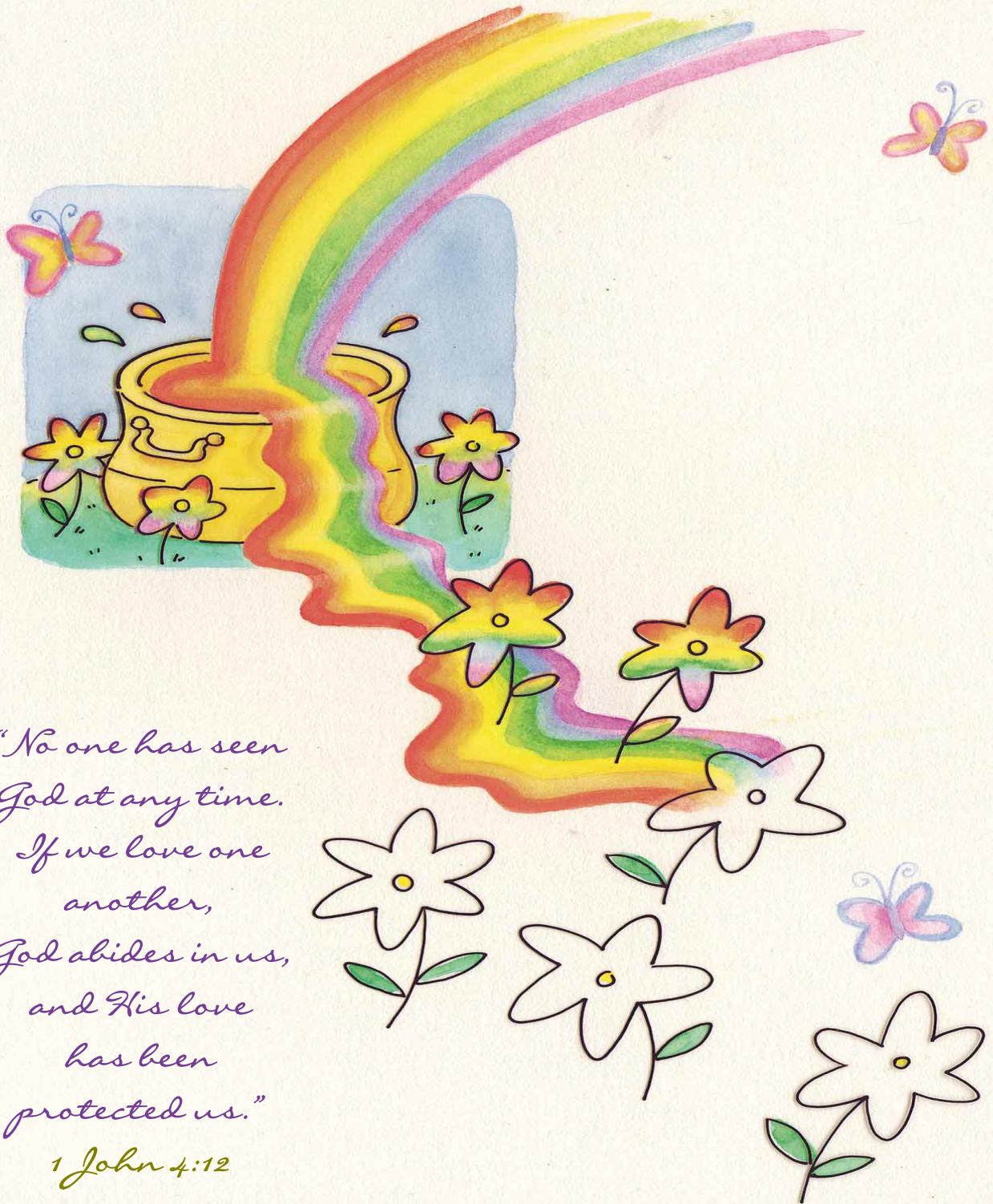


# A Life of Love



*"No one has seen  
God at any time.  
If we love one  
another,  
God abides in us,  
and His love  
has been  
protected us."  
1 John 4:12*

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# A . NEW . LIFE

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."  
(2 Cor 5:17)*



Hallelujah! Praise God for the new life that He has given to us through His precious blood. The moment that we received baptism, we left our old selves and began a life belonging to the One who paid a ransom for our sins. This is why we call Jesus our "Lord," because we are no longer our own. However, how do we carry on with our new lives in an acceptable manner to God? The Bible supplies us with plenty of answers to this question. We hope that through each Student Spiritual Convocation, we can learn as much as possible concerning how to live for Christ.

Why is love so important? If God loves us, why can't we do whatever we want? How is God's love different from human love? These and many more questions about love—the fundamental force that makes all things possible—will be discussed in this book. Because God is love (1 Jn 4:16), we can understand more about Him by learning about love, and vice versa. However, only learning about love does not make one more loving. Love must begin from the heart. After you have received the message from God, it is essential that it is supported with prayers. Ask God to transform your heart so that your life can be truly called a life of love!

## SIX—BOOK SERIES

### Student Spiritual Convocation

- Book 1  
A Life of Prayers
- Book 2**  
**A Life of Love**
- Book 3  
A Life of Servitude
- Book 4  
Living in the Words of God
- Book 5  
Living in Holiness
- Book 6  
Family Life

### LESSON DIVISION

Each class is to use the same Student Spiritual Convocation book. We would suggest that you use "Dating and Falling in Love" for Junior class and above. Because of the sensitivity of this topic, we recommend a less formal class format so as to encourage student participation. If possible, hold discussion sessions in small groups of four or five students with one instructor or counselor.

### QUESTIONS

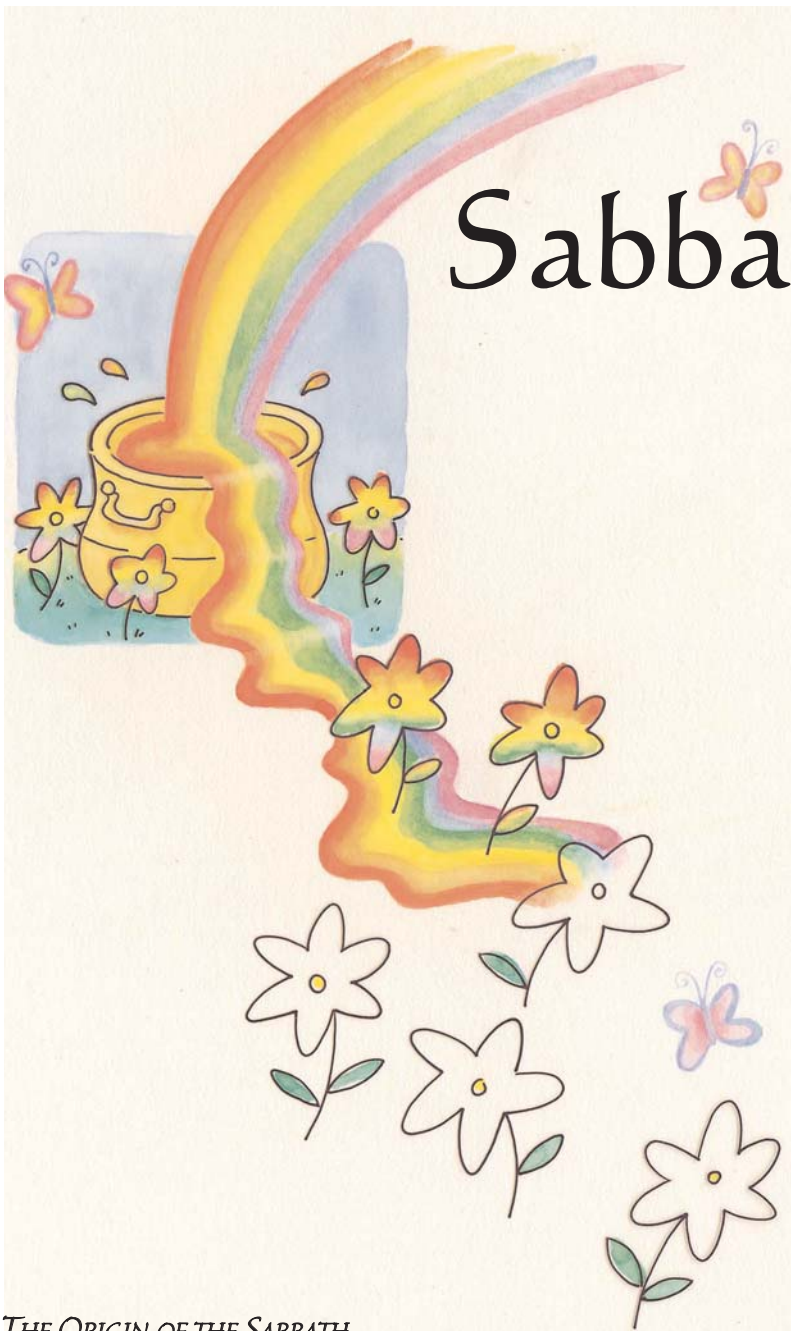
Questions are provided at the end of each lesson. These are divided into three levels of difficulty. Questions in level 1 are informational and students can usually find the answers from reading the text. Questions in level 2 require some explanation. Questions in level 3 involve analysis, comparison, or more extended writing. Depending on the class level you are teaching, you may use any combination of questions from each difficulty level. For example, if you are teaching "Sabbath" to Elementary 2 students, you may include all the level

1 questions, two level 2 questions, and only one level 3 question. However, if you are teaching "Sabbath" to the Senior class, you may include two level 1, two level 2, and all of the level 3 questions. Every lesson can be tailored to a specific class depending on how you mix and match the questions.

### GROUP DISCUSSION/ACTIVITY

We encourage the students to be involved in the class as much as possible through group discussions. If possible, you may ask other instructors or adult counselors to participate in the group discussion as well, especially for "Dating and Falling in Love." Group reports or presentations can help your students to remember the material better. At the same time, you can find out how much your students are learning. If the group discussion or activity is not possible for any reason, you may modify it into an individual writing assignment.

\* All Bible quotations are in NKJV.



# Sabbath

N O T E S

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## 1. THE ORIGIN OF THE SABBATH

### A. THE ORIGIN OF SABBATH

1. God established the Sabbath after He finished all His creations.
  - Our almighty God created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh day. He blessed and sanctified this day (Gen 2:1-3; Ex 20:8-11).
2. God instructed Israel to observe the Sabbath in the wilderness of Sin.
  - After the fall of Adam, the Bible does not mention the Holy Sabbath until the time when the Israelites came to the wilderness of Sin (Ex 16:1, 23).
3. It is one of the Ten Commandments.
  - The chosen people failed to keep the Sabbath under the grace of God, so God included its observation in the Ten Commandments (Ex 16:23-29, 20:8-11).
4. The Jews were captured by Babylon because they failed to

honor this day.

- The failure in keeping the Sabbath is the main cause of the Babylonian captivity—the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (Jer 17:21-27).

5. After the rededication of the temple, the Holy Sabbath has been scrupulously observed.

- The Jews returned to Jerusalem and reconstructed the holy temple after the seventy-year Babylonian captivity. They kept the Sabbath in a very serious manner even until the apostolic times (Jer 25:11, 12; Neh 13:19-22; Acts 15:21).

**B. THE PURPOSES OF THE HOLY SABBATH**

The Lord Jesus Christ said, “The Sabbath is made for man” (Mk 2:27).

