

**Friday: Remember...love was shown...**

**Read:** Romans 5:6-8 <sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For one will scarcely die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die – <sup>8</sup> but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

<p><b>Reflect:</b> Here we have it again...more proof God loves us. Now I realize some may want to confine these verses in Romans to those who are currently Christians. Granted, the “we” of verse six are followers of Jesus in Rome (cf. Rom1:7). Yet we must not forget John 3:16, and how “the world” in that gospel means those who do not (yet) believe in God...which includes <u>everyone</u> at some point.</p> <p>The word “weak” indicates we were powerless and helpless while caught in our sin. The word “ungodly” means we were in a state of opposition to God, totally undeserving of His love and forgiveness.</p> <p>A great question for anyone (thinking specifically of a Christian) who doubts whether or not God loves them; “Why would God stop loving you just because of your most recent sin when He loved you enough to send Jesus to die for you while you were a ‘sinner’?” Was not the act of Jesus dying for the “ungodly” in order to make a (new) covenant relationship with God possible much greater (dare we say unlikely) than the act of God loving one who is now His child? Yes, we must remember we were not righteous when God (first) loved us...</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> Do you <u>really</u> believe God loves you? How has that belief changed you?</p> <p>Who needs to know God loves them? Spend time in prayer for them.</p> <p>Read Romans 8 – especially vs31-39.</p>
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**Pray:** Pray for King Solomon Christian Service Camp and the National Missionary Convention; missions New Life supports. Pray for Bob Griffin and Larry Hayes, New Life’s elders; pray they will continue to be shaped by God’s love. Pray for protection from sin and strength during times of testing.

**Saturday: Remember...who is called...**

**Read:** Matthew 9:13 <sup>13</sup> Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

<p><b>Reflect:</b> Perhaps if we took these words of Jesus seriously we would never be able to build a large enough building for all those who would come to worship our Awesome God (i.e., praise Him in response for what He has done). Perhaps we would have to revert to using a tent and we would not care if it was hot or cold... Perhaps we would have to meet in shifts at White Auditorium and we would not care if we had to spend the next two hours of the afternoon cleaning it up... Perhaps...</p> <p>Yet I fear if these words were taken seriously, some who “go to church” on Sunday mornings would not show up with the large crowd. Why? We know apart from Jesus’ blood no one is righteous. Yet sadly (at times) it seems Christians (just like the Pharisees in Matthew) can think they are righteous on their own account. Often this is based on what they “don’t do,” which is in stark contrast to Jesus’ words (and the OT context of the quote) where He focuses on what they <u>should</u> do.</p> <p>Yep, if Jesus was picking kids on a playground for a game of kickball (or whatever) it seems He would start with the slow, non-agile, unable to catch, etc. This is not to say He would exclude the superstar athletes...but it is to say those superstar athletes will keep themselves off His team if they do not realize God acted first...</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> Does your sin ever get you really down? Can you take comfort in trusting God still loves you?</p> <p>Do you have a tendency to think of yourself as righteous? What should you do about that?</p>
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**Pray:** Pray for Strong Tower Ministries and LCREF; missions New Life supports. Pray for Ed Asbury, Keith Krause, and Mike Haag, deacons at New Life; pray they will continue to desire mercy over sacrifice. Pray for our worship tomorrow at the Church Building. Thank God for desiring all sinners to come to Him.

# We All Want Love...

February 14 – 20

- The following definitions of “love” come from dictionary.com:
- 1) a profoundly tender, passionate affection for another person.
  - 2) a feeling of warm personal attachment or deep affection, as for a parent, child, or friend.
  - 3) sexual passion or desire.
  - 6) a love affair; an intensely amorous incident; amour.
  - 7) sexual intercourse; copulation.
  - 11) the object or thing so liked: The theater was her great love.

Hmmm, no wonder people struggle so much with understanding love. Not until we get to definition 12 does God enter the picture:

- 12) the benevolent affection of God for His creatures, or the reverent affection due from them to God.

Yet it is quickly followed by:

- 13) Chiefly Tennis. a score of zero; nothing.

