came to Earth to become one of us, to suffer and die for us, and then rise again, a resurrection that we celebrate every Easter and, in fact, every Sunday as we gather together to rejoice in this great love that makes us His own.

He gave us Himself, and He wants us to give ourselves to Him in return. Having given ourselves to Him, it becomes a joy and a privilege to share our resources, our time, our abilities with Him by sharing them with others, just as Christ, out of love for His own, shared His very self with us.



Expressing Your Love

Love is expressed not only in words but also in action. In fact, it has been said, "Talk is cheap." To tell someone that you love him is good to do, but love also needs to be expressed by what we do and how we act. As God's people, we convey love through our giving and serving.

In God's Word, He tells us how much He loves each of us and then proves it by giving His Son to die for us. *"God shows His love for us in that while we*

were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Jesus gave His life for us, and He keeps on giving. We respond to His love for us through our giving. When we give faithfully of our time, talents, and treasures, we show our love for Jesus.

God takes love seriously. He loves us, and He expects us to love one another and gives us grace to fulfill His expectations. Jesus said, *"...Love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another"* (John 13:34). We love others by serving them. Serving communicates love. *"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many"* (Mark 10:45).

The love that Jesus places in our hearts can be our fuel to make a difference not only in our own lives, but in the lives of those around us. It is important to thank God for His abundant love, grace, mercy, and blessing, but our words must be supported through the greater expression of our love as seen through our giving and serving as God gives us grace to do.

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God's Love Compels Us



(Week 2)

"Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8).

Giving Is the Language of Love

This is the second week of our stewardship series titled **God's Love Compels Us**. When Sir Ernest Shackleton, an Antarctic explorer in the early 1900s, was asked to describe his most terrible moment in the Antarctic, he said it occurred one night when he and the other members of the expedition were huddled in a little hut trying to sleep. They had divided up the last of their food rations. There was nothing else to eat.

Then in the cold darkness, Sir Ernest heard a quiet movement. He turned and saw one of the men reach over and pick up the provision bag of the man beside him. Shackleton said he lived through an eternity of suspense in the next few moments. He would have trusted his life to this man. Was he now turning out to be a thief who would steal his friend's last morsel of food? Then Shackleton saw the man open his own provision bag, take out his last biscuit, and place it in the bag of his sleeping friend. Shackleton said, "I felt I had witnessed a secret moment between man and God." God wants us to be men and women who will love one another in such a way, openly or in secret, that we are raised above the level of mere mortals to become more like our Creator. That is when we truly imitate God.

Giving is the language of love. Love can never be close-lipped or tightfisted. Jesus said, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*" (Acts 20:35). Because God is love, we can love. Filled with God's love, we seek opportunities to share His love with others.

Children's Message: Week 2

Hello boys and girls, it is great to see you!

Today, we are going to talk about love in two ways.

First love as a gift. What are different times when you get gifts? Wait for responses: (Christmas, birthdays, Easter, Valentine's Day)

Next let's focus on rewards. When are times when we get a reward? Wait for responses: (After a race when we get ribbons or trophies, or after we do the dishes or other chores around the house, we may get privileges)

A gift is something you get that is undeserved.
A reward is something we've earned.

Is Jesus' love a gift or a reward?

Of course, Jesus' love is a gift. We don't deserve Jesus' love, but He loves any way. He can't stop loving because it is Jesus' nature to love, and He loves us unconditionally, regardless of how we sin. He wants the very best for each one of us.

How did Jesus show His amazing love for us? Yes, He went to the cross to take upon Himself our sins.

Let's pray. Dear Jesus, thank You for your gift of love. We thank You, Jesus, that You will never stop loving us. Help us to share Your love with our parents, brothers and sisters, teachers, and our friends. In Jesus' holy and precious name we pray. Amen.

SERMON for Second Week:
“God Loves Us and Meets Us at the Point of Our Need”
Text: 1 John 4:7-12

Grace, mercy, and peace be to all of you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and may His Spirit fill your heart and your mind in the hearing of His Word.

Today is the second week on our stewardship theme **God’s Love Compels Us**. Our text is taken from 1 John 4:7-12 which reads,

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 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. 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. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us.”

This is the middle week of our three-week sermon series. Today, we will focus on “God Loves Us and Meets Us at the Point of Our Need.” Next week, our theme will be “Because God Is Love, We Can Love.”

In a race, the usual celebration takes place at the finish line. If life waited until we were at the finish line, it would not work.

God meets us at our need even when we are covered in sin. God knows everything, even when we want to hide our imperfections. God doesn’t expect us to be perfect. He doesn’t expect us to have our spiritual lives all tidy. It’s like when people come to visit unexpectedly, so we haven’t had a chance to tidy up our house. We let them in, and don’t we typically block off rooms or close doors to parts of the house that are messy so our guests can’t see the clutter? We steer them away from the messes. When God comes into our lives, we don’t have to do any guiding because He knows us. God doesn’t ask us to be perfect when He approaches us. He knows every room in our house. There is nothing that we can hide.

This clutter in someone’s life is seen in John chapter 4. Jesus and His disciples are traveling through Samaria. We know that the Jews and Samaritans don’t get along. Jesus and His disciples are thirsty, so they stop at a well for some water. It was about noon and so it was the hot part of the day. A woman from Samaria, knowing that people do not seek water at this time of the day, comes to the well. She wants to avoid seeing and talking with anyone. Because of her adulterous lifestyle, she wants to avoid attention and criticism. Jesus says to her, *“Give me a drink.”* She responds, *“How is it that you a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?”* She knows that Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Also, Jewish custom does not allow a rabbi to speak to a woman in public. Jesus tells her, *“If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”* After listening to Jesus, she, in her excitement, leaves her water jar and goes back into the village to tell the people, *“Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did.”* She tells the townspeople that she has met someone who knows her. She wanted to keep her life a secret but now she was

open. She is celebrating that someone knows her and accepts her. She said, “*Can this be the Christ?*” The lady at the well was covered in sin, but God met her at her point of need.