1. It reminds people of the creation of God and of the need to worship and love their Creator (Ex 20:8-11; Ezek 20:20).
2. It is a day in which people may enjoy physical and mental rest. God provides food for those who rest from work on this day (Ex 16:29, 20, 23:12).
3. The holy Sabbath reminds all chosen people of the salvation of the Lord so that they will love God all the more (Lev 23:3; Deut 5:15; 2 Cor 5:14, 15).
4. The believers keep the Holy Sabbath in anticipation of the eternal rest in the kingdom of heaven (Heb 4:9, 10; Rom 8:22-25).
5. God promises to bless those who honor and keep this day (Isa 58:13, 14).

Those who worship on Sunday maintain that Christ abolished the Sabbath. Thus, it is necessary for us to examine the thoughts and actions of the Lord of the Sabbath (Mt 12:8) concerning the Sabbath in order to dispel this false notion.



*2. THE JEWS, JESUS CHRIST, AND THE SABBATH*

**A. THE JEWS PERVERTED THE SABBATH**

The reason the Israelites were defeated and captured by Babylon was because they did not observe the Sabbath (Jer 17:27; 2 Chron 36:17-21). After their return from Babylon, the Israelites realized that the rise and the fall of the nation depended on the observance of the law of God and of the Sabbath (Neh 13:15-22). They made oaths to keep the Sabbath faithfully from then on (Neh 10:29-31).

Later on, the rabbinical tradition added many rules to the Sabbath. The Mishnah codified thirty-nine different kinds of work which were forbidden on the Sabbath. These are elaborate and burdensome regulations which bind and suppress men, and they are contrary to what the Lord said: “the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath” (Mk 2:27). If anyone transgressed the rules, the rabbis would expel him from the synagogue.

(Mishnah: A complex and continuous verbal commentary by the rabbis that explains the Torah of Moses.)



**B. CHRIST OBSERVED THE SABBATH**

1. Jesus “came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read” (Lk 4:16).
2. Jesus “went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths” (Lk 4:31).

**C. KEEPING THE SABBATH UNDER THE LAW**

1. Controversy between the Lord Jesus and the Pharisees was frequently incited by the legal aspect of the Sabbath (Mk 3:1-6; Mt 12:9-14). They knew that the Lord Jesus observed the Sabbath, but the manner and attitude of the Lord Jesus toward the Sabbath were different from those of the Pharisees (cf. Jn 9:14-16).
2. At that time, the Jews kept the Sabbath under the Mosaic law along with many traditional restrictions. Prohibitions and inconvenient rules were strictly enforced such as:
  - a. No labor is allowed (Ex 20:10).
  - b. No fire on this day (Ex 35:3).
  - c. Everyone must rest on this day even during the time of harvest and reaping (Ex 34:21).
  - d. Anyone who defiles the Sabbath should be put to death (Ex 31:12-17, 35:2; Num 15:32-36).

3. The Lord Jesus, who is the Lord of the Sabbath (Mk 2:28), brings forth abundant grace (Jn 1:14, 17), and redeems us from the law (Gal 4:5). Therefore, the Lord’s keeping of the Sabbath was not bound by the ordinances of the law. Under His grace and according to God’s original intention, He observed the Sabbath not as a burden or a restriction, but as a free, joyful, and gracious blessing (cf. Gen 2:3; Ex 16:23-25; Isa 58:13).

Although the same day was kept, the Pharisees were bound by the law, while the Lord Jesus kept the Sabbath under grace. For this reason, the Lord Jesus offended the scrupulous Pharisees who looked upon Jesus as a lawbreaker. The Lord Jesus did not follow the faulty tradition; instead, He set an example for His disciples to keep the Sabbath in a gracious manner, disregarding the threats and persecutions.

**D. THE MAIN ISSUE OF THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN THE LORD JESUS AND PHARISEES ON THE SABBATH**

1. The Pharisees criticized the Lord’s disciples for plucking the heads of grain on the Sabbath day (Mt 12:1, 2). Jesus justified this action by quoting precedents that were considered good by the Pharisees themselves:
  - a. David and his followers ate show-bread out of hunger (Mt 12:3, 4, 7).
  - b. The priests in the temple did a great deal of servile work on the Sabbath, but they were justified and required by the temple-service.
2. The Pharisees opposed Jesus’ healing of the sick on the Sabbath.
  - a. One Sabbath, Jesus healed a man who had a withered hand (Mt 12:9-13). The Pharisees took offense at this. The



Lord Jesus responded by asking them, “What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out?” (Mt 12:11, 12).

- b. On a Sabbath day the Lord Jesus healed a man who had suffered for thirty-eight years by the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem (Jn 5:1-18). In response to the hypocritical protest of the Pharisees, Jesus answered, “If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?” (Jn 7:23).
- c. On the Sabbath, the Lord cured a woman who had been under a spirit of infirmity for a long time. The ruler of the synagogue responded to the miraculous cure by saying, “There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and to be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.” The Lord replied, “Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?” (Lk 13:15-16).

As seen from the preceding passages, the contention between the Lord Jesus and the Jews was not about the day of worship, but rather, with regard to the manner and attitude towards keeping the Sabbath. The Pharisees kept the Sabbath according to the law and the Rabbinical tradition, but the Lord Jesus did not, as He Himself was the Lord of the Sabbath.

The instruction of the Lord can be summarized as:

- 1) On the Sabbath, it is lawful to do the service of God (Jn 7:23; Mt 12:5).
- 2) On the Sabbath, it is lawful to do good work and save lives (Mt 12:12; Mk 3:4).

As the Lord’s disciples, we should follow His steps—on God’s designated Sabbath, we abstain from secular activities, remember the grace of God, worship God, and perform good works to glorify God and help others (Mt 15:9; Gen 2:3; Isa 58:13, 14).

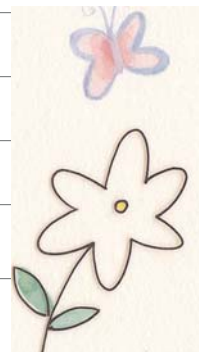


### 3. THE APOSTLES AND THE SABBATH

#### A. THE APOSTLES OBSERVED THE SABBATH

Many Christian churches are inclined to lay the responsibility of the substitution of Sunday for the Sabbath on the shoulders of the Lord and the apostles. We cannot find any evidence that the Lord Jesus did abolish the seventh day of the week. On the contrary, in the scriptures we see that Paul and the other apostles kept the Sabbath (Acts 17:1, 2).

- 1. Paul and Barnabas at Antioch  
But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down to read the law and the prophets (Acts 13:14). “On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear



the word of God" (Acts 13:44).

2. Paul and Silas at Philippi  
"And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the river-side, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there" (Acts 16:13).
3. Paul and Silas at Thessalonica  
"Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews" (Acts 17:1, 2).
4. Paul at Corinth  
"And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 18:4).
5. In the Council of Jerusalem elder James testified  
"For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath" (Acts 15:21).

## B. HOW TO KEEP THE SABBATH

1. We must lay aside secular engagements (Isa 58:13).
2. We must come to church service, listen to the word of God, and pray (Lev 23:3; Acts 16:13).
3. Set the Sabbath day apart and dedicate ourselves to God. On this day we do the Lord's work (Lk 4:16; Acts 13:44; Isa 58:13).
4. We keep the Sabbath not under the law, but under the grace of God
  - a. Under Mosaic law, one may not make fire (Ex 35:3), pick firewood (Num 15:32-36), nor engage oneself in agricultural activities (Ex 34:21), as prescribed by the Mosaic Law. Those who transgress against the Holy Sabbath must be put to death (Ex 35:2).
  - b. In the age of the grace and truth given by our Lord Jesus, we enjoy the Sabbath as a day of spiritual rest and blessing. It is a blessed day (Gen 2:3; Isa 56:2, 58:13, 14).
  - c. On the Sabbath, one may engage in holy works (the Israelites in the Old Testament performed circumcision and offered sacrifices on Sabbath) (Jn 7:23; Mt 12:5; 2 Chron 2:4).
  - d. It is recommended that one do good deeds on the Sabbath (Mt 12:11), and save lives (Mk 3:4).

The Lord Jesus forgives those who honor and remember the holy Sabbath with sincerity but are unable to come to worship on Sabbath services due to uncontrollable circumstances (cf. Mt 12:1-8).

## 4. WHY PEOPLE FAIL TO KEEP THE SABBATH

### A. REASONS

1. Some people consider that the Sabbath was given to the Jews only.

Response a: The Lord Jesus affirms that the Sabbath is made for men, Jews, and Gentiles (Mk 2:27).

Response b: The Sabbath was instituted at the time of Adam, who was the first parent of all mankind.

Response c: The Bible clearly indicates that all the people who are united with the Lord will keep the Sabbath as a covenant between God and man and will be blessed (Isa 56:1-7).

2. Some believe that the Lord resurrected on the first day of the week and so Christians must observe Sunday.

In refutation of this opinion, we must turn to the Bible reference about "the first day of the week." None of the eight verses that follow records that the disciples gathered to observe the first day. Neither did the Lord tell the disciples to observe the day of resurrection.

- a. In Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:2, 9, Luke 24:1, and John 20:1 "the first day of the week" is recorded to confirm the truth of Jesus' resurrection in accordance with the prophecies.
  - b. In John 20:9 the Lord Jesus appeared to the disciples, including the incredulous Thomas. No sign of the disciples' worship gathering is given. Moreover, the Lord did not appear on the first day of the week (Jn 20:26; Acts 1:3).
  - c. In Acts 20:7, the apostle Paul was holding a farewell service with the believers. The time was in the evening and may be mistakenly interpreted as an observance of the first day of the week (Acts 20:7-12).
  - d. In I Corinthians 16:2 Paul instructed the believers to set aside the monetary contribution on the first day, so that it would be convenient for the collection. The fact that the believers saved money at home for contribution has nothing to do with the worship service.
3. Some believe that since Christians are saved by grace, they do not have to keep the Commandments.



Response a: Salvation is not gained by keeping the law, but by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and by faith (Rom 3:28, 25). This is a common misunderstanding among Christians.

Response b: Under the grace of the Lord, we must all the more establish the law, and must not violate or overthrow the law (Rom 3:31, 6:15).

Response c: The Lord Jesus instructs the disciples to keep the commandments for it is necessary to enter eternal life (Mt 19:17-20). The Lord wants His disciples to keep the Commandments in a more spiritual and perfect manner. For instance, He demands that His disciples shall never lust after any woman. This lust is a transgression of the Seventh Commandment (Mt 5:21, 22, 27, 28).

Response d: The apostle Paul said, "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything. It is the keeping of the commandments that counts for anything" (1 Cor 7:19).

Response e: The Book of James teaches that "whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of breaking all of it" (Jas 2:10, 11).

Response f: The Book of Revelation indicates that only true believers keep the Commandments of God and their faith toward Jesus (Rev 14:12, 12:17).

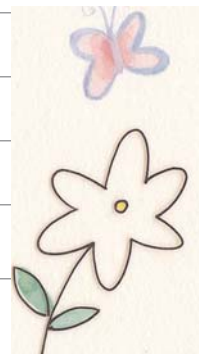
To honor and keep the Sabbath as holy is the Fourth Commandment. If a Christian makes excuses for not keeping the Fourth Commandment, he may as well worship idols and commit adultery, etc. But God forbid! When a person fails in one commandment, he is guilty of all of them (Jas 2:10, 11).