If the score of zero by one person persisted in a game of Ping Pong (Table Tennis) to the point of 11 – 0, it would be a “skunk.” We all know skunks stink. That is basically what I think of the world’s view of love...it stinks. What the world touts as love is (most frequently) a variety of things...

- like “lust” in the form of oogling over a person of the opposite sex
- like “infatuation” in which you cannot stop thinking about the person who is the object of your lust
- like a “quid-pro-quo” kind of relationship in which one is loved as long as they meet a certain criteria

Hmmmm, no wonder God’s love is so hard to grasp. If we do not think we are attractive, view ourselves as out of sight = out of mind to others (e.g., the world would be better off without me), and continue to struggle with sin – no wonder we struggle with the fact of God loving us.

Paradoxically it seems many Christians have a sort of “love-hate” relationship with God. There are times when we long for Him. We want to know He is “here” and that He “cares” for us. Yet there are other times when we want to push Him away – after all “Who could really love me?” and “I failed Him again!” etc.

- Does that tension sound/feel at least vaguely familiar? Let me ask you this, “Do you think God only loves you when you are ‘doing’ something for Him?”

Maybe we should tweak a suggested prayer from last week’s insert (i.e., “Father, I am Yours, and I trust You.”) to, “Father, I am Yours, and I trust You love me.”

**Monday: Remember...Jesus loves us, which means...**

**Read:** Revelation 1:4-6 <sup>4</sup> John to the seven churches that are in Asia; Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, <sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood <sup>6</sup> and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

<p><b>Reflect:</b> “Jesus loves me this I know; for the Bible tells me so...” What powerful words we sang yesterday. Those same words are repeated here in Revelation (and taken a step further); Jesus loves us, has freed us, and made us to be servants of God...for His glory. If only we would live as if this is true.</p> <p>Unfortunately it seems many Christians live in the “reality” of what the King James Version says about this passage. In verse five the KJV says “unto him that <u>loved</u> us...” I realize it may not look like much, but the shift from a past tense of “loved” to the present tense of “loves” is enormous (trust me, “loves” is the better translation from better manuscripts; if you want you can ask me and I will explain it – hopefully briefly).</p> <p>The reality of what is said here in Revelation is powerful. The “loves” of verse five is in a present, ongoing tense. In other words Jesus loves you now...and now...and now...and (you guessed it). We trust this to be true...</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> If think only Jesus loves you, read Col1:15 and Heb1:3. God loves you too. ☺</p> <p>What was most meaningful to you from the worship service yesterday? Sit and ponder it for at least 5 minutes. Thank God for it.</p>
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**Pray:** Pray for Ryan Nelson and “33 Church” in Olathe; he is the latest “church planter” hired by the CEA. Thank God for our time of worship together yesterday at the Church Building. Thank God for the blood of Jesus. Continue to pray for workers in God’s Kingdom (Mt9:36-38).

**Tuesday: Remember...God is trustworthy...**

**Read:** Isaiah 30:15-18 <sup>15</sup> For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.” But you were unwilling, <sup>16</sup> and you said, “No! We will flee upon horses”... <sup>17</sup> A thousand shall flee at the threat of one...The Lord Will Be Gracious <sup>18</sup> Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you...blessed are all those who wait for him.

<p><b>Reflect:</b> It is doubtful we would have used the same words to write v15 if it would have been up to us. Based on our actions it seems we would have preferred words like “pressing on” (for returning) and “gutting it out” (for rest); then “adrenaline” (for quietness) and “logic” (for trust).</p> <p>The background of the text is God beckoning Israel to return to Him in order to be saved from their enemies. Israel’s solution was to flee to Egypt (v16). God was calling them to trust in Him...but their instincts said “we need to do it ourselves.” We are not much different. How often, when faced with difficulties in life, do we try harder to fix them in our own strength instead of returning (cf. repenting) to God? How often do we convince ourselves of reasons why God is upset with us instead of trusting He loves us? Thankfully God is patient with us.</p> <p>It seems we could obviously make things much easier on ourselves if we immediately (and consistently) turned to Him – first. Then we could have “quietness” – the absence of panic and restlessness. Wow...that is a nice thought huh? Remember – He has always acted first...</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> Verse 17 is a complete reversal of God’s blessing (e.g., Josh23:10). Yet despite disobedience God still longs to be gracious (Isa30:18).</p> <p>Are you facing an issue in life where your efforts are consistently not producing godly results? Have you faced this in the past? What else can be done?</p>
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**Pray:** Pray for God to continually be at work at LCS, MCC, and OCC; missions we support. Pray for a change of heart so you will consistently turn to God in trust. Continue to pray for God’s people to have boldness to speak for Him (Acts4:29).

