

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

- Paul said that he was ‘convinced’ of the strength of God’s love. What can you do this week to strengthen your convictions about his love?
- If God is love and we are his children, find one person who you think needs to see God’s love and do something to them that would be a reflection of your heavenly father’s love.
- What is one thing you can do this week to help someone else respond to God’s love?

## PRAYER

Here is Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians: <sup>17</sup>... *And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup>may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup>and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*"

**Ephesians 3:17–19 (NIV)**

- Ask God to show you how much he loves you.
- Make a list of people you know that need to receive God’s love and pray for them to recognize and receive God’s love.
- Ask God to help you be a constant reflection of your Heavenly Father’s love to all around you.

## NOTES

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## Week 1: God’s Love For Us

## CONNECT

- Close your eyes and picture God. In one sentence, describe what you saw. Then describe how you saw felt.
- What aspects of your appearance, your personality, came from your father? Your mother?
- Do you prefer to instigate or respond to romance? Why?
- Define ‘love’ in one sentence.

## WORD

*"<sup>7</sup>Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup>This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup>This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup>Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."*

**1 John 4:7–11 (NIV)**

## THOUGHT

It has often been said that Christianity is a relationship, not a religion. What this means is that God did not come to us on the basis of a moral code, system of practices, or collection of beliefs and does not want us to come to him based on any of those either. Rather, God came to us because of his love for us, continues to love us, and desires us to approach him in love. God loved us first, and our love for him is a response to his love. Therefore, to truly love God, we must understand and receive his love for us. Love is God's very essence and we hope that this discussion of God's love will help you to receive more of his love.

### 1. GOD LOVED ME FIRST

*"<sup>16</sup>And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. <sup>17</sup>This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. <sup>18</sup>There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. <sup>19</sup>We love because he first loved us."*

**1 John 4:16–19 (NIV)**

*"<sup>8</sup>But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

**Romans 5:8 (NIV)**

God loved us first. In fact, God died for us before we were born and long before we decided whether or not we would ever receive that act of love for us. In other words, God went first and he went all in without waiting to see how we would respond. What does it mean to you that God chose to show you how much he loved you with such a costly and powerful first move? What does this say about God's love for you? How have you responded to God's love for you?

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### 2. GOD'S LOVE IS STRONG

*"<sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written:*

*"For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."<sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup>neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

**Romans 8:35–39 (NIV)**

Nothing can separate you from the love of God. The love that motivated Jesus to go to the Cross and to endure the excruciating suffering, the intense shame of that death, along with the burden of being the scapegoat for all of our sins, is the same love that continues to motivate him to love us today. This is not some kind of fickle, capricious or temperamental love. Paul was 'convinced' of the strength of Jesus' love. Which of the elements listed in verses 35, 38-39 is the most threatening to you? Is God's demonstration of love in Jesus' death enough to convince you of his love?

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### 3. GOD'S LOVE IS FOR EVERYONE

*"<sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

**John 3:16 (NIV)**

*"<sup>2</sup>He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."*

**1 John 2:2 (NIV)**

God loves everyone. What that means is that there is no one that he has not chosen to love. And although sin causes separation between us and God, Jesus' death not only demonstrated God's love for us, it also removes the separation caused by sin. However, God gives us the right to choose to enter into a loving relationship with him or to choose to reject his love. Why would a person choose to receive God's love? Why would someone choose to reject God's love? What can be done to help others receive God's love?

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