Response g: The Lord Jesus blotted out such ordinances as the dietary rules, festivals, new moon, and the legalistic regulations about Sabbath observance (Col 2:14-17). The Lord Jesus did not do away with the Ten Commandments! For this reason, Christians today do not have to offer the five Levitical sacrifices, nor do they have to keep the seven festivals of the Lord and dietary rules (cf. Lev 11:1-22).

The Ten Commandments differ from religious ordinances or social judgments (statutes). The Ten Commandments were written by the finger of God on the tablets of stone and were placed inside the ark of the covenant. The other ordinances were displayed outside the ark of the covenant. Hence, the Ten Commandments cannot be eradicated. Christians must, by the power of the Holy Spirit, keep the Commandments of God more fully and more effectively, so as to glorify God and benefit humanity (Deut 3:24-26; Ex 20:3-17).

4. The Lord's Day and other issues

- The view that "The Lord's Day" (Rev 1:10) is the day of resurrection (Sunday) is groundless. The Lord Jesus said that He is the Lord of Sabbath (Mk 2:27), and God also called the Sabbath "my holy day," "the holy day of the Lord" (Isa 58:13, 14). There is no biblical reference to God commanding His people to observe the "Lord's Day" as a special day for worship.
- Some people argue that in Romans 14:5, 6 Paul was telling the believers that as long as they observed a day in honor of the Lord, then it did not matter whether it was Sabbath or the Lord's Day (Sunday). The "esteemed one day" in Romans



14:5, 6 does not refer to Sabbath or the Lord's Day. In its context, Paul was speaking about the festivals in the OT, which the believers no longer were obligated to observe as they were no longer under the law.

**B. WHO ABOLISHED THE SABBATH?**

1. The Roman Catholic Church abolished the Sabbath (Saturday) and ordained Sunday as the day of worship. Evidence: Catholic catechism.
2. In 321 A.D., Emperor Constantine issued an edict that all civil and secular activities should be banned on Sundays.
3. In 336 A.D., at the council of Laodicea, the Catholics formally did away with the Sabbath and instituted the Lord's Day (Sunday).

The Protestants have followed the Catholic tradition in keeping the Sabbath on Sunday. The Lord Jesus said "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" (Mt 15:8, 9).



*QUESTIONS*

- 1.A When and how was Sabbath established?
- 1.B Why is it important for us to keep the Sabbath?
- 1.C Where does the Bible mention Jesus keeping the Sabbath?
- 1.D What did Jesus do on the Sabbath that offended the Jews? Why?
- 1.E Find biblical references of when the apostles kept the Sabbath.
  
- 2.A What is the correct attitude and manner in observing the Sabbath?
- 2.B Why is it that we should not do whatever we want on the Sabbath?
- 2.C Why do many Christians worship on Sunday instead of Saturday?
- 2.D Who changed the Sabbath to Sunday?
  
- 3.A How would you explain to a non-Christian the significance of Sabbath to our salvation?
- 3.B What would you say to your Christian friend who accepts all the truths except that of the Sabbath?
- 3.C Jesus spoke in Matthew 22:37-39 about the two most important commandments. Does this mean we do not have to keep the other commandments such as observing the Sabbath?





GROUP DISCUSSION/ACTIVITY

N O T E S

DOS AND DON'TS OF SABBATH

- a. Form groups of three or four members each.
- b. Set the timer for two minutes. Each group is to compile a list of daily activities within the time limit.
- c. Give 10-15 minutes for the groups to discuss each item on their lists. Have one person read the list to the group and make a mark next to each of the items. Put a "3" next to something that is appropriate for Sabbath; a "7" next to an activity that is not appropriate for Sabbath; and a "?" next to an activity in question.
- d. Have the class come together again. Discuss those activities that are questionable. Let other students answer before the instructors give his/her answer. Always use the Bible as your reference.
- e. Conclude.

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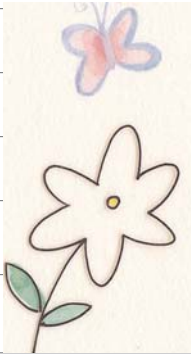
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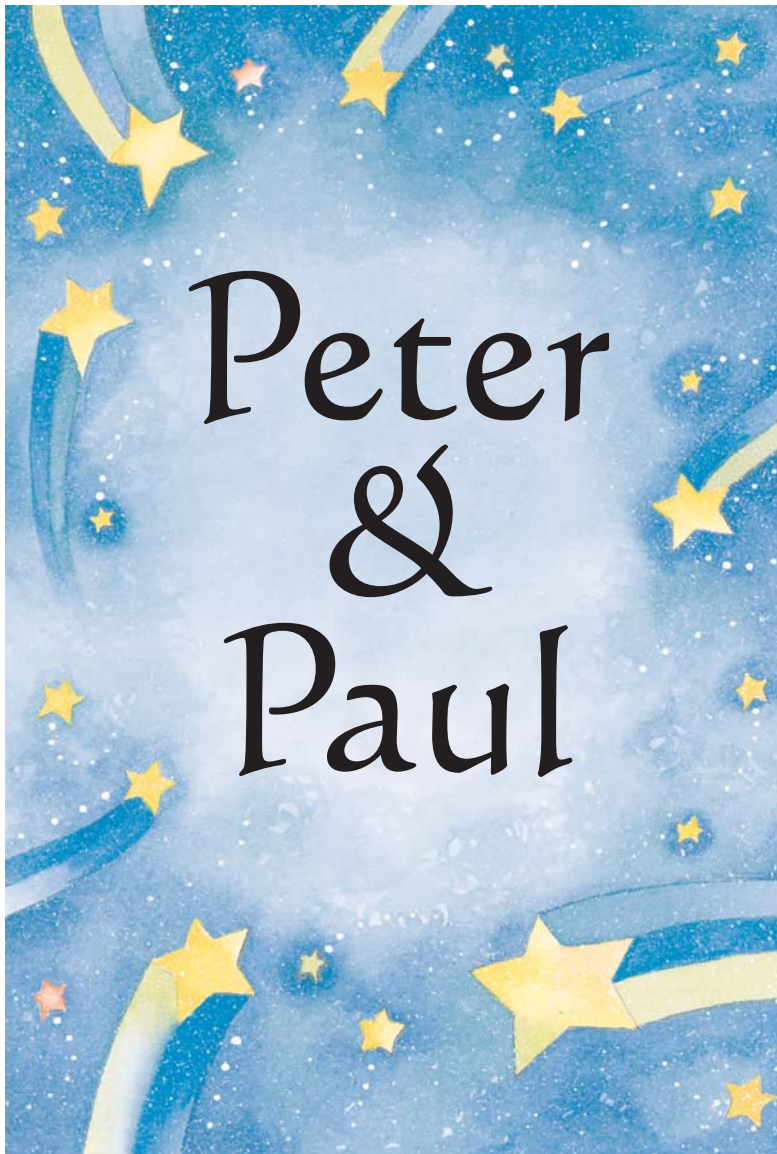
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# Peter & Paul



## 1. PETER

### A. PETER WITH JESUS

1. Jesus called Peter (Lk 5:1-11; Mt 4:18-21; Mk 1:16-20).
2. Walked on water (Mt 14:22-33)
3. Confessed that Jesus is Christ, the Son of the living God (Mt 16:13-20; Lk 19:18-22; Mk 8:27-29)
4. Tried to stop Jesus from going to Jerusalem (Mt 15:21-23; Mk 8:30-33)
5. On the Mountain of Transfiguration (Lk 9:28-36; Mt 17:1-8; Mk 9:2-8)
6. Dialogues between Peter and Jesus

a. When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, "Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?" He said, "Yes" (Mt 17:24-27).

b. "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" (Mt 18:21-35)

c. "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" (Mt 19:27-30; Mk 10:28-31; Lk 18:28-30)

7. Jesus washed his feet (Jn 13:1-17).
8. Proclaimed his faithfulness toward Jesus (Lk 22:31-34; Mt 26:31-35; Mk 14:27-31)
9. In Gethsemane (Mt 26:36-46; Lk 22:39-46; Mk 14:32-42)
10. Cut off the ear of Malchus (Jn 18:10,11; Mt 26:51-56; Lk 23:47-53; Mk 14:43-50)
11. Denied Jesus three times (Mt 26:69-75; Lk 22:54-62; Mk 14:66-72; Jn 18:15-27)
12. Wept bitterly (Lk 23:62; Mt 26:75; Mk 14:72)
13. Jesus appeared to him (Lk 24:34).
14. Fished at the Sea of Tiberias (Jn 21:1-23)

### B. PETER AFTER PENTECOST

1. In one accord, the disciples devoted themselves to prayer (Acts 1:14).
2. Peter conducted the meeting which resulted in the choosing of Matthias (Acts 1:15-26).
3. Peter's first public preaching: On the resurrection of Jesus and His promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:14-42).
4. The first miracle performed by Peter: He went with John to the temple and healed a lame man (Acts 3:1-26).
5. The first imprisonment of Peter and his companions: Before the Sanhedrin, Peter proclaimed to the rulers, elders, and scribes that salvation is in no one else but Jesus (Acts 4:1-12).
6. Peter rebuked Ananias and Sapphira. Great miracles were manifested through him (Acts 5:1-16).
7. He was thrown in prison for the second time (Acts 5:1-16).
8. Peter and John in Samaria (Acts 8:14-25)
9. Peter went here and there to preach (Acts 9:32-43).

10. God summoned Peter to preach to Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48).
11. Peter in prison for the third time (Acts 12:1-19)
12. Peter at the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15:1-11)
13. Peter's letters



## 2. PAUL

### A. PAUL BEFORE CONVERSION

1. A Hebrew of Hebrews (Phil 3:5). A pure Jew from the tribe of Benjamin and a wealthy family. He was born a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37-39, 22:25-29)
2. Born in the city of Tarsus (Acts 21:39), the capital of Cilicia, a center of commerce and civilization
3. Educated under Gamaliel, the greatest rabbi at that time (Acts 22:31; Gal 1:14)
4. A zealous Pharisee who strictly observed the law and tradition (Acts 26:4, 5)
5. An arrogant, proud young man (Phil 3:4-6; Acts 7:58-60)
6. A strong persecutor of Christians, who desired leadership in Judaism (Acts 7:60, 9:1, 2, 26:9-11)

### B. PAUL'S CONVERSION

1. A great light from heaven flashed about him (Acts 26:13).
2. The voice of the Lord resounded
  - a. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5).
  - b. "It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (Acts 26:14).
  - c. "For I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you" (Acts 26:16-18).
3. For three days Paul was without sight and neither ate nor drank (Acts 9:9)

### C. PAUL AFTER CONVERSION

1. "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Tim 1:15).
2. "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal 2:20).
3. "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ...I have suffered the loss of



all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ" (Phil 3:7, 8).

4. "I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor 2:3-5).
5. "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more...I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor 9:19-22).
6. "To which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Tim 1:11, 12).
7. "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21-25).

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**3. PETER & PAUL**

- A. They are very different in almost every aspect (character, education, social status, etc.).
- B. They are the two most important workers in the apostolic church; one for the Jews and the other for the Gentiles.
- C. Peter was the first apostle to receive Paul (Gal 1:18, 19; Acts 9:26-28).
- D. God made Peter the first one to preach to the Gentiles so that he might defend Paul in the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 10, 15).
- E. Peter was receptive to Paul's correction (Gal 2:11-14).
- F. Peter highly regarded Paul's writings (2 Pet 3:15, 16).