**Wednesday: Remember...Who defines love...**

**Read:** 1 John 4:8,16 <sup>8</sup> ...God is love...<sup>16</sup>...God is love...

<p><b>Reflect:</b> A quick review of the cover to this devotional guide is sufficient to show how culture and Scripture do not complement each other. Yet this is nothing new. After all, the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden can be summarized as their desire to define for themselves what was right and wrong (instead of allowing God to define it). Therefore, if a person wants to define love in terms of what is really lust (following Adam and Eve’s example)...they are free to do so. And they are also free to be wrong.</p> <p>Last week (as well as on Tuesday) the devotional guide focused on the issue of trust. God is trustworthy – and so is His word. This is foundational because we live among people desperate for love. Yet with the variety of views concerning what love is, more often than not the One in Whom love originates is lost in the shuffle (apparently since He cannot be seen our eyes are drawn towards cars, the opposite sex, food, money, etc.).</p> <p>Love is not something God shows towards you when He remembers. Love is not something that gives God butterflies in His stomach when He thinks of someone else. No, in His essence God is love. He defines it because He <u>is</u> It. All He does is loving; accepting this requires trust (e.g., 1Jn4:9; Heb12:5ff).</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> Since God is love, what are some implications for Christians (e.g., 1Jn4:7ff)?</p> <p>Do you remember when you first realized God loved you? Will you share that with us?</p> <p>Do you still have times when you wonder if God loves you? Will you share them?</p>
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**Pray:** Pray for Shiloh Home of Hope and Emporia Christian Schools. Thank God for the tangible ways He has shown love to you recently (include in this the cross because it is certainly a BIG way in which He has done this). Continue to pray for God’s Word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1).

**Thursday: Remember...we still have to trust...**

**Read:** Ephesians 3:14-21 <sup>14</sup> ... I bow my knees before the Father...<sup>16</sup> that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit...<sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend... the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge...<sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think...

<p><b>Reflect:</b> Have you ever been in a conversation with someone who frequently got off on tangents? Interesting and worthwhile tangents, but tangents nonetheless? (And yes, if you have talked to me you have, more than likely, experienced this...at least the tangents – I hope they are interesting...at least worthwhile.)</p> <p>In verse fourteen Paul finally gets around to praying what he started in chapter one verse 15 and then again in chapter three verse one. What kept veering Paul off course? God’s love and His work in the world.</p> <p>Note what Paul says in verse 19 – he wants us to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge. To “know” something means to experience it in an intimate way. In other words, head knowledge falls far short of this experiential knowledge. The word for “surpasses” is also used in 1:19 and 2:7 where it is translated as “immeasurable.” We will never exhaustively know the love of Christ...but we can know (and appreciate it) more each day...through our faith (i.e., trust).</p>	<p><b>Respond:</b> Do you think an application of v20 is for people to realize, to accept, to “know” God loves them? If so, who are some you need to pray will “know” this marvelous truth?</p> <p>Read Matthew 7:24-27; verse 25 (had been founded) uses the same word for “grounded” in Eph3:17. What will one day happen if we do not “know” God’s love for us?</p>
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**Pray:** Pray for the ministry of Cookson Hills (a Christian Children’s home and mission New Life supports). Pray this prayer of Paul for yourself and your family. Pray for Brent McCrory, the preaching minister at New Life; pray he will continue to be shaped by this prayer. Continue to pray for open doors to share God’s Word (Col4:2-6).