



Lent Devotional Plan

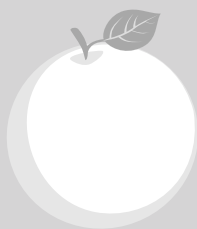
Adapted from Deron Spoo's
"The **Good** Book"

For Families

You will find a family specific devotional at the end of each booklet. Please choose whatever day and time to do them with your family (*over a meal, before they sleep, etc.*).



There is no specific day that each devotional corresponds with. **All devotionals have been tailored to be relevant for your children.**



week seven

Revelations 22

Romans 8

1 Corinthians 13

Galatians 5

James 1

1 John 3

Revelations 22

1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

6 And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."

7 "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, 9 but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

10 And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. 11 Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."

12 "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. 15 Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

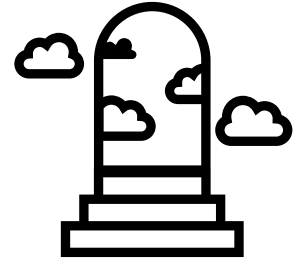
17 The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

35 | What Heaven Holds in Store



Heaven. What comes to mind when you think about heaven? Where does your imagination take you? It's easy for us to think heaven will be the fulfillment of every dream or desire we may have on earth. In our passage, John gives us a glimpse of what heaven will look like. In doing so, we see both the mysteries and the majesties that await all of us who are saved.

Heaven has a river. The water of life, bright as crystal, flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb (v1). Deron Spoo makes the connection that water serves two primary purposes: drinking and bathing. Heaven will be a place where we can drink freely from the river of life and find eternal refreshment. It will fulfill the very thirst of our souls. Not only will it bring refreshment, but it will bring eternal cleansing. In heaven every sin, brokenness, will all be washed away.

Heaven has a street. All of us will walk through the streets of heaven. There will be nothing that separates us from one another. We will all live in complete unity and harmony. As we experience perfect communion with God, we will also experience perfect community with one another.

Heaven has a tree. In Genesis, the result of the fall is that we have all been banned from the tree of life. In heaven all of us will have complete access to the tree of life where we can experience the abundance and richness of God's love. It says from this tree we will experience true healing where the wounds of the past will no longer hurt us anymore.

Heaven has a throne. If you notice, the throne is at the center of heaven itself. And upon the throne, God will dwell in heaven. This is the ultimate reward of heaven – we will experience his presence unhindered and uninterrupted. Heaven without Him would not be heaven at all. In fact some would define hell as the absence of God's presence for eternity.

The incredible truth is that we can experience a glimpse of heaven here on earth. Heaven gives us the proper perspective that everything we live for today is temporary. The good things in life will fade away, but also the painful things in life will come to an end. But more importantly, Jesus is coming back for us. For in heaven we will be with Him for eternity.

Reflection

CS Lewis once said, "Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither." What are we waiting for? What are we pursuing? How much of those things truly satisfy us? What would it look like to live with the perspective of heaven?

A pastor once said that in the timeline of heaven, being eternity, our lives seem so short. Would you agree? If so, how would that change the way we live our lives here on earth?

adapted from Deron Spoo's "The Good Book"

Romans 8

1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

12 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope

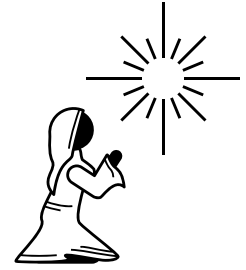
21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

36 | Is God Ever Mean?



Romans 8 revolves around this one theme that God is bent on loving every person he ever created.

Romans 8:14 offers this promise: "All those led by God's Spirit are God's son." When we become children of God, the promise brings with it a promise: God will watch over us, leading us faithfully through the events and circumstances of this life. Because of our new status, we can have this assurance.