In Philippians chapter two, Paul wrote, “*And being in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*” Because Jesus understood our need, He was willing to suffer the most despised and cursed death. He came to die for the forgiveness of our sins because this is what we needed. In every way, Jesus was a servant. He felt no necessity to cling to the honor and privilege that were His as God’s Son. He loved and continues to love us unconditionally. He truly met us at our point of need.

In the Parable of the Prodigal Son found in Luke 15, we find a son insisting on getting an early inheritance from his father. He takes his share of his father’s inheritance and leaves home to go to a far country. He wastes and squanders his inheritance in reckless living. He spent everything that he had. To avoid starving, he finds a job feeding pigs. He is poor and doing poorly. He knows that he doesn’t deserve another chance with his father. He has sinned and his sin is so bad, but he is in such terrible straits that he decides to go back and see if his father will hire him as a servant. He practices his speech. When he is still a long way from his father’s home, his father sees him and runs to meet him. The son tells his father, “*‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost, and is found.’*” God’s love is shown in the love of the father. In the son’s point of need, the father welcomes him home. The father puts on the best robe on his son and plans a big welcome home celebration.

The older son sees the celebration for the son who has returned. He is filled with resentment and bitterness because he has worked and served his father. He sees that all his hard work and effort are wasted

One is focused on love

The second is framed by transaction or reward for a job done.

This parable reminds us that there is no sin is so bad that we won’t be welcomed back by God’s open arms. God loves us, and He knows of our sins. There is no sin that is so bad. God will meet us at our point of need.

We are living in a lost generation where children don’t have roots in the church. Something is being lost. They don’t hear about the love that is revealed by the Father to the younger son. If they are not in church, they don’t hear the Bible stories that tell of Jesus’ love. The Church will have more of a challenge because kids aren’t in church as they used to be. How is the church going to respond to those who are lost?

Parents don’t give up on your children. Our Heavenly Father is not going to give up on His children. Some may feel that they are outside of God’s boundaries to love. People feel that their behavior places them outside of God’s love. God loves us no matter what.

In Matthew chapter 14, we find Jesus coming to meet Peter in his point of need on the water. Peter and his friends were in the boat. This is the time when Jesus asks Peter to come to Him on the water. Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. Jesus and Peter were both on the water. But when Peter *“saw the wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink he cried out, ‘Lord, save me.’ Jesus immediately reached out his hand took hold of him., saying to him, ‘O you of little faith, why did you doubt?’”* Jesus came to Peter in his time of need. Jesus didn’t just draw near but He reached out to Peter. Peter was rescued.

Does our love bring Jesus to those around us? Especially to those forgotten or shunned by others? Where the love of Jesus is, transformation takes place.

Our Heavenly Father is not going to give up on any of us. Our actions can’t push us away. We may feel that we’ve done too much. No matter how bad our sins are, God is there for us. We are all sinners. God loves us, and He sent His Son into the world for us. Our Father is waiting with open arms for each one of us.

Let’s pray. Thank You, Father, that You are with us each and every day. We live in the promise and assurance that You will be there in our time of need. Help us to live in Your love promises. We pray in the name of Jesus our Savior. Amen.

“God’s Love
Compels Us”

Week 3:

“Because God
Is Love, We
Can Love.”



Bulletin messages (Week 3)

“Because God is Love, We Can Love”

Because we have been loved by God, we can bring this love into the world. God’s love in us overflows through us to others. Thus, God’s love is released into the world.

God’s Love Compels Us

WHEN GOD’S LOVE COMES INTO OUR HEARTS, PEOPLE AROUND US WILL SEE A DIFFERENCE IN US.

“Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and truth” (1 John 3:18).



God’s Love Compels Us

GOD’S LOVE FOR US IN JESUS STIMULATES OUR LOVE FOR HIM AND OTHERS.

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:11).



Worship Helps, Week 3

Hymns:

Opening Hymn: “Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus” 685

Sermon Hymn: “All Depends on Our Possessing” 732

Closing Hymn: “If Thou But Trust in God to Guide Thee” 750

Readings:

Old Testament: Deuteronomy 30:1-20

Epistle: 1 John 3:16-18

Gospel: Luke 6:27-36

Stewardship Litany

Pastor: Heavenly Father, You have called us to be stewards of the Gospel so others will hear the Good News. Help us, Lord, by word and action to be faithful to our calling as we acquaint those around us of Your love and the redeeming power of Your Son's death on the Cross.

People: Lord, may we be motivated by Your love to lead others to You.

Pastor: Lord God, we ask that You would bless us with a zeal to be Your stewards as we serve You through serving others.

People: Help us, Lord, to share Your love with those around us.

Pastor: Lord God, we thank You for Your grace which enables us to understand that we were created for Your purpose, not ours. Change our mindset from what we want to do to what You want us to do.

People: Lord, help us to realize that all we have belongs to You.

Pastor: Dear Lord, as Your Holy Spirit works in us through Word and Sacraments, You teach us to become givers rather than takers. You change us into people who understand stewardship to be a joy rather than a duty.

People: Lord, may we be motivated by Your love to use our time, talents, and treasures in ways that honor You.

