

**Understanding God’s Love and Holiness**

Passages: As listed in the lesson.

*Memory Verse*

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

<b>Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]</b>	<b>Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]</b>	<b>Good Works [Behavior]</b>
1. God shows His love for us through our family members. 2. Our holiness is shown through our actions and reliance on the Holy Spirit in our daily lives.	1. God is love. 2. God is holy.	1. Live out love in our daily lives. 2. Be holy, and have a plan to stay holy.

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. What Is Love?
- B. The Love of God
- C. What Is Holiness?

**Life Application**

- 1. Don’t Hold Back; Love God with Your Whole Being!
- 2. A Plan to Stay Holy

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** Out of His love, God has called us to be set apart as His holy people. Let us repay God’s love and demonstrate our holiness and love through our daily actions.

## *Spiritual Teachings*

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### **Introduction**

What are some examples of love that we see in society today? (*Write these examples in one column; e.g., parents and children, siblings, movie romance, etc.*)

Now, if you had to describe God's love, how would you describe it? (*Write these responses in an adjacent column; e.g., like a father who loves his children, love to the point of dying on the cross, etc.*)

So, this is our understanding of love from what we have seen in the world and have studied as Christians. Now, I want to tell you about an exclusive club. Only select people—people like you—can join this special club! However, if you want to join this club, then there are a few rules that you have to follow exactly. If you do not follow them exactly, you will be kicked out. These rules are:

- You have to follow all the rules given by the club leader
- The club and the club leader have to be the most important things in your life
- You have to call the club leader at least once every day

If this were an exclusive club with amazing benefits, wouldn't you want to join? What if I told you that what I described is the covenant you must make to be a part of God's holy nation? Do you still want to join this club? In today's class, we will be learning about two qualities of God—love and holiness. Since God is absolute and almighty, He is the absolute standard from which we can learn about love and holiness.

### **A. What Is Love?**

Let's take a look at the following statements:

- I love my parents
- My parents love me

There is an obvious but distinct difference between the two. The first is how we feel towards our parents. This love is personal to us; we can show it through our actions, our thoughts and understanding, and our feelings and emotions. What are some ways we show love to our parents?

The second is how our parents feel towards us. We may not always feel their love because we cannot see or hear their thoughts. We only see what they do for us or say to us. So, sometimes when our parents do something that we view as uncaring, we may feel as though they don't love us. Has this ever happened to you? But in their eyes, this could be how they believe love should be shown.

Now, let's look at the following statements. This time we've added a third point.

- I love God
- God loves me
- God is love

The first is what we feel towards God. Like our love towards our parents, this love is personal to us. We decide whether we love God, and we show it through our actions, thoughts, understanding, feelings, and emotions.

The second is how God feels towards us. We see the results and actions of His love, but we don't always understand it, just as we may not understand our parents' love. There may be times when we feel as if God is not looking after us or showing love to us, and it is only after a period of time that we can see

God's love toward us.

The third statement is unique to God. We know God is absolute and almighty—He existed before anything else. So, all love actually begins with God. Before we can understand how to love God, we first need to understand how God is love. When we come to understand how God is love, we can understand how God loves us and how we should love God. This will be the focus in our lesson today.

## **B. The Love of God**

God recognizes that it is difficult to understand someone you can't see or hear directly, so He has given us many examples of His love in our lives. What are some of these examples? (Examples: Parents and children, siblings, husband and wife, best friends, church members, etc.). God has also helped us to understand His love through other ways, including:

- His forgiveness of our sins
- When He disciplines us to turn us away from sin
- Sending His Son Jesus to give up His life on the cross

These are some of the signs that indicate and demonstrate His love. But to truly understand the depth of His love, we need to examine it more closely. Let's take a look at a few of the characteristics of His love.

### **1. Enduring, merciful, and free**

God showed His love when He sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross for us. Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross for us is an amazing display of God's love. In the hymn *And Can It Be That I Should Gain?*, we sing: "Amazing love! How can it be, that thou, my God shouldst die for me?" Yet, His sacrifice on the cross is only a small part of the qualities of God. When translating the Bible from Hebrew and Greek to English, sometimes translators cannot find one word to precisely explain the original Hebrew meaning. This is the case for the word "love" in Hebrew.

There are many ingredients that make up love, and the love of God even more so because it is so vast. The love of God is far too broad to be encompassed in a single word. Let's look at just a few characteristics of God's covenantal love:

- He is loyal and enduring forever: He keeps His promises (Ps 103:17)
- He is merciful and kind: We, being sinners and Gentiles, have now received this grace to be a part of His covenant (Eph 2:4–7)
- His love towards those He has called, His people, is free (Eph 2:8)

God's love is enduring, merciful, and has no price except our own love in return. Deuteronomy 7:9 says, "Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments." This is the love of God—that we can freely be His people and be a part of His covenant.

### **2. The bride of Christ**

Do you remember the exclusive club mentioned earlier? When we join this exclusive club, we are making a "covenant." When we receive God's calling and choose to follow Jesus, we are agreeing to be His people. All we must do is follow His commandments; in return, He will keep His promises.