Romans 8:29: "Those [God] foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son." Two rich words from this verse deserve careful exploration: foreknew and predestined. Foreknew. The verb to know is often used as a euphemism in the Bible for intimacy—even sexual intimacy. If to know means "to love," then to foreknew translates to "fore-love." Before you existed, God had already made the decision to love you. The matter was settled. God sees no reason to reconsider this matter. Even in that time of your preexistence, you were preloved. Predestined. The prelove of God brings with it a benefit: he has granted you a predestiny. To become exactly like Jesus Christ.

Indeed, God isn't mean. His decision to love us and his desire to give us a destiny are clear evidence of his love for us.

Perhaps one more passage from Romans will serve as proof of God's love for humanity. Consider the Himalaya Mountains. The Himalayas are the most majestic range of mountains found anywhere on our planet. Likewise, Romans 8 is one of the most beautiful depictions of God's love found anywhere in the Bible. If Romans 8 is the Himalayas, then verse 28 is Mount Everest. It's the high point of the high point. "We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 28).

The best gifts of God are free. He offers us a place in his family. He gives us his guidance. He offers us a destiny to become like Jesus. And he guarantees that every event will result in our benefit. Paul said it best when he boldly proclaimed, "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39).

Reflection

As you read through Romans 8 again, what other evidence do you see that highlights the truth that God isn't mean? In what other ways does he show his love to you?

1 Corinthians 13

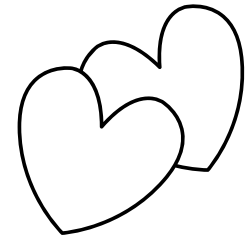
If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

37 | More Than A Feeling



Every time the word love appears in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul reflexively uses agape love. Agape love isn't based on attraction or natural affection or family connection or even emotion. Stripped of all selfishness, agape is the highest and purest form of love.

Genuine love isn't something complicated or sophisticated. Love, in fact, is quite simple.

Love is learning to say and mean certain words. If love is patient, then we learn to say, "I can wait, you go first." If love is kind, we teach ourselves to confess to others, "I'm sorry. I was wrong." If love knows no boasting or pride, then we strike the words "I told you so" from our vocabularies. If love isn't easily angered, then we develop the discipline to say nothing at all when we most want to retaliate.

Love is learning to say good things and mean them; love is also learning when to choose silence.

Love "does not keep a record of wrongs." If love keeps no record of wrongs, then it stands to reason that love likewise keeps no records of rights. Love doesn't keep a running tally of favors or sacrifices made for the purpose of holding another person in our permanent debt. To keep a record of all the rights we've done for someone else, only to use it later as a tool of manipulation or guilt, is far from agape love.

It's a helpful tool in Bible reading to notice repeated words and phrases. Typically these repetitions signal a main point in a particular passage. The NIV translation of 1 Corinthians 13:7 uses the word always four times: "always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." True love is on stranger to endurance. Love is sacrificial in its protection, optimistic in its trust, positive in its hope, and unflinching in its resolve. Far beyond mere emotion, love is a decision to will and work for someone's best interests—always.

This is agape love: to will and work for someone's best interest. Great, strong, and deep indeed.

Reflection

Reread 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Each time you encounter the word love, substitute the name of Jesus. Jesus is the perfect expression of God's love for humanity. Now reread these same verses, substituting your name for the word love. How does it sound? Is it true? Where do you need to allow Christ to help you improve in your practice of love for others?

Galatians 5

1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

2 Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you.

3 I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. 4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. 5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

7 You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8 This persuasion is not from him who calls you. 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump. 10 I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. 11 But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. 12 I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!

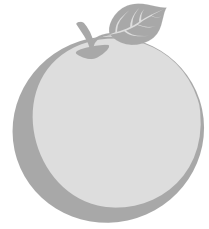
13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

38 | Can God Change Your Character?



Galatians is the angry letter of the New Testament. The apostle Paul, its author, was a passionate follower of Jesus and a bold leader in the early Christian community. Paul's teaching about the love of God was simple and direct. Paul used the word grace to describe God's act of initiating a relationship with humanity. And the term faith was used to describe our best reaction to the love of God. God reaches. We respond. The result is relationship.