God's Love Compels Us to Give

In the beginning God gave, and He continues to give. God's character is to give. Out of His love, God gives humanity a beautiful and majestic place to dwell. Our heavenly Father loves us so much that He holds nothing back from us. *"He Who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?"* (Romans 8:32). To give and to keep on giving is the essential nature of God, Who is love (1 John 4:8). All that we are, have, and hope to be are gifts from God.

Acknowledging God's ownership is the basic principle for Christian giving. King David said, *"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein"* (Psalm 24:1). When we give our gifts to God as grateful and faithful stewards, we are merely returning to Him what He has already given to us. Paul asks in 1 Corinthians 4:7, *"What do you have that you did not receive?"*

Wholehearted and unconditional giving has its source in God Who Himself gave unreservedly. Because of the awesome love shown to us at the cross, we give. God, abiding in us, enables us to give, for, through Christ, we have His very nature, a giving nature. We become more Christ-like as His love for us and within us opens our clenched fists and

breaks down our natural desire to put ourselves first. Compelled by God's love to give, we experience the joy of giving.



Gifts from the Heart

Giving that pleases God is done from hearts filled with God's love. As we mature in faith, we grow in grace to be able to give freely of our lives and resources.

Love is what motivated God to give, and, because of His love, He didn't give leftovers; He gave His best. He gave us what we needed — His own Son. *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16). Through faith, we begin to understand God's tremendous love for us, and we are compelled to share with others the love of God that fills our hearts. We are compelled to give our first, our best — of money, time, efforts, and abilities. The more fully we understand how richly God has blessed us, the deeper will be our love

and gratitude to Him and the greater will be our desire to respond.

The gifts from Abel and Zacchaeus are Biblical examples of giving from hearts of love:

Gifts from Cain and Abel

(Genesis 4:2-4)

The giving of Cain and Abel is the first story about giving in the Bible. The contrast between the two brothers in their giving is not that one brought harvest of grain and the other offerings of animals. The difference in their gifts is that Cain's offering was thoughtless in that he merely brought *"an offering of the fruit of the ground"*; Abel, on the other hand, in faith (Hebrews 11:4) *"brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions"*. Abel recognized that all his flock was a gift from the Lord and that all of it belonged to Him. Because Abel gave his best from his heart, God was pleased with his offering.

Our own offerings will be like Cain's or Abel's. Which of the following offerings represents you?

- Offer nothing.
- Give an offering like Cain without faith or commitment.
- Give an offering like Abel with faith and love, acknowledging God as the Lord of your life.

Gifts from Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)

Until Jesus entered his life, Zacchaeus lived for himself and his money. He was wealthy and sought to become wealthier. All that changed with Zacchaeus' first encounter with Jesus when he responded to Jesus' call to follow Him. As a result of his conversion, Zacchaeus' perspective on his material possessions changed. His money and possessions were no longer the center of his attention. His new focus in life was to serve and please the Lord. With Jesus' love in his heart, he promptly gave half of what he owned to the poor, and, to those whom he perhaps had cheated, he gave four times the amount that he may have fraudulently taken. Zacchaeus' generous giving gave evidence that his heart was changed.



The same grace that enabled Abel and Zacchaeus to give willingly, cheerfully, and generously from hearts filled with God's love is ours.

Giving Faithfully

Our faithful giving honors and glorifies the Lord. We are not to give out of duty or for recognition. Rather, faith in and love for God motivate us to give, and giving generously is evidence of our faith. God's grace empowers us to be faithful with our lives and resources. God's love and generosity are seen through our giving.

God asks us to give for the ministry of the church, to spread the Gospel, and to help those in need. Of course, God, Who owns everything, is not in need of our money. He graciously allows us to take part in building His kingdom and accepts our offerings as an act of worship. By God's grace, we can sever our firm attachment to things of this earth. We can grow to love the things that endure. Things come and go, but our service and gifts to the Lord last forever. We offer our gifts to the Lord through the Church because the Church is Christ's body on earth, commissioned by Him to tell others about God's love and forgiveness.

Stewardship Advisors
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God's Love Compels Us



(Week 3)

**“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver”
(2 Corinthians 9:7).**

My 2021 Commitment for the Lord

"God's Love Compels Us"

After prayerfully seeking God's guidance, I/we commit to joining in the work of Jesus Christ through _____ (name of church) _____

Support the mission of ____ (name of church) ____ financially:
\$ _____ per _____

(Prayerfully consider giving 1% more of your income than you did last year)



I commit to grow in the joy of knowing Jesus more by reading His Word daily, attending church and Bible studies regularly, and developing an active prayer life.

Share your faith with others by inviting them to experience Christ here at __ (name of church) __

Name(s) _____
Please return on Commitment Weekend or send to the church office.

My 2021 Commitment for the Lord

"God's Love Compels Us"

My (our) weekly offering will be \$ _____, totaling \$ _____ annually.

"Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy" (1 Corinthians 4:2).

Please detach and
keep for your records



Where Is Your Heart?

This is the third and final week of our theme **God's Love Compels Us**. There is a story of a wise woman who was traveling in the mountains when she found a precious stone in a stream. The next day she met another traveler who was hungry, and the wise woman opened her bag to share her food. The hungry traveler saw the precious stone and asked the woman to give it to him. She did so without hesitation.

The traveler left rejoicing in his good fortune. He knew the stone was worth enough to give him security for a lifetime. But a few days later, he came back to return the stone to the wise woman. "I've been thinking," he said, "I know how valuable this stone is, but I give it back in the hope that you can give me something even more precious. Give me what you have within you that enabled you to give me this stone."

