

# Bible Study on Love *4 lessons* *with questions*

This Bible study on love starts where the Bible does, with God's love for us, and moves outward: God is love in 1 John 4, what love looks like in 1 Corinthians 13, who our neighbor is in the parable of the Good Samaritan, and the hardest command of all in Luke 6, to love our enemies. Four lessons for a small group, a couples' study or your own reading.

Each lesson prints the passage from the Berean Standard Bible, gives the big idea, notes for the leader, questions to observe, understand and apply, a memory verse and a prayer. The apply questions are practical on purpose: love in the Bible is something you do, not only something you feel.

*We love because He first loved us.*

– 1 John 4:19 (BSB)

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## LESSON 1 OF 4

# God is love

Read 1 John 4:7-21

**The big idea:** Love comes from God, who showed it by sending His Son for our sins; because He first loved us, we love one another.

## Read

<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup> This is how God's love was revealed among us: God sent His one

and only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. <sup>10</sup> And love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God remains in us, and His love is perfected in us. <sup>13</sup> By this we know that we remain in Him, and He in us: He has given us of His Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> If anyone confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. <sup>16</sup> And we have come to know and believe the love that God has for us. God is love; whoever abides in love abides in God, and God in him. <sup>17</sup> In this way, love has been perfected among us, so that we may have confidence on the day of judgment; for in this world we are just like Him. <sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. The one who fears has not been perfected in love. <sup>19</sup> We love because He first loved us. <sup>20</sup> If anyone says, “I love God,” but hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup> And we have this commandment from Him: Whoever loves God must love his brother as well.

– 1 John 4:7-21 (BSB)

## Notes

John says “God is love,” and then he shows what he means: God “sent His one and only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him.” Love is defined by what God did, not by our feelings: “not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

Then John draws the line straight to us: “if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” He is blunt about the alternative. Whoever says “I love God” but hates his brother is a liar. Love for God and love for people cannot be separated. And love drives out fear, because it rests on God’s love, not our performance.

## Questions

**OBSERVE** What does the passage say?

1. Where does love come from, according to verse 7?
2. How did God show His love (vv. 9–10)?
3. What does John say about someone who claims to love God but hates his brother (v. 20)?

**UNDERSTAND** What does it mean?

1. Why does John define love by what God did, rather than by a feeling?
2. How does ‘perfect love’ drive out fear (v. 18)?
3. Why can’t we love God whom we have not seen while refusing to love people we have seen?

**APPLY** What will I do with it?

1. Who is the ‘brother’ you find hardest to love? What is one loving thing you could do for them?
2. Where does fear crowd out love in your life?
3. Thank God this week, every day, that He loved you first.

## Memory verse

*We love because He first loved us.*

– 1 John 4:19 (BSB)

## Pray

*Father, thank You that You loved me first and sent Your Son as the atoning sacrifice for my sins. Let Your love be perfected in me. Drive out my fear, and help me love the people I find hard to love, because You first loved me. Amen.*

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LESSON 2 OF 4

## What love does

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

**The big idea:** Without love even great gifts and sacrifices are worth nothing; love is patient, kind and selfless, and it bears, believes, hopes and endures.

## Read

<sup>1</sup> If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a ringing gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have absolute faith so as to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give all I possess to the poor and exult in the surrender of my body, but have not love, I gain nothing. <sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no account of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love takes no pleasure in evil, but rejoices in the truth. <sup>7</sup> It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

– 1 Corinthians 13:1-7 (BSB)

## Notes

Paul wrote these words to a church that was proud of its gifts and divided by its rivalries. He says that without love, impressive speech is noise, knowledge and faith are nothing, and even giving everything away gains nothing.

Then he describes love by what it does and does not do: patient, kind, not envious, not boastful, not proud, not rude, not self-seeking, not easily angered, keeping no account of wrongs. This is not a sentimental wedding reading; it is a portrait of how to treat difficult people. The chapter ends with the greatest of three: “faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of these is love” (13:13).

## Questions

**OBSERVE** What does the passage say?

1. What three things does Paul say are worthless without love (vv. 1–3)?
2. List everything love is, and everything love is not (vv. 4–6).
3. What four things does love do with ‘all things’ (v. 7)?

**UNDERSTAND** What does it mean?

1. Why would someone do impressive things without love?
2. What does it mean that love ‘keeps no account of wrongs’?
3. How does Jesus fit this description of love?

**APPLY** What will I do with it?

1. Read verses 4–7 again, putting your own name in place of ‘love’. Where does it stop being true?
2. Which one of these qualities do you most need at home this week?
3. Is there an ‘account of wrongs’ you are keeping? Ask God to help you close it.

## Memory verse

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

– 1 Corinthians 13:4 (BSB)

## Pray

*Lord, without love I am nothing. Make me patient and kind. Take away my envy, my boasting and my pride. Help me keep no account of wrongs, and teach me to bear, believe, hope and endure, the way You love me. Amen.*

# Who is my neighbor?

Read Luke 10:25-37

**The big idea:** Jesus answers ‘Who is my neighbor?’ with a story about a Samaritan who showed mercy, and tells us to go and do likewise.