God wants to produce something in your life. He's looking for fruit. You may attend church, join a community of people learning to follow Jesus, and even engage in service that improves the lives of others. All these activities are good and nice. Yet they're not the results God is looking for in a Christ follower's life. God wants to produce something more internal and external.

Galatians 5 details the character change the Holy Spirit will produce in the life of a Jesus follower when given permission: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." These nine character traits are the fruit of the Spirit.

Spiritual gifts must not be confused with spiritual fruit. We aren't expected to have all the gifts of the Spirit. Yet a follower of Jesus is expected to have all the fruit of the Spirit—no exceptions. Followers of Jesus can never say that God doesn't expect them to have love or joy or kindness.

The Holy Spirit is the only one who can instill self-control as a permanent part of our character. The same holds true for every fruit of the Spirit. And this may be the best insight of all. We can't produce any fruit by our own decision or will. That's why these character traits are known as the fruit of the Spirit. God's Spirit is the source and sustenance of any lasting change in our personalities as we follow the person of Jesus

Reflection

Are you still growing? Reread the characteristics that the Holy Spirit wants to produce in your life. Are you seeing more of these traits with each passing year? In each area of your relationships with God, others, and yourself, are you continuing the ascent? There is no letting up. There is no relaxing. There is no relenting. We provide the willingness, and the Spirit provides the results of a changed character.

James 1

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion:

Greetings.

2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

9 Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, 10 and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. 11 For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. 14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

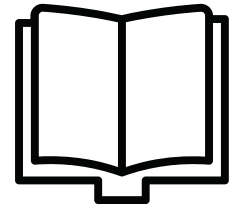
16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. 18 Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

26 If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. 27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

39 | Straight Talk



James is a short letter of only 5 chapters but comes rich with wisdom. It is a more intimate letter as it tracks his stream of consciousness flowing from point to point as if speaking to a loved one, rather than following the formal format of something like a school paper. James letter has been described as blunt and bold. It is here that he shares his truth in love.

James was the son of Mary and Joseph making him Jesus' half brother. Yet in his introduction in verse 1, he calls himself "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." James could have easily used his biological connection to identify himself with Jesus, but instead, he calls himself Jesus' servant. He saw this relationship as the more significant connection to Jesus.

James' letter is broken into two major topics: suffering and wisdom. We seem to have an abundance of one while always seem to lack the latter.

James takes the time to put our suffering in perspective. Usually in our suffering, people will tell us what we want to hear, but James tells us what we need to hear. That God is using our suffering to develop us spiritually so that we may be "mature and complete and lack nothing." This leads us to ask for what God wants us to get out of our period of suffering rather than asking for Him to get us out of our suffering. Through this experience, we gain wisdom that helps us to grow in spiritual maturity.

Wisdom always seems to be lacking when we need it most. It takes time and a lot of experience to develop and still we may not feel fully equipped. But don't be afraid, for in verses 5 and 6, we can ask God, who gives generously and without grudge. All we have to do is ask. Knowing this, in our moments where we feel we lack wisdom, all we have to do is ask and He will provide in His divine ways. So let us not be afraid but be at peace that He is on our side.

James goes on to list many other practical topics. Towards the end, James highlights the value of Scripture. First is Scripture challenges us to listen. Many people are great at talking, but how many are great listeners? The second is that we are not only to hear, or read, Scripture, but we must also follow what it says. Jesus has many challenging commands in the Bible. Once we hear them, we are to put them into practice. Once we are able to follow through on what we hear, we "will be blessed in what he does" (v25).

Reflection

If you are suffering, pray v4 over yourself. "And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing." Take heart knowing that God is in our suffering.

Alternatively, take some time to reflect on James 1. What are some practical ways you can obey what James is telling us? "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger" (v19). "Look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained from the world" (v27)

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1 John 3

1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

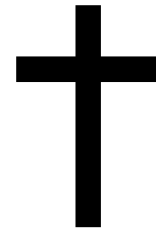
4 Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. 5 You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. 7 Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. 8 Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. 10 By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

11 For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12 We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. 13 Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

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

19 By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; 20 for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; 22 and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. 23 And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. 24 Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

40 | Becoming Your True Self



John was the youngest of Jesus' twelve disciples, supposedly just a teenager. He wrote his trilogy of letters, much after Jesus' earthly life, when he was an old man. John writes of God's great love (v1) for us as a promise of God.