In this story, we have two travelers. The male traveler initially celebrated what he thought was his wonderful new fortune. This precious stone given to him by the woman would provide him with a lifetime of financial security. However, he makes a 180-turn in his thinking when he realizes that the generous heart demonstrated by the woman was even more precious than the stone itself. In his new paradigm, he sees life differently; he gains a new perspective on life. He realizes that a giving and loving heart is more important than earthly treasures.

The question for us to consider is "Where is my heart?" Stewardship is about the heart. Those who faithfully serve and follow Jesus love Him wholeheartedly. The condition of our hearts determines whether we will serve ourselves, the things of this world, or Jesus. When our hearts are right with God, He can use us to make a difference in people's lives.

Children's Message: Week 3

Hello boys and girls! Thanks for being here!

In our Old Testament lesson from Deuteronomy 30, which we read earlier, the people were told to love the Lord, listen and obey His voice, and hold fast to Him. (verse 20).

I want us to think about the times that you hold really fast or real tight to your parents' hands. Can you remember the times when you hold your parents' hands really tightly? (wait for responses).

- In parking lots
- On amusement park rides such as the roller coaster
- Funerals
- On windy days
- In a scary movie

Jesus wants us to hold fast to Him. We know we can't hold His hand, so what does that verse in Deuteronomy mean? It means that we can be sure that Jesus always hears and answers our prayers. It means that we can be sure that Jesus always loves us and protects us. Believing those things about Jesus means you're holding fast to Him.

Let's pray: Jesus, thank You for telling me to hold fast to you. Help me remember that You are always holding fast to me. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Sermon for Third Week:
“Because God Is Love, We Can Love”
Text: 1 John 3:16-18

Let's pray, May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, my Rock and my Redeemer. Amen.

Our text is from 1 John 3:16-18 which reads: *“By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 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? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”*

This is the text for the proclamation today of the Good News.

This is our third week in our three-week stewardship series **God's Love Compels Us**. Next week, you will receive a commitment card that you are going to fill out that will be a demonstration how you have faithfully acknowledged receiving gifts of time, talents, and money from God. God has given you talents, and He has given you resources to be a participant in how God is breaking into this world with His love. God's love shapes the world. When you make a commitment, you are trusting that God will work through you as you share His love with others. You have the opportunity to use your time, talents, and money to bring love to others.

How can we expect to be part of God's plan to be a participant to break into this world with His love? In the first week in our sermon series, we looked at the theme “God Is Love.” We learned that regardless of the circumstances that you are in God loves you. God's love is not determined by your good works. God's love is defined by His character which is love. He loves.

The second or last week our message was “God Loves Us and Meets Us at the Point of Our Need.” God doesn't just love us when we get our spiritual lives all tidied up or God doesn't just love us when we get things figured out. God brings us into His love. You may think that you are outside of His boundary or your sins are too big for God to handle, but God is there for you. God meets us at our point of need when we are floundering. God meets us at our point of need, and He enables us to be part of God's plan to bring love into this world. God fundamentally brings us into His love.

Now today, we are looking at how we can be participants in sharing God's love out into the world. There is no doubt in my mind that you are part of God's plan to bring love into the world. Because God is love, we can love. Hear the words of Scripture that you are part of God plan. We read from our text, *Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*”

The love that God has for you is going out into this world not only in our words but in our actions and deeds. Not just superficial actions that on the surface look good. These actions and deeds of Christians are shaped by the truth that God loves us. We know love because He has given His life for us. We know what love looks like. God laid down His life for us. Love is laying down our lives for others.

Being able to love others in words and deeds is challenging. When we want to love other people, we see that some people seem impossible to love. We may ask, “Do I have to love others?”

This may be a surprise to you, but sometimes there are some moments and some days when we ourselves are not so loveable. We are hard to love. Love is hard. We ask “Do I have it in me to love?” Looking to my own life when God knows the mistakes in my life that I will make today I question how God can love me.

Our days are filled with noise and static. We want to see beauty and be enamored by nice things. We want to see the image of God living within them. But life doesn’t give us the beauty that we seek. To describe this noise and static, I will use an illustration that will be difficult for those who are younger to relate to, but some of you will remember the days when there wasn’t cable TV and the TV reception was very suspect. In the early years of television, people used antennas on top of the TV for reception. To help with the reception, people would often attach tin foil to the antennas. Depending on the weather and other things, people were not always able to watch what they wanted to see. On most occasion, there seemed to be a lot of static and noise with the channels. The similarity to this today would be the problem that we have when the Wi-Fi is down. In much the same way, when you are dependent upon cell phones and computers and the Wi-Fi goes down, you hear noise and static.

Do you struggle trying to love? You have hopes and dreams and build up that person that you want to see. You look forward to loving someone, but instead there is a lot of noise and static. You can’t get the view that you want because of the noise and static.

God has given us a clear vision with what He wants from us. The Ten Commandments are clear, and we memorize them. We are to have no other gods; we are to honor our mother and father, we are not to steal; we are not to commit adultery; we are not to kill; we are not to covet our neighbors’ belongings, etc.

You seek a glimpse of the beauty in life, but there is just noise and static. We want to see God at work in this world, we don’t see it because of all the noise and static.

In Genesis 1, we are told that God created us in His image. But far too many times I wonder, do I really want to be the vision of God that people are to see? God knows there is sin; that is why He sent His Son into this world. Because of the love of Jesus, we are freed from trying to have our souls filled or fed by the world. We are freed from having to nourish our souls by the world’s noise and static. We don’t need cell phone reception because there is no bad signal strength from God. Jesus stays in tune with us. Because we have seen Jesus, we have love. The love of God is revealed in Jesus.