As described before, God's love is a covenant, which means that there are responsibilities that both

parties must keep. “Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything” (Eph 5:24). God is the bridegroom, and we are the bride. Let’s turn to Deuteronomy 7:6–11. What are some of the things we have to do to stay in the love of God?

Keeping His commandments and statutes, submitting to Him, and being careful to listen to and understand His words are all ways for us to stay in the covenantal love of God. In addition, we should learn to treat others with kindness, mercy, and love.

From examining the characteristics of God’s love, we can see now that love is not merely an emotional response to someone. It requires our understanding of God and His commandments (1 Jn 5:2–3).

### **C. What Is Holiness?**

We cannot define holiness without looking to God’s Word. Without the Bible, we would never be able to understand what holiness is, and thus how we should be holy. Let’s read Psalm 15. After reading this chapter, how would you describe holiness? Do you think you are holy? For humankind, holiness is something impossible to achieve without God, who Himself is holy. But in what way is God holy?

God is holy because no sin exists in Him. It is simply not in His nature to do wrong or wickedness (Job 34:10). But not only is God incapable of doing evil, but He also detests it in His children. He commanded us, “You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy” (Lev 11:44).

### **A Holy Nation**

God’s love and holiness are inseparable. God has set us apart as His own special people because He loves us. But in God’s eyes, love is more than an emotional response. It is a relationship where both parties have a responsibility to uphold. In our relationship with God, our responsibility is to be holy. Let’s read 1 Peter 2:9–10.

What are the key words in these verses? (*Ask the students to circle the following words: chosen, royal, holy, His own special people, the people of God, mercy.*) From these words, we know God has set us apart to be holy. But what does it mean for us to be holy today?

#### **1. We belong to God**

Our commitment to stay holy is also a reminder that we do not belong to ourselves. We belong to God; we are His own special people, as described in 1 Peter 2:9–10. Let’s look at two other verses: Titus 2:14 and Galatians 5:24. We have been cleansed and purified, so we have to put aside our desires and passions. What are some things that are holy and belong to God? (*Sabbath day, the holy temple, our body, the church, etc.*)

#### **2. We have been called by God**

“Sanctify” and “consecrate” are commonly used in the Bible to show that whatever God sets apart is different from common things. That which God has set apart is called “holy,” which means that it belongs to God. If something is not holy, it cannot belong to Him. “Holy” can only be used to describe whatever belongs to God, whether it be a person, object, or time. Today, God has called us, His people, to be saints, or holy people (Rom 1:6–7). Those who have been called by God have the responsibility to pursue holiness in accordance with His word.

### **Life Application**

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### **1. Don't Hold Back; Love God with Your Whole Being!**

The love of God has no end, because love is who God is. But as we just learned, love is more than a feeling or an emotion. Because God is love, He desires that we imitate Him, and this is evident in the words of the Bible, both in the example that God sets, and the instructions that He gives us. In the New International Version of the Bible, "love" is recorded 744 times. The importance of love is undeniable, and not just our love for God, but for those around us as well. Love is the greatest need in our world.

Jesus teaches us to "love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mk 12:30). The Greek word that Jesus uses for "love" in this verse is *agape*. This is a love that comes from God Himself: an everlasting, unchanging love. Everything will cease one day, but the love of God lasts forever. If we choose to grow in the love of God through the power of the Holy Spirit, we will become more and more like Jesus, and one day, see Him face to face and spend eternity with Him together!

But love cannot be an afterthought. We need to pay attention to its growth and cultivate it daily. To do so, we must truly embrace Jesus, and as we pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, the love of God will grow in our hearts. We should never let the flame of our love for God go out but be on guard against anything that can lead us astray on our walk with God. As Jesus taught us, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (Jn 14:15).

#### **A Good Practice! How Do You Love Others?**

When we are filled with love, we will love the lonely and the hungry. We will visit the sick and comfort those who are in pain, whether physically, emotionally, or spiritually. Love is an active compassion, the driving force behind the kindness and care that we share with those around us. The Bible records one of the greatest descriptions of love in 1 Corinthians 13:1–8. (*Ask students to read the passage together as a class.*)

It is crucial for us to commit these verses to memory and to live them out in our lives. The first three verses teach us that love must be the motivation for all that we do. Yes, we can offer and do many things, but if we don't act with love, our actions are meaningless. The next four verses teach us how love manifests in our behavior and thoughts. Together, these verses guide us on how to act as holy, loving children of God.

Let's do a quick exercise to test our love. There are two other ways we can read 1 Corinthians 13:4–7. First, replace the word "love" with "Jesus." Read it, and you will read the heart of Jesus. Next, replace the word "love" with your name (e.g., "Jimmy suffers long and is kind."). Determine which of the aspects of love you need to grow more and share with your classmates.

### **2. A Plan to Stay Holy!**

There are many things we struggle with at our age, such as the temptation of dating before we are ready for marriage, looking at things we shouldn't (e.g., pornography), other sexual temptations, greed, or hatred towards certain people. But God wants us to be holy. Without holiness, no one can see God (Heb 12:14), so we must strive to avoid temptations. To do so, we must come up with a plan to help each other stay holy. What specific action plan can we follow in order to have holiness in our lives?