**QUESTIONS**

- 1A. How was Peter different after the Pentecost?
- 1B. How was Paul changed after Jesus spoke to him?
- 1C. List the similarities and differences between Peter and Paul.
- 2A. How did Peter and Paul show their love to God?
- 2B. Why do you think Jesus loved Peter so much?
- 2C. Why do you think God chose Paul to be His worker even though he fervently persecuted Christians?



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- 3A. What is one aspect of Peter and Paul that you admire the most and wish to emulate?
  
- 3B. Imagine yourself as either Peter or Paul writing a letter to the other. Choose one of the situations below, read all the related scriptural references, and carefully think about how Peter or Paul would feel under those circumstances. Then write a letter to your co-worker in Christ.
  - 1) Peter writes to Paul after Paul spent 15 days with him following Paul’s conversion (Acts 9:1-30; Gal 1:18).
  - 2) Paul writes to Peter about his “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor 12:1-10).
  - 3) Peter writes to the imprisoned Paul about his own experience in Acts 12:5-17.
  - 4) Paul writes to Peter after his near-death experience in Lystra (Acts 14:8-20).

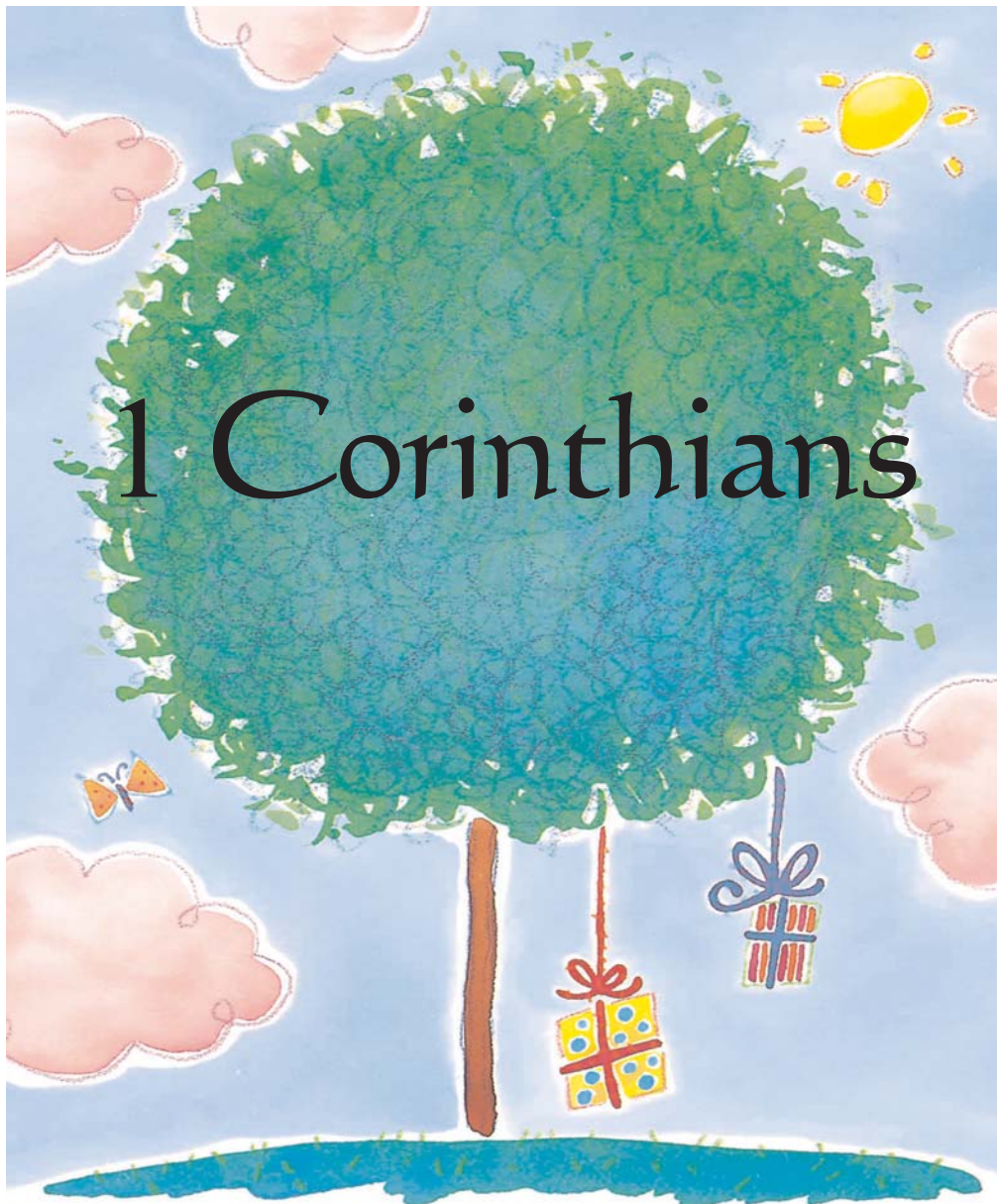


*GROUP DISCUSSION/ACTIVITY*

**LIFE TRANSFORMATION**

- a. Form groups of three or four members.
- b. In each group, assign a group leader, a recorder, and a reporter.
- c. Discuss the factors that helped Peter and Paul change their lives so dramatically. Note the common factors between the changes of the two characters.
- d. Share how we can use the factors mentioned above to change our lives to become useful vessels like Peter and Paul.
- e. Conclude with a prayer.





# 1 Corinthians



## 1. FREEDOM AND IDOL SACRIFICES (8:7-13)

### A. THE CRITERIA OF CONDUCT: LOVE AND KNOWLEDGE (8:1-6)

1. Knowledge: puffs up
2. Love: builds up

### B. THE CRITERIA AMONG BRETHREN (8:7-13)

1. The brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge (8:11).
2. When you sin against your brethren and wound their weak consciences, you sin against Jesus Christ (8:12).
3. "Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble" (8:13).

### C. ATTITUDES TOWARD FREEDOM (PAUL HIMSELF AS EXAMPLE) (9:1:27)

1. Selflessness (9:1-18)
  - a. "...but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ" (9:12).
  - b. "Nevertheless we have not used this right..." (9:12, 15,18).
2. Subservience (9:19-23)

"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more" (9:19).
3. Subjection (Discipline) (9:24-27)

"But I discipline my body and bring it into subj-



ection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (9:27).

**D. USING THE EXAMPLE OF THE WILDERNESS GENERATION AS A WARNING (10:1-13)**

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (10:12).

**E. THE LORD'S SUPPER AS CRITERION (10:14-22)**

1. "What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God" (10:19-20).
2. "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons..." (10:21).

**F. IDOL SACRIFICE AND CONSCIENCE (FREEDOM) (10:23-11:1)**

1. "All things are lawful for me, but not all things edify" (10:23b).
2. "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (10:31).
3. "Just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved" (10:33).
4. "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (11:1).



**2. SPIRITUAL GIFTS (12:1-31)**

**A. GENERAL CRITERIA (12:1-3)**

The works of the Holy Spirit

**B. THE MULTIPLICITY AND UNITY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS (12:4-31)**

1. Varieties of gifts:the same Spirit  
Varieties of service:the same Lord  
Varieties of working:the same God
2. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (12:7)
3. All these (gifts) are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as He wills (12:11, 18).
4. "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (12:13).
5. "Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually" (12:27).





3. MORE EXCELLENT WAY: LOVE

A. VALUES OF LOVE SHOWN BY ITS ABSENCE (13:1-3)

Love is not only:

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B. CHARACTERISTICS OF LOVE SHOWN BY ITS PRESENCE (13:4-7)

Love is:

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C. ABIDING NATURE OF LOVE SHOWN BY COMPARISON (13:8-13)

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QUESTIONS

- 1A. Explain why knowledge puffs up but love builds up (8:1).
1B. What right(s) was/were Paul referring to in verses 9:12 and 15?
1C. Think of one time when you got sick or hurt. Write down how you felt and what your family members or church brothers/sisters did to make you feel better. Then based on your experience, write down ways that you, as a member of the body of Christ, can help someone who is sick to feel better. (Refer to 12:12-27.)
1D. Read verses 10:6-11; what are the three things we must not do?
2A. How can you demonstrate love by becoming a "slave" to others (9:8-15)?
2B. Is it possible that something you do can give glory to God but may offend others (refer to 10:31-33)? Please give one example and explain.
2C. Think of the gift(s) God has bestowed on you. Which member do you feel you are equivalent to in the body of Christ (12:27-31)? Please explain.
3A. Give an example of someone who imagines that he knows something, but does not yet know as he ought to know (8:2).
3B. Read verse 8:9. How can one's liberty become a stumbling block to someone else who is weak? Take the following situations as examples to explain.
a. Going to an R-rated movie with nude scenes and graphic violence
b. Attending a dance party at a night club
c. Buying a fancy sports car
d. Applying heavy make-up and wearing mini-skirts (for sisters)
e. Having long hair or dyed hair (for brothers)
3C. Explain why love is the greatest among the three (13:13).



# PHILIPPIANS



## 1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

### A. AUTHOR

Paul wrote this epistle. He names his co-worker, Timothy, in the salutation because Timothy was with him when he wrote this letter.

### B. PLACE AND DATE

Paul wrote to the Philippians from his prison quarters in Rome around A.D. 61-62.

### C. THE CITY OF PHILIPPI

Philippi was a city of the province Macedonia. In 350 B.C., the city was named Philippi after Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great. Its former name was Krenides. It became a Roman colony in 42 B.C. Luke recognized it as “the leading city of the district of Macedonia.” As of Paul’s time, most of the population consisted of Grecians, with a smaller contingent of Jews and Romans.

### D. THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI

The year of Paul’s first contact at Philippi was around A.D. 50. The first converts were Lydia, a seller of purple cloth, and the town’s jailer. The other members of their two families were also baptized at this time. The first meeting place of the believers at Philippi was probably the home of Lydia (c.f. Acts 16:15, 40). Most of the congregation were Grecians, though the fellowship included some converted Jews. By the time Paul wrote the epistle, the church had an organizational structure that included the church offices of bishops and deacons (Phil 1:1).

### E. CHARACTERISTICS

1. Philippians has been called Paul’s love letter to the saints at Philippi because its informal, personal style reveals so much of the apostle’s character. The epistle contains less censure and more praise

than does any other epistle. Because the writing was more practical than doctrinal, no detailed outline is apparent in the structure of this personal letter.

2. Some of the main subjects that stand out:
  - a. Joy in Christ—the word “rejoice” and “joy” appear seven teen times.
  - b. Unity of believers in Christ (c.f. 1:27-2:18; 4:1-9)
  - c. Keeping faith under hard circumstances of everyday life
  - d. Growing in the Lord
  - e. The gospel—it appears nine times in the letter.