My soul has been delivered into the beauty of God because I know the love of Jesus. Because I have seen Jesus, my view changes through the lenses of Jesus’ love. From the Apostle John we read, *“By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers”* (1 John 3:16). In the same way, Jesus wants us to use our lives—to lay down our lives—that our brothers and sisters might be blessed and saved.

Our whole view is to be oriented around the love that Jesus delivered on the cross. Even though Jesus was jeered and spit upon, He stayed on that cross for you and me. Our view changes through the lens of Jesus' love.

Jesus stays tuned into you with His love. Jesus is the vision that you are to see when you see yourself in the mirror. In the midst of the noise and static in the world, we can see Jesus.

Because of sin, people are filled with the noise and static of the world. The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians, *"For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."* The world and the Corinthians saw the cross as worthless. Those who see the cross as folly deny its power to save them from eternal destruction. To us the cross is an instrument of God's salvation through Jesus. We can find renewal in the love of Jesus. The cross and the tomb create in us our excitement.

Even when the love of Jesus grows cold in the world, we can find the love of Jesus. His love is vital. He loves us in the world. We have been given goods to share. You have the goods. You have the love of Jesus. Our eyes are opened to see we have been blessed with goods from Jesus to share. 1 John 3:17 tells us: *"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?"* We can share not only our words, but our deeds and actions.

We have the promise that every day He sees us. We are part of sharing God's love in the world. There are moments and days when we don't want to tune in. But then we rejoice knowing that we have Jesus. We have our eyes opened to the love of God Who sees us from the empty tomb. We have God's love.

Every day He sees us. He calls us to trust and believe in Him. You and I are part of how God's love is being shared. You and I are tools that Jesus uses to share with those in need.

How blessed we are that Jesus sees us from His cross.

Father, thank You for Your love that was shown through Jesus. Helps us to clear our minds of the noise and static to see Your love for us each and every day. Amen.

Bible Study, Week 1

“God Is Love”

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for loving us unconditionally. We are not loveable, so we rejoice, knowing that You love us and want the best for us in spite of our sinful and evil ways. We ask for Your blessings on this study that we are about to begin. In Jesus’ precious and holy name we pray. Amen.



Introduction:

God’s love flows out of His nature and His character. The Apostle John tells us “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8). All of God’s actions are loving, even when we cannot perceive them to be so. Not only are His actions loving, but all He withholds from us or refrains from doing in our lives is also loving. We deserve God’s wrath but instead we get His love. His love rescues us from our sinful and rebellious state. No matter who we are or what we’ve done, God’s love seeks us. There is no sin that is too much for God to handle. He demonstrated His amazing love for us when He sent His Son, Jesus, to live among us and to suffer and die on the cross. Jesus took upon Himself all of our past and future sins. Jesus’ willingness to be mocked, to suffer, and to experience the most brutal type of death is the most significant act of love in the history of the world and in each of our lives. The path to God’s love is to believe that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Loving and trusting in Jesus gives us an abundant life today and life forever with Him in heaven.

In his book, *A Martyr’s Faith in a Faithless World*, Rev. Bryan Wolfmuehler writes, “The Bible is a love story. God is love. You are the beloved. This is astonishing when we consider how unlovely and how unlovable we are.” God saw our depravity and sin and that is why He sent His Son, so, we could receive God’s love. God’s love never changes, and we have the joy of receiving more and more of His love on a daily basis.

God has put us on earth to do two things. We are to first love God and then love our neighbors. “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (Matthew 22:37-40). Loving God and others is what matters most in life. There is nothing more that is insisted upon in the Bible than love. The Apostle John tells us, “*We love because He first loved us*” (1 John 4:19). All love comes from God, and we are able to love because we have received His love through Jesus.

1. The Apostle Paul wrote, “*So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love*” (1 Corinthians 13:13). Why is love the greatest?
2. We love because _____ (1 John 4:16; 19).
3. Love is _____ (1 John 3:18).
4. List and explain different ways you can express Christian love in your most important relationships (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

5. When we say “love,” we can mean many different things. Explain.
6. Read Ephesians 3:17-19. How is God’s love described?
7. Read 1 John 5:2-3. What does love prompt you to do?
8. Read John 13:35. What does loving others make you?
9. Why is Christian love more of a lifestyle rather an emotion?

Four Types of Love

In scripture, love is communicated through four Greek words: Philia, Storge (pronounced STOR-jay), Eros, and Agape. These different types of love are characterized by brotherly love, family love, romantic love, and God’s divine love.

- Philia love (friendship love) is the type of intimate love in the Bible that most Christians practice toward each other. There is emotional warmth and tender affection toward a friend or family member. It involves closeness, bonding and mutual sharing in a relationship. It is companionship or brotherly love. This friendship was seen between Jonathan and David.
- Storge love (empathy love) refers to family love. Love for others because you have something in common. Love comes from common circumstances, common beliefs, common values, or common blood. The love that exists between parents and children, and brothers and sisters. It was the love that Mary and Martha had for their brother Lazarus. It was the love that Jacob had for his sons.
- Eros love (romantic love) refers to sensual or romantic love. It refers to sexual desire. The intimate love shared between a married man and woman. It is the most selfish love. It can be very intoxicating. It was the love that David had for Bathsheba.
- Agape love (unconditional God love) is the highest of the four types of love in the Bible. It is divine love. This term defines God’s immeasurable, incomparable love for mankind. It is the divine love that comes from God. Agape love is perfect and unconditional. John 3:16 tells us: *“For God so ‘agape’ the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”*

10. Why would all four types of love be important in a marriage?
11. Read Romans 5:3-5. What is a source of hope for Christians?
12. In what manner did God display His Christian love (agape) toward us (Romans 5:8)?



Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for the love that You have for us through Jesus. Help us to embrace Your love and seek opportunities to share it. In the wonderful name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Bible Study, Week 2

“Loving God and Our Neighbors”

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, the love of Jesus is the most amazing love that we can ever experience. We thank You, Jesus, for loving each of us individually. May each of our lives give testimony of Your love within us. We ask for Your blessings on this study. In the wonderful name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.



God's Instruments of Love

As God's stewards, we receive blessings upon blessings from God Who loves us and wants the best for us. God gives and keeps on giving. However, Scripture is clear that our stewardship is not seen in what we get from God but rather how He uses us to share our blessings with others. As His instruments, we are His hands, feet, and mouth to the world. We receive in order to give. We find it easier to receive blessings, but, by nature, we are not inclined to be sharing people. Because we are selfish and greedy people, we are more interested in keeping what we have and wanting even more. To enable us to be loving and sharing stewards, God changes our hearts. With transformed hearts filled with God's love, we seek opportunities to use our blessings that He has entrusted to us to help others. God's blessings pass through us to others. We are blessed to be a blessing.

1. In order for you to be God's instruments through whom He works, what is important for you to understand?
2. Read 2 Corinthians 9:8. What enables your generosity?
3. There is no life in the Dead Sea because water comes in but doesn't leave. In contrast, the Sea of Galilee is full of life because water flows in and flows out. How does the comparison between these two seas relate to our lives as God's people?
4. How were the following examples of people who were instruments of God's love?
 - King David: (1 Chronicles 29)
 - Barnabas: (Acts 4:30-37)
 - Zacchaeus: (Luke 19:1-10)
 - Macedonians: (2 Corinthians 8:1-7)

Can you give other examples from the Bible?
What about people you know?

Loving God and Others

God loves us. It's His love that initiated His creation and redemption of mankind. Because God loves us, we can love. The importance of loving is reflected in how Jesus answered the question that He was asked by a Pharisee, who was a lawyer: *"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"* Jesus replied, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. A second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself"* (Matthew 22:36-39). Loving God and others are the first and second commandments we have been given as God's disciples and stewards. In

responding to the Pharisee, Jesus calls him “*your God.*” This implies that a relationship had already existed. Throughout the Old Testament, God had already demonstrated His love. Jesus wants the Pharisee to respond to the love God had already shown to him. We, too, have experienced the love of God. We, too, willingly want to express our love for God through loving others.



Even though Jesus was asked to state which was the one great commandment, Jesus could not stop at one. He added a second commandment, for one cannot be kept without the other. We are to love God and others, but we know that true love comes only from God. God’s love for us enables us to love Him and others. The Apostle John wrote, “*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 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. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation of our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought to love one another” (1 John 4:7-11).

Throughout God’s Word, He calls us to love everyone which includes not only our family and friends but our enemies, neighbors, and strangers. Jesus tells His disciples that, when they feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick and visit those in prison, they are really doing it for Jesus (Matthew 25:35-40). When we love our neighbors, God’s love is perfected and shown in us.

5. Can we receive justification by loving our neighbors, the homeless, and the prisoners? Why or why not? What Scripture makes this clear to us?
6. How is God’s love demonstrated in nature?
7. Why is it necessary to have the first great commandment before the second?
8. How is the world’s love different than God’s love?
9. Love is _____ (1 John 3:18).
10. The best time to love is _____ (Proverbs 3:27-28; Galatians 6:10).

We Are Stewards of God’s Love

God’s nature is to love, and He created the people in the world to love. Through faith, we recognize our call to be God’s stewards of His love to others. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to understand God’s love and how it is affecting our lives. Filled with God’s love, we can allow love to flow through us so that it overflows from our lives into the lives of others. The love that God has for us in Jesus is not for our own personal consumption only. As good stewards, we have the opportunity to share God’s love with many who have never experienced it.

11. Read John 4:1-42. In what way was the Samaritan woman at the well a steward of God's love?

12. Read the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Although love is not mentioned, how is the Good Samaritan being a steward of God's love?

13. Read 1 Peter 4:10. What are you to do as a steward?

14. Read 1 Corinthians 4:2. What are stewards to be?

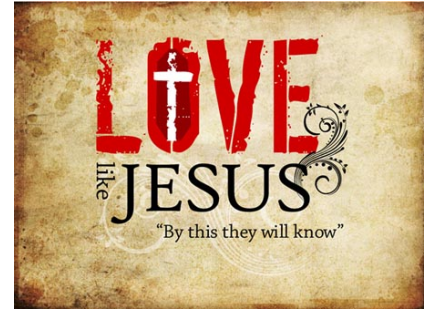


Prayer: Dear good and gracious Heavenly Father, there are many, many, times when we don't express love for You, but You keep on loving us for which we thank You. Help us to share Your love within us with others. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Bible Study, Week 3

“Because God Loves, We Can Love”

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, our hearts rejoice knowing the love that You have for us through Jesus. Help us to share Your love in us with others. We ask for Your blessings on this study that we are about to begin. In the wonderful name of Jesus we pray. Amen.



Through God’s gifts of faith, grace, and love, we become faithful stewards who use our time, talents, and treasures faithfully. Christ’s love for us and ours for Him releases our grip on the gifts that God entrusts to us. The love we receive from God’s abundant grace compels us to love others. God’s love can’t be contained.