## Read

<sup>25</sup> One day an expert in the law stood up to test Him. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” <sup>26</sup> “What is written in the Law?” Jesus replied. “How do you read it?” <sup>27</sup> He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’ and ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” <sup>28</sup> “You have answered correctly,” Jesus said. “Do this and you will live.” <sup>29</sup> But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” <sup>30</sup> Jesus took up this question and said, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> Now by chance a priest was going down the same road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So too, when a Levite came to that spot and saw him, he passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan on a journey came upon him, and when he saw him, he had compassion. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Take care of him,’ he said, ‘and on my return I will repay you for any additional expense.’ <sup>36</sup> Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” <sup>37</sup> “The one who showed him mercy,” replied the expert in the law. Then Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

– Luke 10:25-37 (BSB)

## Notes

An expert in the law asked Jesus about eternal life and summed up the law well: love God with everything, and love your neighbor as yourself. Then, “wanting to justify himself,” he asked, “And who is my neighbor?”

He was looking for a limit.

Jesus answered with a story. A priest and a Levite saw the wounded man and passed by on the other side. A Samaritan, someone the listeners would not have expected to be the hero, had compassion, bandaged his wounds, took him to an inn and paid for his care. Jesus turns the question around: not who qualifies as my neighbor, but whose neighbor will I be? “Go and do likewise.”

## Questions

**OBSERVE** What does the passage say?

1. What two commands did the expert in the law quote (v. 27)?
2. What did the priest and the Levite do? What did the Samaritan do (vv. 31–35)?
3. How did Jesus end the conversation (v. 37)?

**UNDERSTAND** What does it mean?

1. Why did the man ask ‘Who is my neighbor?’ What was he hoping to hear?
2. How does Jesus change the question by the end of the story?
3. What did the Samaritan’s mercy cost him?

**APPLY** What will I do with it?

1. Who in your life do you tend to pass by on the other side of the road?
2. What would it cost you to show mercy to someone this week? Do it.
3. Is there a group of people you find it hard to see as neighbors? Pray for them by name.

## Memory verse

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind.*

– Luke 10:27 (BSB)

## Pray

*Lord, I often look for the limits of love. Forgive me for passing by on the other side. Give me compassion like the Samaritan's, and the willingness to stop, help and pay the cost. Show me who needs a neighbor this week, and help me go and do likewise. Amen.*

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LESSON 4 OF 4

# Love your enemies

Read Luke 6:27-36

**The big idea:** Jesus calls His followers to love their enemies and do good to them, being merciful just as their Father is merciful.

## Read

<sup>27</sup> But to those of you who will listen, I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. <sup>29</sup> If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone takes your cloak, do not withhold your tunic as well. <sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what is yours, do not demand it back. <sup>31</sup> Do to others as you would have them do to you. <sup>32</sup> If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. <sup>33</sup> If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. <sup>34</sup> And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. <sup>35</sup> But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them, expecting nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. <sup>36</sup> Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

## Notes

This may be the hardest command Jesus gave: “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” Loving people who love us back is ordinary; “Even sinners love those who love them.” Jesus calls for a love that does not depend on the other person.

The reason is God Himself: “He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.” We were His enemies once, and He loved us. So Jesus ends, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” Loving an enemy does not mean pretending wrong is right or staying in danger. It means refusing to repay evil, praying for them and doing them good.

## Questions

**OBSERVE** What does the passage say?

1. List the four commands in verses 27–28.
2. What does Jesus say even sinners do (vv. 32–34)?
3. What reason does Jesus give for loving enemies (vv. 35–36)?

**UNDERSTAND** What does it mean?

1. Why is loving those who love us not enough for Jesus’ followers?
2. What does it mean that God is ‘kind to the ungrateful and wicked’?
3. What is the difference between loving an enemy and trusting them?

**APPLY** What will I do with it?

1. Who is hardest for you to love? Pray for them by name every day this week.
2. What is one good thing you could do for someone who has mistreated you?
3. How does remembering God’s mercy to you change how you see your enemy?

## Memory verse

*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

– Luke 6:36 (BSB)

## Pray

*Father, You are kind to the ungrateful and wicked, and You were kind to me. I bring You the people I find hardest to love. Bless them, do them good, and help me pray for them and refuse to repay evil. Make me merciful, as You are merciful. Amen.*

## Tips for leading this study

**Begin with God's love.** Lesson 1 is the foundation. People love others best when they know they are loved.

**Be careful with lesson 4.** Some in your group may have been seriously hurt. Make clear that loving an enemy does not mean staying in danger or excusing abuse.

**Make it practical.** End each lesson with one concrete act of love for the week, and ask about it next time.

**Read 1 Corinthians 13 with names.** Have each person read verses 4–7 with Jesus' name in place of love, then with their own.

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Bible Study on Forgiveness • 4 lessons

Bible Study on Identity in Christ • 4 lessons

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1 Corinthians 13, a prayer for love

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## Questions