## 2. CONTENT

### A. SALUTATION (1:1-2)

1. Paul and Timothy (1:1a)
  - a. Had a very close relationship (c.f. 2 Cor 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; Phil 1).
  - b. Both had a close relationship with the Philippian church (Acts 16:1-3, 10, 19:21-22, 20:3-4).
2. Servants of Christ Jesus (1 Cor 6:19-20)
3. Addressed to all the saints, the bishops and deacons: a well organized church

**B. THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER (1:3-11)**

**N O T E S**

1. Thanksgiving (1:3-8)
  - a. The reason for thanksgiving and joy in his prayers (1:3-4)
  - b. For the past and the present: partnership in the gospel from the first day until now (1:5)
  - c. For the confidence in the future: "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (1:6; 1 Cor 1:9; 1 Thess 5:24).
  - d. The communion between Paul and the Philippians was based on his sincere affection for them (1:7-8; 1 Thess 2:6-8; 1 Cor 4:14-16). This close communion was expressed as "partakers with defense and confirmation of the gospel."
2. Prayer (1:9-11)

The progress of a Christian is unlimited:

  - a. Love with knowledge and all discernment (quality) may abound more and more (quantity)
  - b. You may prove what is excellent (rooted faith)
  - c. You may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ (attending salvation)
  - d. Filled with the fruits of righteousness (to be the light and salt in the world/image of Christ)
  - e. Everything is for the glory and praise of God.

**C. WITNESSING WHILE IMPRISONED (1:12-26)**

1. "The things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel...most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear" (1:12-14; Acts 4:23-31, 8:1-8; 2 Tim 2:9).
2. "Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill...What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice" (1:15-18).
3. "...through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope...with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death" (1:19-21; Rom 14:7-9; 2 Cor 2:14-17).
4. "To live is Christ and to die is gain" (1:22-26)
  - a. To live is Christ
    - 1) Fruitful labor for himself (1:22b)
    - 2) For members' progress and joy in faith (1:25b)



- 3) May have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus (1:26b)
  - b. To die is gain. To be with Christ is far better (1:23b; 2 Cor 12:1-4; 2 Tim 4:7, 8)

**D. PRACTICAL APPEALS TO THE PHILIPPIANS (1:27-2:18)**

- 1. Appeal for steadfastness (1:27-30)
  - a. "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ" (1:27a; Eph 4:1; 2 Thess 1:11, 12).
    - 1) In one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel (1:27b)
    - 2) Not frightened in anything (1:28a)
  - b. Not only believe in Christ but also suffer for His sake (1:29b; Rom 8:17; 2 Tim 2:1-3, 9-13). Paul himself was the example (1:30).
- 2. Appeal for unity and humility (2:1-11)
  - a. Attain oneness in mind through fellowship (2:1, 2; Acts 2:42-47)
  - b. Be considerate and respectful (2:3, 4)
    - 1) Do nothing from selfishness or conceit.
    - 2) In humility count others better than yourselves.
    - 3) Look not only to your own interests, but also the interests of others.
  - c. Christ is our pattern (2:5-11)
    - 1) The humility of Christ (2:5-8)
      - He was in the form of God (2:6a).
      - He was born in the likeness of men (2:7b).
      - He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant (2:7a)
      - He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross (2:8).
    - 2) The exaltation of Jesus (2:9-11)
      - God has highly exalted Him (2:9a).
      - God bestowed on Him the name which is above every name (2:9b)
      - Every knee should bow (2:10).
      - Every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord (2:11a).
- 3. Appeal for realization of God's salvation (2:12-18)



- a. Work out one’s own salvation (2:12, 13)
  - 1) With fear and trembling; be sober and watchful
  - 2) Depend on God for He is at work in you, both to will and to do (2:13).
- b. Be blameless even in a perverse generation (2:14-18)
  - 1) Faith and obedience (2:14)
  - 2) Holding fast the word of life, shine as a light without blemish (2:15, 16).
  - 3) Paul’s willingness to sacrifice and to suffer in order to help members in achieving salvation (2:17, 18; Rom 9:3)

**E. PLANS FOR HIS COMPANIONS (2:19-30)**

- 1. Timothy (2:19-24)
  - a. “For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state” (2:20).
  - b. The others looked after their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ (2:21).
  - c. As a son with a father, Timothy had served with Paul in the gospel (2:22).
- 2. Epaphroditus (2:25-30)
  - a. “My brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier” (2:25a)
  - b. “Your messenger and the one who ministered to my need” (2:25b)
  - c. “He was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also...” (2:27)
  - d. “Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me” (2:29, 30).

**F. WARNING AGAINST ERRORS (3:1-4:1)**

- 1. Warning against those who preach the necessity of circumcision (3:1-11)
  - a. The warning (3:1-3) “For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit.”
  - b. Paul’s personal recollection of what Christian faith has meant to him (3:4-11).
    - 1) Utter discarding of Jewish privileges (3:5-7)
    - 2) The surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus his Lord (3:8a)



- 3) "I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ" (3:8b).
  - 4) From legalism to faith in Christ (3:9)
  - 5) Share Christ's suffering that he may attain the resurrection from the dead (3:10, 11)
2. Warning against false "perfectionism" (3:12-16)
- a. "I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me" (3:12b).
  - b. "Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead" (3:13b).
  - c. "Let us, as many as are mature, have this mind" (3:15a).
3. Warning against "libertism" (3:17-21)
- a. "Whose god is their belly...who set their mind on earthly things" (3:19).
  - b. "For our citizenship is in heaven...the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body..." (3:20, 21).

**G. CLOSING EXHORTATIONS (4:2-9)**

1. Entreat Euodia and Syntyche to agree in the Lord (4:2, 3)
2. Be joyful and prayerful (4:4-7)
- a. Be joyful (4:4, 5)
    - 1) Rejoice in the Lord (4:4).
    - 2) Let all men know your forbearance (4:5a).
    - 3) The Lord is at hand (4:5b).
  - b. About prayer (4:6,7)
    - 1) Let your requests be made known to God (4:6).
    - 2) The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (4:7).
3. Pursing higher virtues (4:8, 9)
- a. Think about things of higher virtues (4:8).
  - b. "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do" (4:9).





**H. EXPRESSION OF THANKS (4:10-20)**

**N O T E S**

1. To receive gifts does not mean that Paul is in want. "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content" (4:11, 12).
2. "Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account" (4:17).

**I. CONCLUSION (4:21-23)**



**QUESTIONS**

- 1A. Explain what Paul meant in verse 1:21.
- 1B. List five ways to demonstrate how you can "shine as light in the world" (2:14-16).
- 1C. In your Bible, circle (with a pencil) all the times Paul wrote "joy" and "rejoice" in the letter he wrote from his prison cell to the Philippians church. Find at least seven reasons why Paul or the Philippians should be joyful.
- 2A. How can someone preach about Jesus Christ with the wrong motives (1:15-18)?
- 2B. How can you live a life worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ?
- 2C. List 5 things that you encountered in the past week that would meet the standards of verse 4:8. List 5 things that are opposite to what is described in this verse.
- 3A. Is it necessary for a Christian to undergo suffering in his/her life of faith?
- 3B. How can humility help in the unification of the church (2:1-11)?
- 3C. How would you imitate Paul (3:17; 4:9)? Which aspect of your life would you want to model after Paul's?



**GROUP DISCUSSION/ACTIVITY**

**BE PATIENT, GOD IS STILL WORKING ON ME!**

- a. Form groups of three or four members. Assign a group leader, a recorder, and a reporter.
- b. Read Philippians 2:12, 13. Discuss what these two verses mean.
- c. Answer the following questions:
  - 1) How do you work out your own salvation? What specific things do you have to do?
  - 2) How is God at work in you? Give examples from your own experiences or examples from others you know.
- d. Have the class come together again. Let each group report.
- e. Conclude and pray.



# The Meaning of True Love



## C. THE ESSENCE OF LOVE (1 Cor 13:4-8)

- Patient
- Kind
- Not jealous
- Not boastful
- Not arrogant
- Not rude
- Does not insist on its own way
- Not irritable
- Not resentful
- Does not rejoice at wrong
- Rejoices in the right
- Bears all things
- Believes all things
- Hopes all things
- Endures all things
- Never ends

## D. SELFLESSNESS (Mk 6:31-35)

1. Self-sacrifice (Jn 12:24; 2 Cor 11:14, 15; 1 Thess 2:7, 8)
2. Willing to die for another (Jn 15:13; Rom 5:6-8)
3. "I" ("ego") is the greatest challenge and most powerful enemy of love (Isa 47:8-10; Zeph 2:15).



## 1. THE DEFINITION OF TRUE LOVE

### A. SINCERE LOVE

1. Issued from a pure heart, good conscience, and sincere faith (1 Tim 1:5)
2. Honest, pure, without ulterior motives (2 Cor 6:6)
3. Truly show with action, and not only with words (1 Jn 3:18)

### B. SPIRITUAL, DIVINE LOVE

1. Loving the soul more than the flesh (Mk 10:21; Jn 6:26, 27; Mt 26:16; 2 Cor 11:28, 29)
2. Holy and pure love (1 Cor 16:20)



## 2. THE ORIGIN OF "TRUE LOVE"

### A. GOD IS LOVE (1 JN 4:8, 16)

1. Is abundant in goodness and mercy (Ex 34:6, 7; Ps 118:1-4, 130:7)
2. Gives life and health (Acts 17:24-28)
3. Raises (Ps 104:10-16; Mt 5:45; Ps 23:1) and nourishes mankind
4. Protects (Deut 32:10)
5. Delivers (Isa 63:9)

- 6. Heals (Ps 103:1-5)
- 7. Disciplines (Heb 12:6, Jer 31:20)
- 8. Redeems and saves (Jn 1:1, 14, 16; 3:16)
- 9. Gives the Holy Spirit and eternal life (Eph 1:13, 14; 2 Cor 1:20-22)

**B. THE LOVE OF CHRIST**

- 1. Full of mercy, healing those suffering in illnesses and pain (Mt 14:14; Jn 5:5, 6; Heb 13:3)
- 2. Has love and patience for the weak (Jn 21:3-17; Rom 15:1; Gal 6:1, 2)
- 3. Forgiving (Mt 18:21-35)
- 4. Loves enemies (Mt 5:44-48)
  - a. Loved Judas to the end (Jn 13:1-5)
  - b. Merciful toward the enemy (Lk 22:50, 51)
  - c. Undergoing great agony at the point of death, He still forgave His enemies and prayed for them (Lk 23:34).
- 5. Saves the pitiful souls of men (Mt 9:35-38; Lk 23:39-43; Mt 16:26; 2 Pet 3:9)
- 6. Willingly offered Himself to undertake the punishment for all the sins of the world by being crucified on the cross (Isa 53:10; Ps 22:14-18; Rom 5:6-8; 1 Pet 2:21-25)
  - a. Faced and overcame the sorrows and excruciating pain in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mt 26:36-46; Lk 22:39-44; Heb 5:7; Jn 18:25)
  - b. Forsaken by all, even His closest friends (Ps 69:20; Mt 26:56, 69-75; Mk 14:50-52)
  - c. Everyone despised Him, mocked Him, cursed Him, spat on Him, and even punched Him (Mt 26:66-68, 27:39, 40; Mk 10:65, 15:19, 20; Lk 22:63-65, 23:11).
  - d. Lashed by Roman whips (the ones with hooks on the end) (Mt 27:26; Mk 15:15; Jn 19:1), His back was cut as a farmer's freshly tilled field (Ps 129:3).
  - e. Pressed upon His head was a crown of thorns. Blood dripped down as the sharp thorns pierced into His head (Mt 27:29; Mk 15:17; Jn 19:2).
  - f. Forced to carry the heavy cross to Calvary on His back, which was wounded and bleeding (Jn 19:17).
  - g. His hands and feet were nailed to the cross. The sweat and blood flowed mingled down for all His weight was supported by three nails —tremendous pain beyond what any human being could take (Ps 22:16).
  - h. In the sixth hour, blood and sweat continued



to flow out of His body. His tongue was so dry that it cleaved to the roof of His mouth (Ps 22:15; Jn 19:28, 29).