Some time ago, an elderly man named Alfred retired in a Midwestern town where he had once owned a large factory. As a young immigrant to the U.S. from Denmark, he had made a promise: “Lord, as I prosper, I will share the Gospel with others overseas.” True to his promise to God, Alfred built a hospital in India, supported leprosy clinics in India and Tanzania, and helped fund special medical work in Liberia.

A national magazine wanted to print a story about Alfred’s generosity. He declined saying, “No, I want no one to see me. I want people to see the Lord only.”

For people like Alfred, being faithful with God’s gifts is a natural response to the love given to him by Jesus. Wanting to share God’s love by helping others is a by-product of His love. Giving

“God is love. He didn’t need us. But He wanted us. And that is the most amazing thing.” (Rick Warren).

and serving others is not done for recognition from others or to earn God’s favor but in response for all that God has done for us in Christ Jesus. *“And He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him Who for their sake died and was raised”* (2 Corinthians 5:15).

1. On what does God base His love for us? How have we deserved His love?
2. How do we know that God’s love never changes (Malachi 3:6; Romans 8:35; Hebrews 13:8; 1 John 4:8)?

What Compels You?

In the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, he wrote, *“For the love of Christ compels us”* (2 Corinthians 5:14 NIV). Because of Christ’s love for him, Paul could do nothing but be obedient to his calling as a minister of the Gospel. Through the Holy Spirit, Paul was overwhelmed by God’s love for him which compelled him to respond to that love by serving as an ambassador for Jesus. In the same way, Christ’s love for us stimulates our love for Him and others. The love of Christ demonstrated at the cross is our motivation.

God's Word warns us of all kinds of temptations that would lure us into removing the Lord from His rightful place in our lives. If the love of Christ is no longer central in our hearts and minds, we are compelled to follow a wrong direction. Perhaps the biggest warning in the Bible is the love of money. The lure of money and what money can buy can pull us away from our relationship with Jesus. We may also find that our careers, families, or hobbies can become overly important, and we drift apart from embracing God's love for us and our love for Him. When the love of Christ is central to who we are, we are motivated to lay down our lives, take up our crosses, and follow Him (Matthew 16:24).

3. Read 1 John 3:17. What are you to do for your neighbor?
4. God's love works in people's hearts and changes their lives. How was God's love evident in the following people?

- Abel (Genesis 4:1-16; Hebrews 11:4).
- Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)
- The Woman of Samaria (John 4:1-30).
- Residents of Ephesus (Acts 19:11-20).

"Lord, grant that I might not so much seek to be loved, as to love" (Francis of Assisi).

5. Read 1 John 3:10. What does this verse make clear to you?



Loving our Brothers and Sisters in Christ

John Calvin wrote, "Whatever a person may be like, we must still love them because we love God." Faith prompts demonstrations of love for all people. In the words of the Apostle John, "*Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another*" (John 4:11). God's love for us has achieved its purpose in us when it causes us to love others. "*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*" (John 13:34-35). Filled with the Holy Spirit,

we are able to reflect Christ's love.

Pastor Stuart Briscoe shares the following ways that love shows itself:

- Love is fundamentally more interested in giving than in getting.
 - Love is interested in meeting needs, not in getting needs met.
 - Love is inspired in the heart of the lover, not necessarily in the beloved.
6. God referred to King David as a "Man after His own heart." David was not perfect, but God loved him. How did God reveal His love to David throughout his life? How did God's love for him show itself in David's life? (1 Chronicles 16:8-36; 17; 29; selected Psalms)
 7. Love describes the nature of God. God's love is seen in Jesus. Is it possible for a Christian not to love (1 John 4:8)?

Prayer: Gracious Heavenly Father, Your love for us and all people is beyond comprehension. We thank You so much for Your love. Please use us as Your instruments of love. Amen.

“God’s Love Compels Us”

Answer Guide:

Bible Study 1:

1. 1 Corinthians 13:13. Of the three virtues, faith, hope, and love, love is the virtue that focuses outwardly toward humanity. Love bears the most fruit. In heaven, love continues.
2. 1 John 4:16; 19. God is love, and He loved us first.
3. 1 John 3:18. Shown through our deeds not just our words
4. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Love that comes from God exhibits these virtues:
 - Patient
 - Kind
 - Rejoices with the truth
 - Bears all things
 - Believes and hopes all things
 - Endures all thingsLove is or does not:
 - Envy,
 - Boast,
 - Arrogant,
 - Rude,
 - Insist on own way,
 - Irritable,
 - Resentful
5. Love is used to describe many of our emotions and attitudes toward many things. We may say, “I love my job.” “I love mint ice cream.” “I love my car.” This love is quite different than love for God or love for a spouse. There are different types of love which we will be discussing.
6. Ephesians 3:17-19. Through faith, Jesus dwells in our hearts, and His love fills us. Christ’s love connects us with God and we can enjoy His fullness. God’s love surpasses our understanding and fills us with all the fullness of God.
7. 1 John 5:2-3. God’s love compels us to keep His commands (which motivates us to love our neighbors.)
8. John 13:35. Loving others in obedience to God command shows that we are His disciples.
9. Emotions are fleeting. God’s love is constant. God’s love for us and our love for Him make us who we are. We live in the joy of God’s love.
10. Love in a marriage incorporates the four types of love.

Philia: This is a friendship type of love and married couples have an emotional warmth and affection toward each other. This type of love expresses closeness, bonding, and mutual sharing.

Storge: This is a love that develops between people who have common circumstances, common beliefs, common values or common blood.

Eros: This is a romantic and sexual love that married couples enjoy.

Agape: This is the highest type of love. It is the divine love that we receive from God. Couples seek to give and receive this unconditional love.