#### **a. Pray daily**

The Holy Spirit gives us the power and strength to say "no" to temptation. Therefore, the first step is to pray daily, asking God to fill us with His power so that we have the strength to resist

the devil (Jas 4:7). When we pray before we leave for school, we offer our day to Him and make a covenant with God to be holy with our feet, our hands, and even our eyes (Job 31:1).

**b. Meditate on God’s word daily**

Let us read Philippians 4:8 together. Filling our minds and thoughts daily with God’s word is the best way to fight against unholy thoughts, for the word of God is powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb 4:12). For example, if you struggle with unholy thoughts about the opposite sex or the media, you can meditate on Job 31:1 and Romans 6:12–13. When we meditate on the word of God, it will guard our hearts and help us fight those unholy thoughts. However, we must first recognize our weaknesses. Then we can find the right verses to combat them. Memorizing God’s word can help us get rid of our anger, resentment, or bitterness. The word of God is like water; it cleanses any undesirable elements in our lives.

**c. Offer our bodies fully to God daily**

Though the Internet or those around us seek to tempt us, we must not succumb to sexual lust before marriage, and instead offer our bodies fully to God each day. Each of us should honor marriage, as the marriage bed must be kept pure (Heb 13:4). We should not have an intimate relationship with the opposite sex, not even in dreams or fantasies. With the power of the Holy Spirit, we must strive to prevent even a hint of sexual immorality from coming into our lives (Eph 5:3).

**d. Be accountable to a spiritual friend**

When we belong to the light, we should live in light and not hide secrets in our lives. However, if we keep losing the battle to be holy, the Bible has taught us to “pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim 2:22). In other words, we must be accountable to a spiritual friend who calls “on the Lord out of a pure heart,” and who can help us fight this spiritual battle. By allowing someone to hold us accountable for the choices that we make, we are taking a step out of darkness (Eph 5:8–11).

Taking these concrete actions can help us live in holiness and be free from sin. We can also listen to godly music, such as hymns, and develop a habit of helping the church and those in need. When we live a life of simplicity and holiness, we glorify God.

*Check for Understanding*

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- 1. What is the covenantal love of God?** God’s special relationship with His people, where He shows loyalty, kindness, mercy and love, and where His people have to keep His commandments.
- 2. What is the difference between God’s love and the love we see in the world?** Love in the world is usually an emotional response and can be temporary. The love of God is a relationship that will last forever with God because He is faithful.
- 3. What does it mean to be holy?** It means to be free of wickedness and to belong to God.
- 4. What are some ways that God shows His love in our lives?** Through parents, siblings, spouses, best friends, etc.
- 5. How does one with love act, according to 1 Corinthians 13:4–7?** Love: suffers long; is kind; does not envy; does not parade itself; is not puffed up; does not behave rudely; does not seek its own; is not provoked; thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity; rejoices in the truth; bears all things; believes all things; hopes all things; and endures all things.
- 6. What are some concrete actions that we can take to help us stay holy?** Pray daily; meditate on

God's word daily; offer our bodies fully to God daily; and be accountable to a spiritual friend.

### *Memory Verse*

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

**Key Words:** faithful, covenant, mercy, keep, commandments

### **Meaning**

1. When the Israelites were about to enter Canaan, Moses exhorted them to remember their relationship with God and to be faithful to God always. Through this verse, we know that God will keep His covenant with those who love Him and keep His commandments.
2. To love God means to do what God commands, how He commands it.
3. Our part of the covenant requires us to keep God's commandments always. This means living out biblical teachings in our lives, such as keeping the Sabbath holy and being kind to others.

### *Conclusion*

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God gave up His Son so that we could be saved and have everlasting life. We did nothing to deserve salvation, yet God, out of His great love, made this plan for us. We should love God even more in return, and not with just any love, but with the love of God. When we are filled with the love of God, we're motivated to love Him back by loving other brothers and sisters through our servitude. God has also called us to be holy in our thoughts and in our actions. Let's strive to be more like God, who abounds in holiness and love!

Lesson 4 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does this verse teach us about our covenant with God?  
*God will keep His covenant with those who love Him and keep His commandments.*
  
2. “But you are a \_\_\_\_\_ generation, a royal priesthood, a \_\_\_\_\_ nation, His own \_\_\_\_\_ people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who \_\_\_\_\_ you out of darkness into His marvelous \_\_\_\_\_.” (1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2:9)  
*chosen, holy, special, called, light, Peter*
  
3. According to our study of Deuteronomy 7:6–11, how do we stay in the love of God?  
*By keeping His commandments, submitting to Him, listening to and understanding His words.*
  
4. How is God holy? What does this mean for His followers?  
*He is holy because no sin exists in Him. It is simply not in His nature to do wrong or wickedness. It means that His followers must also be holy and avoid evil (Lev 11:44).*
  
5. What actions will you take this week in order to grow in your love? Consider what you lack the most according to 1 Corinthians 13:4–8.  
*Personal answers.*
  
6. What aspect of your life do you need to change in order to become more holy?  
*Personal answers.*