- i. All His bones were out of joint (Ps 22:14).
- j. Had high body temperature, and His heart melted like wax within Him (Ps 22:14).
- k. Not only did He suffer and die for us physically to save our souls, He bore all our sins and was abandoned into the darkness by God (Ps 16:10; Acts 2:27, 31; 1 Pet 3:19, 20; Mt 27:45, 46).

**C. IN OUR HEARTS**

To comprehend the love of God, stand beneath the cross daily (Eph 3:16:20). Meditate on the love of God day and night (Ps 47:9). Never forget that "Jesus died for us" and never forget the grace He has bestowed on us (Gal 2:20; 1 Cor 15:10; 1 Tim 1:13-16).

**D. FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Pursue after the fullness of the Holy Spirit and He will pour out the love of God abundantly into our hearts (Eph 4:16).



**3. THE WORKS OF LOVE**

**A LOVE GOD (Mt 22:36-38)**

- 1. Keep His commandments (Jn 14:21-24; 1 Jn 5:3)
- 2. Love the house of God (Church, the body of Christ) (Eph 1:22, 23; Ps 84:1-10, 122:1-9)
- 3. Love Jesus (Rom 14:7, 8; 2 Cor 5:14, 15)
  - a. Offer time: go to worship meetings, read the Bible, pray, undergo spiritual cultivation, perform holy work, preach the gospel (Heb 10:25)
  - b. Offer money: help the poor, establish church buildings, financially support the holy work locally and in other places in the world (Prov 19:17; Mt 25:31-40; 2 Cor 8:6-11; 1 Chr 29:1-19)
  - c. Offer labor: spiritual gifts, talents, and knowledge in services, personal preaching, literary ministry, and others (Acts 7:22; Heb 11:24-26)
  - d. Offer life: suffer for Christ unto death (Phil 1:20, 21; 2 Cor 4:7-11)

**B. LOVE MANKIND (Mt 22:39)**

- 1. Love family (1 Tim 6:8)
  - a. Be filial; serve and provide for parents (Eph 6:1-3; Prov 23:22; Gen 47:3, 11, 12)
  - b. Help brothers and sisters (Prov 17:17; Gen 50:15-21)
  - c. Save the souls of family members (Gen







*QUESTIONS*

- 1A. What is the difference between true love and carnal affection? Give three examples.
- 1B. How do you know that God loves you? Or, how would you explain the love of God to a non-believing friend?
- 1C. How can you show your love to God?
- 1D. What are three things you can do to demonstrate God’s love to someone today?
- 1E. Is it easier for us to learn to love our parents before we know how to love God? Why?
- 2A. Explain how the love of Christ can control us (2 Cor 5:14).
- 2B. We associate love with gentleness and warmth, not with pain and suffering. Then how could Paul’s love grow deeper each day in his service to the Lord, despite so much pain and sorrow (Acts 9:16; 2 Cor 11:23-29)? (Hint: Read Philippians and Romans 8:18-39.)
- 2C. Find a Bible character (excluding those mentioned in this lesson) who showed great love either to God or to men. Justify your answer with Bible verses.
- 3A. Choose one topic to write an essay on.
  - a) What would this world be like without love?
  - b) Write a portrait of someone you know who has a lot of love.
  - c) What have I learned about love from my parents?
  - d) One experience when I was touched by the love of Christ.
- 3B. Describe John’s understanding of love, according to the First Letter of John.

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*GROUP DISCUSSION/ACTIVITY*

**TESTIMONY OF LOVE**

- a. Form groups of three or four members.
- b. Let volunteers share testimonies (personal or about a family member). After each testimony, discuss how God’s love was manifested through the event.
- c. Conclude with a prayer.





# Living a Life of Love



## LOVING OTHERS

### A. What is love?

1 Jn 3:16 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Jn 4:7-10 \_\_\_\_\_

Write a summarized definition of love from the above verses.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### B. What are some tangible ways in which we can express our love for others?

Rom 12:9-10 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Gal 5:13 \_\_\_\_\_

Eph 4:2 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Jn 3:17, 18 \_\_\_\_\_

### C. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13). For each of the types of people below, write down several ways in which you can lay down your life for them.

Your parents

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Your brother(s) or sister(s)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



A schoolmate \_\_\_\_\_

Someone in your RE class \_\_\_\_\_

A spiritual leader \_\_\_\_\_

Someone who gets on your nerves \_\_\_\_\_

**D. Does love always require sacrifice? Explain.**

**E. For Christians, love is not an option; it is a command (Mt 22:39; Jn 13:34, 15:17; Col 3:14). We are commanded to love not only our "brothers," but our enemies (Mt 5:43, 44). When we just "don't have it in us" to love others, what truths can encourage us? (See next page.)**

1 Jn 4:7 \_\_\_\_\_

Rom 5:5; Gal 5:22 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Jn 4:11 \_\_\_\_\_

What can we do if we're finding it difficult to love someone?

In addition, Paul writes that love comes from "a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim 1:5). What do you think this verse means?



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

F. What truth from this part of the study would you like to apply to your life this week?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



*LOVING GOD*

A. What did Jesus say was the greatest commandment in the Law? (Mt 22:37; see also Deut 6:5)

\_\_\_\_\_

B. If we love God, how will it be evident in our lives?

Ps 97:10 \_\_\_\_\_

Jn 14:21 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Jn 4:20-21 \_\_\_\_\_

C. What comes first, our love for God or His love for us?

(1 Jn 4:10) \_\_\_\_\_

D. What can you learn about God's love from the following verses?

1 Chr 16:34 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps 36:5 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps 94:18 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps 119:64 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps 119:64 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps 119:64 \_\_\_\_\_

Prov 15:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Isa 54:10 \_\_\_\_\_

Zeph 3:17 \_\_\_\_\_

Rom 5:8 \_\_\_\_\_

Rom 8:35-39 \_\_\_\_\_

Eph 3:17-19 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Jn 3:1 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Jn 4:16 \_\_\_\_\_

From the verses you just examined, choose a verse that is especially meaningful to you. Copy it down in the space below.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Now meditate on the verse you just picked. What does it tell you about God? About His love for you? How would it affect your daily life if you were to wake up each morning fully assured of these truths?

E. How can you increase your love for God?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



*GROUP DISCUSSION*

N O T E S

- 1) Read the book of 1 John and write down everything you read concerning love. List what you find into three categories: God's love for us, our love for God, and our love for others.
- 2) Say a silent prayer while meditating on the items you have listed from 1 John. Ask God to show you at least one area in which you could grow and what, specifically, you can do about it. Share your findings and your ideas with your discussion group or write it down on the remaining blank spaces on this page.

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# Dating and Falling in Love



It is tough to be a Christian in a society where everyone does what he thinks is right in his eyes. In addition to what is around us—the media, popular philosophy, and peer pressure—our own desires can lead us to do things against God’s commandments. It is helpful when we know exactly what God wants us to do at all times. In some cases, the Bible tells us rather plainly what to do or what not to do. Other times, it is unclear as to exactly what God wants us to do. One area that troubles most of our youths is that relating to people of the opposite sex.

The Bible gives us clear instructions on what NOT to do before marriage and the proper conduct for married couples. However, can we find answers about what our youth CAN do before they are ready to be committed to each other? More specifically, what are some of the correct attitudes we should have toward dating?

## I. DATING QUESTIONS

The following are some questions about dating that the youth in TJC have frequently asked. Please state whether or not you agree with each of the viewpoints, and give your reasons. After you have completed the questions, check your responses with what the Bible says in section II of this lesson.

1. My parents get so paranoid when I meet with school friends of the opposite sex. We really enjoy each other’s company. I do not intend to marry the person I study with. What is wrong with just spending time alone with someone I like?
2. This brother/sister that I really admire has invited me to have a casual meal to discuss some work for church. Is that considered dating? What should I do?
3. I think one of the benefits of dating nonbelievers is that I can bring them to church. Isn’t this also a way to help save people’s souls? Why or why not?
4. Ever since the last youth fellowship, I began to have strong feelings toward brother/sister X. I can’t help thinking about him/her all the time. When I get near him/her, my heart starts racing and I end up doing silly things. I tried praying to stop these feelings, but I just can’t seem to stop them. What should I do?
5. I believe in marriage within the same faith, but how am I going to find the right spouse if I don’t get to know that brother/sister? Isn’t dating a healthy learning process for young people? Why or why not?
6. My parents got married when my mother was still an unbeliever. A few years after the children were born, she also got baptized. Now, my mom helps out in church and most people think she is a good role model. If it worked for my parents, why can’t it work for me?
7. Is it permissible for TJC youths to date nonbelievers? YES or NO  
Is it permissible for TJC youths to date believers? YES or NO  
If yes, what is the appropriate age for one to

- start dating? If not, why?
8. I think if both sides can abide by some agreeable guidelines, then dating should be harmless and even helpful. What are some of the guidelines a Christian should follow on a date?
  9. I have been going out with the same non-believing girl-/boy-friend for the past two years. We have agreed that sex before marriage is wrong. But now, I learned that some of the physical contact that has been occurring when we are alone is actually wrong in the eyes of God. Especially in our recent dates, it has become harder and harder to control our actions. How should I deal with this situation?

II. CAN WE HAVE SOME ANSWERS, PLEASE?

Our heavenly Father is most pleased when we obey His commandments. In addition to the Ten Commandments, the Bible gives us plenty of instructions on how to conduct our lives. But, can we find biblical sources that tell us about dating? There may not be verses that directly relate to dating, but the Bible provides us with numerous principles on human relationships that can apply to this topic. What should you do if you have questions that are not covered in this lesson? There are four simple steps you may follow:

1. Pray for the wisdom from the Holy Spirit. The best solution to any problem is to go to the source of wisdom and strength—God Himself. This should be the first and the most important step in whatever we do.
2. Always follow God’s rules. Use the principles in this lesson and others throughout the Bible (a reason for you to know your Bible well!).
3. Ask: “What would Jesus do if He were in my shoes?” As you develop an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus (through prayers and Bible reading), it will become easy for you to know what Jesus would do in different situations, even though certain occasions could never have happened in His time.
4. Talk to someone with spiritual maturity. This can be a minister, a parent, a relative, or an RE teacher. Open your heart to what God wants to say through this advisor.

Now let us look at some biblical principles that can help to answer the previous questions on dating.

III. BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES ON DATING

1. Dating and friendship

There’s nothing wrong with spending time with your school friends, nor is there anything wrong with having close friends. However, when we truly understand and realize who we are—the children of God—then we will be careful about how we act when we make friends. The Bible commends true friendship (Prov 17:17, 18:24, 27:17; Eccl 4:9, 10; Jn 15:13) but cautions us on whom we trust (Mic 7:5; Isa 2:22). We need to recognize that we naturally develop attachments to people whom we spend much time with. We are also easily influenced by those whom we spend a lot of time with.

Principles to follow:

- A) Never be alone with someone of the opposite sex. If you need



to study together, suggest a public place such as the library, or invite another friend to come along. We can learn from Joseph, who avoided any possible temptation (Eph 4:27).

- B) Always remember to behave properly as a true Christian. Actions always speak louder than words. Know where to draw the line of being "friends" or "more-than-friends." See what the Bible tells us in Philippians 1:9-11, 1 John 3:2, 2 Peter 3:11, 1 Timothy 6:11.