In verse 2, we see God's promise broken down: He will appear, we will see Him, and we will be like Him. We know that Jesus was lifted into heaven at the Ascension. We also know He came back down in the form of the Holy Spirit. Yet His second coming is to be determined. For some it may seem like a scary time after reading Revelations. But we know that when we look upon Jesus' face when we see Him return, we will be reassured that everything is good in His hands. And once He comes again, we will be fully cleansed, purified, "just as he is pure" (v3). We will finally be free and complete in His presence and God will rejoice seeing us, His children, becoming exactly like His Son. Until then, we continue to become more and more in Christ's likeness.

When John talks of Jesus' arrival, it seems to deal with sin in our lives (v5 and v8-9). From this we see that Jesus takes sin very seriously. The question is, "do we take sin seriously enough?" We must be very intentional in removing sin from our lives. On the other side of this, we have guilt. It is all too often that we find ourselves holding onto our guilt too tightly, so much so that we can't let go and repent, heal, and be freed. But guilt isn't a bad thing. It is actually a gift of God. It helps us sense when we are in the wrong and that we need to change our ways. We need to repent in order to deal with the guilt and not let it linger.

Once sin is dealt with, and we have repented of it, we may let it go. We see that we can have confidence in God, if our hearts don't condemn us (v21). We see this very evidently that God did not send Jesus to condemn the world in John's gospel chapter 3 verse 16 "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." Let us take confidence in v20, that even when our heart condemns us, that God is greater. Come and bring your guilt before the Lord so that we can come to repent and be clean. That is how we grow in becoming more like Christ. That is how we find our true selves.

Reflection

Guilt is a state. Someone can be guilty yet not feel it, and someone can not be guilty, yet wrestle with the feelings that come along with guilt. When we repent, we are freed from this state and are allowed to walk away and let go of it.

What are some long-standing guilts that you hold onto today? Have you repented of them? If so, do you still hold onto this feeling of guilt, why? Share these guilty feelings with God, and let His grace wash over you, allowing you to be set free. "This is how we will know that we belong to the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows all things." (v19-20) Surrender these things to Him for he already knows them and conquered them through Jesus' resurrection.

adapted from Deron Spoo's "The Good Book"

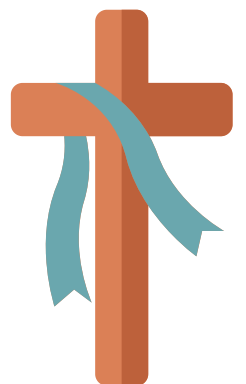
1 Corinthians 13

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.





The Greatest Love

In today's bible passage, we are reminded of what Godly love looks like. For some of us, we may think love looks like our parent's marriage or even a Disney movie! There are many things in this world that try to tell us what love is **but what is true love from God like?**

When we turn our Bible to 1 Corinthians 13, we learn that love is patient and kind. This kind of patience and kindness clearly doesn't come from us. It can only come from God who helps us to love in this way. Jesus is the perfect example of this kind of love. He has always been patient and kind to us. Even though we make mistakes and sin against Him, Jesus still chose to die on the cross for us. And the reason is quite simple, Jesus loves us so much.

Just as Jesus shows His patience and kindness to us,
let's share His love with those around us.
Remember, you don't have to do it alone!

Ask God to help you and to have His love overflow from your heart to others.

Reflection/Prayer

1. How would you describe love?

2. What does God say about love in 1 Corinthians 13?

3. Who is God calling you to love? Share with your family.

Prayer: "Dear God, Thank you for dying on the cross for our sins and for displaying what kindness and

patience look like. Jesus, can you help me to display your love in my life by how I love others?"