11. Romans 5:3-5. The Apostle Paul here tells us to rejoice in our suffering because it produces endurance which produces character which produces hope which does not put us to shame, for this hope ensures us that God's love has been poured into us through the Holy Spirit.
12. Romans 5:8. Agape love is God's divine love. It is unconditional love. God demonstrated His unfathomable love by sending His Son to earth to take upon Himself our sins by suffering and dying on the cross. This He did while we were in the depths of our sin.

Bible Study 2:

1. God is the owner and the source of all things (save sin) Psalm 24:1. He also controls and sustains all things (Colossians 1:17). We are merely the caretakers of what God entrusts to us. By God's grace, we understand that we are stewards through whom God works. We are God's hands, legs, and mouth to the world. We are His instruments.
2. 2 Corinthians 9:8. The inclination of human nature is to keep and to hoard. Money becomes our identity and security. God's grace transforms us. By grace we have *"all sufficiency in all things at all times, ...abound in every good work."*
3. When money and possession control our lives, we become self-centered and uncaring people who live for ourselves. This attitude resembles the Dead Sea because it keeps everything it receives. With new hearts filled with God's love and grace, we become giving and sharing people who resemble the Sea of Galilee, which is alive and well because it doesn't keep all that it receives.
4. King David (1 Chronicles 29): David's loving and giving heart is reflected in his generous giving to the Temple. His great generosity was a big encouragement for his people to give.

Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37). Barnabas sold a field that belonged to him and gave the money to the apostles.

Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). Zacchaeus was a tax collector who loved money. After Jesus changed his heart, he gave half of all that he had to the poor. He also pledged four times any money that he may have received fraudulently.

Macedonians (2 Corinthians 8:1-7). They gave beyond their ability to the needy Christians in Jerusalem, and in fact begged for the "favor of taking part" in giving.

5. What we do does nothing to earn God's love or our justification. We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). We don't deserve to be loved. Because God loves, we can love. But faith is always accompanied by good deeds (Ephesians 2:10).
6. God created heaven and earth. God demonstrated His love by giving us all the air and oxygen, sunlight, water, food, energy, etc. that we need. The majesty and beauty of His creation is awesome. Even though the beauty and functionality and continued preservation of God's creation has been corrupted by sin, God still provides through His abundance all we need.
7. The first great commandment is found in Matthew 22:36: *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment."* An intimate relationship is the source of our love for others. When God loves and we return His love, we are enabled to love our neighbor which is the second great commandment. *"A second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself"*
8. The world's love is a self-centered or self-interest type of love. It is love that expects something in return. We love to get love in return. God's love is unconditional. It expects nothing in return. God's love wants the best for the person or people He loves.
9. 1 John 3:18. Love expressed in deeds and in truth.
10. Proverbs 3:27-28; Galatians 6:10. Now. We should never withhold love or any good thing. We are to love and do good to all people especially believers.
11. 1 John 4:1-42. The Samaritan woman heard Jesus' truth and wisdom and felt His love. She shared that love by telling the town people about Jesus.
12. Luke 10:25-37. The Good Samaritan came to the rescue of a stranger. He gave the injured person medical aid and then brought him to an inn for where he made financial arrangements, for the care of the victim. The Good Samaritan demonstrated love by his actions.
13. 1 Peter 4:10. We are to use the gifts that God has given to us as His stewards, we are to use them in service for others.
14. 1 Corinthians 4:2. We are to be found trustworthy.

Bible Study 3:

1. Through faith, we understand how undeserving we are to receive God's love. It is God's nature to love. His love never changes. We don't earn His love, but we receive it. Even though, we are sinful and evil people, God loves us. Through Christ's redemption, God sees us covered with Christ's righteousness.
2. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Malachi 3:6. For I the Lord do not change. God's love does not change.

Romans 8:35. Nothing or no one will separate us from God's love. Not tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, etc.

Hebrews 13:8. God's love was from the beginning and lasts forever.

1 John 4:8. God is love so He is unable not to love.

3. 1 John 3:17. If we have the financial means, we can't close our eyes and hearts to their needs of others. Being in a position to help should compel us to help.

4. Abel (Genesis 4:1-16; Hebrews 11:4). Abel demonstrated his love for God by giving Him the fatted part of his livestock. He gave his best in faith.

Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). After his heart was changed, he willingly gave away half of his money to the poor. If he had cheated anyone, he was offering a four-fold return.

The Woman of Samaria (John 4:1-30). After hearing Jesus' words of truth, she went and told the people in the town that she had met the Christ and invited them to meet him also

Residents of Ephesus (Acts 19:11-20). Some Jews and Greeks who were practicing exorcism and magical arts came to faith. They willingly destroyed their books which were very valuable. They gave up a fortune to follow Jesus.

Consider discussing the following:

The Apostle Paul

Peter (John 21:15-19)

A woman of the city (Luke 7:36-50)

5. 1 John 3:10. If we do not love our brothers and sisters in Christ, we are not children of God.

6. King David. In Chronicles 16:8-36, David shares a song of thanks for all of God's gifts and goodness. He was giving God the glory that He deserves.

In Chronicles 17, God tells David that he will not be the one who will build the temple. His offspring or Solomon will build the temple. David praises God for His promise to build a house of worship for His people.

In Chronicles 29, we see David give generously for the temple. He acknowledges God for all His blessings and goodness. God is seen as the source of all good things, so David is merely returning what God had already given to Him.

7. 1 John 4:8. Love fittingly describes the nature of God. God made us in His image so we are made to love. If we are Christians, we will love God and others.