**2. What is a date?**

In a general sense, a date is one male and one female agreeing to meet with the purpose of getting to know each other better. Of course, what people do on a date vary greatly from one situation to another. This is where the debate comes in. But, in the case where the two of you need to discuss church work, is that considered a date? Technically, it is not if all you have to discuss is some church work. But, why not discuss it at church or over the phone? Actually, whether or not your meeting is called a date is not all that important. The motive or purpose of the meeting is what determines the outcome.

**Principles to follow:**

- A) Never be alone with someone of the opposite sex so as not to give the devil an opportunity (Eph 4:27). If you need to work together, find a public corner in church. If you do go out with a church member of the opposite sex, always be in the company of others.
- B) Do not become a stumbling block to someone whose faith is weak (1 Cor 8:9). While a church brother or sister may just want to find an undisturbed place to discuss some church work, others may not necessarily know the reason why the two of you are alone at a restaurant or a coffee shop.

**3. Dating and evangelism**

It is great that you want to bring people you know to Christ. This is what Jesus commanded His disciples to do (Mt 10:7, 27; Mk 16:15; Lk 9:2, 60; Acts 5:20; 2 Tim 4:2). However, we should preach the gospel to others without expecting anything in return, for our reward is in heaven (1 Cor 9:16-18). Therefore, it sounds more like an excuse when a member uses the name of evangelism to date nonbelievers. Know that bringing someone to Christ requires much labor of love and patience. Will you still care for that person's soul even after you have terminated your romantic relationship? Can you guarantee that you will not be influenced by this person whom you care so much about? [Also refer to principles in numbers 6 and 7]

**Principles to follow:**

- A) Do not be yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14-18).
- B) Be in this world but not of this world, nor conform to this world (Jn 17:14-17; Rom 12:2).

**4. Feelings of uncontrollable attraction to someone**

It is likely that during our growth process, sometimes we find ourselves suddenly attracted to someone. When this happens, you have probably learned either from friends or society to "express your true feelings" and just tell that person how you feel, hoping that your admirer will have similar feelings for you.



Normally, people call this kind of sudden, strong liking for someone a “crush.” It is temporary, and is made of fantasies based upon physical appearances. These are not reasons for you to ask someone out on a date, though this may be what other people do. Because most other people do it does not mean it is the right thing or the best thing to do. Can you imagine if every one of us acted on our impulses? It would be chaotic, and many people would get hurt. **This is why our church cautions our youth NOT to date.**

[Also refer to answer number 2 of True and False.]

**Principles to follow:**

- A) Pray for the fullness of the Holy Spirit to bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22, 23), especially the last quality of the fruit, self-control.
- B) Wait patiently for God’s time when you can dedicate all your romantic love to the one you marry (Ps 37:7, 40:1)

**5. Dating and marriage**

A successful marriage depends on many factors; but one of the factors that most people focus on is that of find the right spouse. Commonly, one might date around until she finds “Mr. Right” or he finds “Miss Right.” But this is not the only way. The church has always encouraged marriage within the Lord (Refer to answer number 6). However, not everyone agrees with the approach that the church traditionally practices—introduction through families or the church.

Although some members believe that we should not date non-believers, they feel it is all right to date believers. They treat dating as a kind of practice on how to relate to their future spouse. However, practice does not make perfect in this case. First, you do not know if the person you are dating will be the one that you will be married to; therefore, you would never treat him/her as if you would your spouse. Second, it is not fair to treat those brothers/sisters whom you are dating as your experiments. Third, feelings are guaranteed to get hurt, including your own, if you date around because you have to break up with every person whom you do not wish to marry in the end.

**Principles to follow:**

- A) A good spouse comes from God (Prov 19:14), and not from ourselves. We see only the present and the superficial, but God is all-knowing and foresees the future (Job 34:21; Isa 46:9, 10). Therefore, trust in God and not our own judgment (Prov 3:5).
- B) In all we do, we must first seek the will of God (Jas 4:15) through prayers (Phil 4:6).
- C) A marriage centered around God cannot go wrong even if the couple do not know each other well (example of Isaac and Rebekah).

**6. Examples of successful marriages with non-believers**

Praise and thank God that in some instances, marriages between a believer and a non-believer actually worked out very well. This was especially true when the church was first established and the members were still few and strong in faith. However, do you know how many of such mixed-faith marriages fail? Usually, these believers eventually stop coming to church after getting married and we never get to hear about their failures.



There may be different reasons why marriages with non-believers work for some believers. We can say that it was God’s will, the fervent prayers, the good conduct, or the long-suffering of the believing spouses. But there is not one formula that will guarantee the success of a marriage between a believer and a non-believer. We have even seen some examples of failure in unions of believers when one or both spouses do not follow God’s way of life. If some members find it hard to live a godly life, how are we going to expect a non-believer to follow God’s way of life?

**Principles to follow:**

- A) **Follow the rule, not the exception.** We should first follow God’s rules or principles because His ways always work (Jas 1:8). But, if we want to follow other people’s examples which are exceptions to the rule, we have to realize that we are taking a great risk.
- B) **Prevention is better than restitution.** No matter how much you think two people may love each other, daily conflicts on some very fundamental issues, such as religion, can tear the relationship apart. We have heard the testimonies of those non-believing spouses who finally came to Christ: the believing spouses, especially sisters, almost always had to suffer and endure much hardship before they could have peace in their families. If you are determined to marry a non-believer, are you willing to pay the price? Are you sure that you will win the soul of your spouse (1 Cor 7:16)?

**7. Dating and age**

These are very tough questions to answer. There is no law or commandment in the Bible that directly or indirectly refers to dating. However, the Bible has plenty to say concerning marriage. But you may ask, “What does dating have to do with marriage? I don’t intend to marry every person I date.” That is partially true. People usually do not think about marriage the first few times they begin to date. But eventually, people do come across someone they date whom they think they want to spend the rest of their lives with. So they marry. Therefore, generally speaking, we can conclude that people date because they hope to find the right spouse.

Dating non-believers: Although dating someone does not mean you will definitely marry that person, we understand that the ultimate goal of dating is marriage. If you do not intend to marry a non-believer, why do you want to date him/her? (Please also refer to number 6.) Therefore, TJC does NOT recommend that our members date non-believers.

Dating Believers: Please consider the following stories before we answer this question.

**Scenario One:** Brother M felt very strongly toward Sister W ever since the last youth seminar. M began to think about W very often. After some encouragement from his friends, Brother M finally gathered up enough courage to ask Sister W out for ice cream. Sister W agreed and they went out one Saturday night. They had a very nice talk—for three hours. They continued to see each other frequently. However after a while, they began to have arguments over every little thing. Before they knew it, they found it was getting harder and harder to talk to each other without a disagreement. Finally, they decided to break up the relationship. The problem now was that since everyone





in the church knew about them, it made them feel very awkward seeing each other in church. Brother M was thinking of transferring to a school in another state. Sister W dropped out of the choir and began to refuse to participate in other church work as well. Soon, she found many excuses to not come to church at all.

**Scenario Two:** Sister Y and Brother P have known each other since elementary school. They began to work closely at church during their high school years. While in college, they had opportunities to share many personal problems. Each time, they felt that their friendship was growing stronger from a deeper understanding of one another. Because of this closeness, people began to question whether it was more than just friendship. It was evident that their close relationship could develop into romantic affections. They had to do something before these feelings began to hurt their friendship. First, they both decided to pray and talk to the pastor about it. Together with the pastor, they decided that they were not ready for marriage at the time. In order to eliminate further problems, they felt it was best to avoid any situations where they would be alone. If at a later time they feel they are ready for marriage, they will pray for God’s guidance. If everything goes well, they will be engaged.

**8. Guidelines for a date**

Assuming that you agree that one should avoid dating until one is ready for marriage, the following guidelines can be helpful for any member who is seeing his/her fiancé before their marriage.

- a. **Let your families/close friends know where you are going.**
- b. **Go to safe public locations and avoid being alone in an apartment or a room.**
- c. **Avoid provocative stimulants such as R-rated movies or skimpy clothing.**
- d. **Have a mutual and clear understanding of what “purity and godliness” mean.**

It is difficult to come up with detailed “do’s and don’ts” on a date—the list would be endless. However, we believe that those guided by the Holy Spirit should know what is pleasing in the sight of God. In addition to the above guidelines, you can make other decisions based on the following principles.

**Principles to follow:**

- A) **Fear the Lord and love Him with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength (Deut 6:2-5). Know that God searches our hearts (Jer 17:10), sees everything that we do (Heb 4:13), and will repay everyone according to what we do (Rev 22:12).**
- B) **Draw near to God to know His will (Jas 4:8) so that God will be pleased with you.**
- C) **Never put yourself into a situation that will be tempting (Rom 6:13; 2 Pet 3:17).**
- D) **Do not let your freedom become a stumbling block to those who are weak (1 Cor 8:9).**

**9. Present non-believing girl-/boyfriend**

It feels good to know that there is a special someone who cares for you. You feel you can share all your time, secrets, joy, and sorrow with this person even though he/she does not share your life of faith. If you have not asked yourself this question, please do so now: “Do I think I



can share my future with him/her?" If the answer is yes, do you know what kind of life it will be for both of you? If your life of faith is important for you, how do you plan to live harmoniously with your non-believing spouse? What if your spouse, who first agreed to leave you alone on Saturdays as long as you do not ask him/her to come to church, later changes his/her mind and asks you to stay home? What about your children’s faith? Are you willing to go through the possibility of a life-long struggle with someone you love and risk the chance of losing your own salvation?

If your present girl-/boyfriend is sincerely seeking the truth please consider the following:

- A) Make sure that your girl-/boyfriend knows the importance of keeping yourselves pure before your marriage (2 Cor 7:1). (Please also refer to answer #8)
- B) At the same time, pray that the Lord will guide her/him to salvation soon (1 Tim 2:4; 1 Thess 5:17).

If you cannot imagine yourself married to your girl-/boyfriend, then it is more painful for you to keep the relationship when you know it will never work out in the end. The longer you keep the relationship, the harder it is to break up, and the more painful the break-up will be.

Principles to follow:

- A) Avoid temptations to stay with your boy-/girlfriend (Rom 6:13; 2 Pet 3:17).
- B) Do not be yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14-18).
- C) Pray for God to give you strength to overcome any difficulty (Phil 4:13).

#### IV. FALLING IN LOVE

True or False:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ “Love at first sight” is possible for some people.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ It is easy to differentiate “true love” from “crushes.”
3. \_\_\_\_\_ If two people truly love each other, they will never fight or argue.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I am the only person that knows who is the best spouse for me.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ If two people truly love each other, no difficulties or worries can affect their feelings toward each other.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ It is better to marry the wrong person than to be single for life.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ If two people love each other deeply and have decided to marry each other, then a sexual relationship before marriage can be justified.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ If two people truly love each other, their love will continue and remain the same forever.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Having sex is the best way to show one’s love to his/her partner.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Young people know about love better than older people.

After you have answered the above questions, here are the biblical standpoints which represent the views of the True Jesus Church.



1. "Love at first sight" is possible for some people.

FALSE. No matter how popular this idea may be, "love at first sight" does not happen in real life. But, some people may say: "What about the way I felt when I first saw so and so?" Of course, we must admit that the feelings you might have had—the sweaty palms, butterflies in your stomach, or other exciting sensations—were very real. However, this "excitement" does not equal love. (Refer to the chapter on the "Meaning of Love.") This kind of love is made up of an imaginary relationship based on a person's physical appearance. It should be called "sensations at first sight." When these feelings happen, you probably say to yourself: "What's happening to me? I never felt like this before. I think I am in love!" Notice how these feelings are purely selfish; they focus on "me, me, me!" These motivations all center around satisfying oneself, which has very little to do with the other person. Usually these feelings last for only a short period of time. You did not "fall in love" with that person—whom you barely knew—you loved idea of being in love. These two are very different.

"True love" grows from friendship, deep understanding, and acceptance of the other person. It is selfless and giving. It is developed through time and can stand the test of time.

Look at two biblical examples on how "love at first sight" brought very tragic results in the end: Shechem and Dinah (Gen 34), and Samson and Delilah (Judg 16:4).

2. It is easy to differentiate "true love" from "crushes."

FALSE. The initial thrill young people feel at meeting a new person of the opposite sex seems like it will remain forever. Some people may even declare after their first encounter. "This is it! She/he is the one for me." But, little did they know that they were only at the high point of a roller coaster ride. Very soon, the explosive excitement would cease. We need to be clear about the differences between a crush and true love. A crush is temporary, a climax of someone's emotional curve and a fantasy of another person someone knows very little about. After the newness and excitement wear out, these people who had once sworn their undying loyalty to their new-found love suddenly realize how unappealing their partners have become. Again, we must go back to the lesson on "Meaning of Love" and compare it with a crush. Our conclusion is the same as question one above—any feelings must be able to stand the test of time.

We can see two examples of crushes and the tragic end because they acted upon their impulse at the time: Amnon and Tamar (2 Sam 13), and Samson's marriage with a Philistine woman (Judg 14).

3. If two people truly love each other, they will never fight or argue.

FALSE. If any married couple claims that they never had a disagreement, then they are either lying or still do not know each other thoroughly enough yet. Before anything else, we must emphasize that there are healthy and unhealthy ways for a couple to disagree. Healthy disagreements are part of the natural process for two people to grow deeper in understanding. Unhealthy arguments can only cause hurt feelings and discourage understanding.

We have seen married people fight over small matters. Most of the time, they are only expressing how they feel about their spouse: "Hey,

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how come you are different from me? Why do you not understand me and what I want?" Coming from different backgrounds, we cannot expect everyone to get along without any work from both parties. This is what we call "smoothing out the rough edges from one another" (Prov 27:17). However, how we deal with a disagreement can either build up or tear down a relationship.

The Bible warns us about strife and quarreling (Prov 17:14, 19:13, 20:3, 21:9; 2 Tim 2:14). We find that unhealthy arguments, such as strife and quarreling, are more likely to happen in godless families where each member cares about him/herself more than others. It is also likely that unhealthy disagreements will occur more frequently in families of mixed faith than families of the same faith.

**4. I am the only person that knows who is the best spouse for me.**

**FALSE.** We often think that we are our own experts who know what we want. We make decisions based on our likes and dislikes but rarely consider what God thinks. The Bible tells us that God is the only one that knows us best because He made us and knew us even when we were in our mother's womb (Ps 139:13-14)! Not only that, God wants what is best for us because He loves us. Before we can know what is best for us, we need to learn to put God as our priority. As we pray for our future (school, marriage, work, etc.) we should remember that God can use other people (i.e. our parents, ministers, RE teachers, marriage coordinators, or any godly member) to help direct our ways. Consider how God used Abraham's old servant to find a wife for Isaac or how Ruth listened to Naomi's instructions in finding a husband for her. When we keep our heart and mind open to God, then it is more likely that we can see His guidance. However, when we choose to be stubborn on our own ways, we will never be able to see God's guiding light.

**Principles to follow:**

- A) **Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil (Pro 3:5-7). Please read 1 Corinthians chapter 13 for a detailed description of what true love is and is not. It is more than just a strong feeling. It is a lot of work that involves seeking the good of the other person instead of how it makes us feel inside.**
- B) **Keep a humble and open attitude when we listen to godly counsel (Pro 11:14).**

Let us also look at two biblical examples of successful marriages: Isaac and Rebekah (Gen 24); Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 4).

**5. Difficulties and problems cannot affect a couple who truly love each other.**

**FALSE.** Too many of us romanticize what love is. We naively think that love can conquer all obstacles. Unfortunately, the fire of love can slowly dwindle down because of economic difficulty, serious illness, business failure, long separation, or family or religious conflict. Our conclusion is that human love is fragile and can easily be wounded by difficulties no matter how much a couple thinks they love each other. Human love is unreliable especially when it is not based on the love of God.

Love based on Christ is sure to survive all the vicious agents of life (Rom 8:35-39). When a husband and a wife are filled by the love of Christ,



then they will understand that the difficulties in life are only trials from God to make them more perfect (2 Cor 4:17; Heb 12:11). They will learn to rely on God's help by praying together about their problems (Jn 15:7). Therefore, hardships in life will actually strengthen their love for God and for each other (Zech 13:9).

**6. It is better to marry the wrong person than to be single for life.**

**FALSE.** What a sad reason to get married! Apostle Paul supported the idea of unmarried members remaining single so that they could concentrate on serving the Lord (1 Cor 7:1, 8, 25-34). However, Paul also stated that singlehood is a gift (1 Cor 7:7) that may not be appropriate for everyone (1 Cor 7:2, 9, 28, 38).

We know that God made men and women to be married and have families. However, if people (especially sisters) have this kind of preconception and fear, they are likely to ignore sound judgment and lower their Christian standards. It is dangerous to fall into the trap of making hasty decisions.

There is an example: Sister N has made up her mind to marry only within the Lord but has not put much effort in prayers concerning her marriage. She thinks she has plenty of time and choices. However, she recently realized that 30 is just around the corner and there are fewer and fewer available bachelors in church. Then, she starts noticing a male co-worker named Tony who has been very nice to her. Slowly, she begins to reason with herself: "Well, I better accept the fact that I don't have much of a choice any more. Actually in many ways Tony has better qualifications than most of our church brothers: He is intelligent, well-mannered, considerate, has a respectable job, and has no bad habits except the occasional social drinking. What else can a woman ask for in a husband? Although our personalities and faith are not that compatible, I think he will come to church and change himself for me because he wants to make me happy. Anyhow, it will be better than being an 'old maid' like some other sisters I have heard about."

When someone has this kind of mentality toward marriage, it is almost always the precursor to an unhappy or broken marriage. These are excuses, not reasons, to be married. The Bible has clearly taught us that marriage is from God, therefore, we cannot separate what God has joined together (Mk 10:9). Paul warned the Corinthian believers who had unbelieving spouses: "For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?" (1 Cor 7:16)

**7. If two people love each other deeply and have decided to marry each other, then a sexual relationship before marriage can be justified.**

**FALSE.** This is a common misconception in our society nowadays. In the last fifteen to twenty years, we have witnessed a steady decline of traditional moral standards and the corruption of human sexuality. The media has brain-washed the new generation with the idea that it is only human to have sex with anyone you like, even if it is on your first date. The humanitarian philosophy in our society also encourages acceptance of abnormal sexual orientations such as homosexuality and bisexuality.

Having sex is not the same as love. People can have sex without love or love without sex. Think carefully when someone wants you to have sex with him/her by saying: "If you love me you would." Someone who sincerely loves you would never force you to do something you don't want to do or something you know is not right. So, no matter what the world



may tell us, we should keep God's principles in order to please our Father in heaven.

**Principles to follow:**

- A) We are not of this world (Jn 15:19); therefore, we should not follow the pattern of this world (Ex 23:2; Rom 12:2).
- B) It is the will of God for His children to avoid sexual immorality and be holy (1 Thess 4:3, 4).

**8. If two people truly love each other, their love will continue and remain the same forever.**

**FALSE.** Although we grow up hearing the favorite ending to a fairy tale, "And they lived happily ever after," about 50% of marriages in the U.S. end up in divorce. After their honeymoons, many newlyweds find that their once princes/princesses have turned into monsters. Why? Human love, regardless of how true and sincere it may appear, is fragile. It is especially straining to a relationship if there is some kind of hardship such as financial difficulties, health problems, family struggles, conflicts of faith or values, etc. To keep a lively and healthy relationship, love between a couple requires constant maintenance and it must be based on something constant.

Nothing is constant about people. As long as our breath remains in us, we continue to grow. Growth always brings about change, whether visible or invisible. It is the same with human relationships. Our affection or love toward others changes with time or circumstance. One day we may pledge our undying love and loyalty to someone, and the next day we may lose all our confidence toward the same person for any number of reasons.

But unlike men, God is always the same (Rev 1:8) and His love for us remains unchanged (Jer 31:3). This is why marriages within the Lord are different from those of this world. When a couple earnestly seeks to please God and is filled by God's love, then they will naturally want to love one another selflessly. (Please also refer to number 3.)

**Principles to follow:**

- A) Abide in the love of God (Jude 21).
- B) Pray for the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18).

**9. Having sex is the best way to show one's love to his/her partner.**

**FALSE.** Unfortunately, many young people today agree with the above statement, The misconception about love and sex and the constant peer pressure have all helped to increase teenage promiscuity and teenage pregnancy. While it is mandatory that all public schools teach sex education, no school is obligated to teach the true meaning and responsibility of it. Therefore, let us find out the reasons why God gave us sex.

- A) To share the most intimate expression of love between a husband and a wife.

God did not think it was good for Adam to be alone. He searched among all the creatures on earth but he could not find a helper suitable for man. Finally, God made woman out of Adam's rib. When Adam saw Eve standing before him, he said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh"





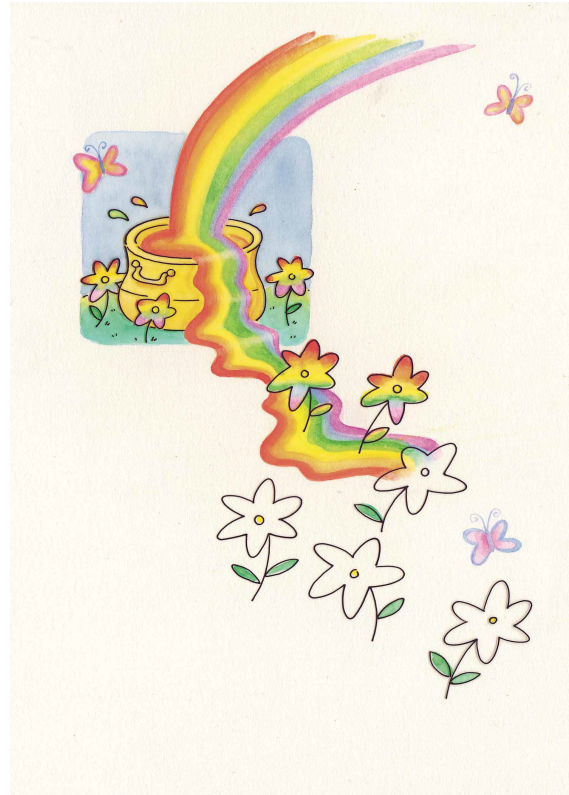


*"But whoever has this world's goods,  
and sees his brother in need,  
and shuts up his heart from him,  
how does the love of God abide in him?"*

*My little children,  
let us not love in word or in tongue,  
but in deed and in truth."*

*1 John 3:17-18*





*“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.  
And His commandments are not burdensome.”*

*1 John 5:3*

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