

THE LOVE OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

God's love is boundless; it is beyond description. It reaches to the highest heaven and stoops to the lowest hell. His love extends as far as the east is from the west, and envelopes all that lies between. The words of finite¹ man will always fall short in defining the love of the infinite God. His love draws us into a father-child relationship. He desires that we confidently call Him *Abba* (Daddy) and He tenderly responds. The extraordinary thing about God's love is that not only is His love like no other, but that He *is* love. To know God's love is to know Him, and to know God is to be irresistibly drawn to Him, *I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you* (Jeremiah 31:3). Everything He does flows from His love. All that we experience in this life is filtered through God's boundless love; for we are His dear children.

THEME SCRIPTURE

God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him (I John 4:16b).

¹ finite: having definable limits; restricted, not infinite; having a limited nature or existence.

SECTION I – Definitions

1. WRITE your own definition of *love*. _____

Dictionary Definition

The dictionary defines *love* as a strong constant affection or liking for someone or something; a passionate affection of one person for another; adoration, infatuation, romantic relationship, warm attachment, devotion.

Biblical Definitions

The Hebrew word for God's love is *ahab* to have affection for. The extensive definition includes the following: desire, longing for, delight, God's love toward man, human love toward God, a passionate love, act of being a friend, human love for objects such as food, drink, sleep, wisdom.

The Greek word for God's love is *agape*, the sacrificial, long-suffering love of God towards an entirely unworthy people. It is free, constant, unrevoked, uncaused, undeserved.

God is love. He pours out His love for the highest good of the recipient of His love. God's love is distinguished from *eros* (sexual love), *phileo* (brotherly love), and *storge* (family love), in that *agape* is sacrificial and entirely selfless.

Scripture Descriptions

2. READ the following Scriptures that demonstrate God's love. UNDERLINE any words or phrases that describe God's love.

Jeremiah 31:3 *I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn You.*

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

John 15:9 *As the Father loved Me [Jesus], I also have loved you; abide in My love.*

Romans 5:8 *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Ephesians 2:4, 5 *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).*

I John 4:7, 8 *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

I John 4:9, 10 *In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His Only Begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation² for our sins.*

3. What did you learn about God’s love from these Scriptures? _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

PERSONAL

How has what you have learned impacted your life? _____

SECTION II – The Expression of God’s Love

READ Luke 1:26-56.

READ the accounts of Jesus’ birth. MEDITATE on how God demonstrated His love to the world in that He humbled Himself, *made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant³ and coming in the likeness of man* (Philippians 2:7), so that we could identify ourselves with Him. CONSIDER the love of God toward Joseph and Mary as you study the course of events that led up to Jesus’ birth.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was well acquainted with God’s love. God’s love so captured all her attention that she did not dwell on other’s misconception of her divinely ordered circumstance.

Christ’s Birth Announced

READ Luke 1:26-38.

1. What happened in the six month after Mary’s cousin Elizabeth had conceived (v. 26)? _____

² *propitiation* – Greek *hilasmos* atonement: the sacrifice that atones (covers) man’s sins; Jesus was the sacrifice that bore the wrath of God for sinful man through His death on the cross.

³ *bondservant* – Greek *doulos* a slave: bondman; one who gives himself up to another’s will.

2. What is written about Mary and Joseph (v. 27)? _____ 6

3. What loving declarations did the angel Gabriel make to Mary (vv. 28, 29)? _____

What was her reaction? _____

4. What did the archangel Gabriel announce to Mary (v. 30)? _____

5. What did he foretell about JESUS (vv. 31-33)? _____

6. What was Mary's question to the heavenly messenger (vv. 34, 35)? _____

How was Mary to conceive the *Holy One, Son of God*? _____

7. The angel went on to inform her that Elizabeth, her relative (cousin), though barren had conceived in her old age. How did he also encourage Mary (vv. 36, 37)?

⁴ Gabriel – Hebrew warrior of God: archangel; one of the angel princes; chief of the angels; angel of God used as a messenger to mankind, i.e. Daniel (Daniel 8:16, 9:21) and Zachariah (Luke 1:19).

⁵ Nazareth – Greek the guarded one: ordinary residence and home town of Christ.

⁶ betrothed – Greek *muesteuo* espoused: to be promised in marriage.

⁷ know: Jewish idiom for the sexual union between a man and a woman; a virgin.

In His divine love toward sinful man, God chose a humble young woman to give birth to His Son that He might die for the sins of the world.

8. WRITE what Mary humbly responded as she submitted to God's will (v. 38)? _____

PERSONAL

How has the love of God so captured your attention that you are willing to submit to His will for your life despite the consequences you might face?

SECTION III – The Incarnation⁸ of Christ

READ Matthew 1:18-25.

1. After God's divine announcement to Mary through the archangel Gabriel what came to pass (v. 18)? _____

2. What kind of man did God, in His love, choose to be the earthly father to His Beloved Son (v. 19a)? _____

3. Wanting to protect Mary what did Joseph want to do (v. 19b)? _____

4. Who did God send to Joseph? How did he comfort and instruct Joseph (vv. 20, 21)? _____

⁸ Incarnation: the union of Divinity with humanity in Jesus Christ.

What was Joseph to call God's Son? Why? _____⁹

5. What had God declared through the prophet in Isaiah 7:14 (vv. 22, 23)? _____

God's eternal plan for man is expressed in His name *Immanuel* which means God with us.

6. How did Joseph obey the divine instruction from the LORD (vv. 24, 25)? _____

PERSONAL

What does Immanuel personally mean to you? _____

PERSONAL

God demonstrated His love to Joseph and Mary in a personal way as He carried out His eternal plan of salvation for mankind. How has God used you to carry out His loving plan of salvation?

⁹ Jesus – Greek *Iesous*: transliteration of the Hebrew Joshua meaning Jehovah is Salvation; Savior; Christ personal name given to Him at His incarnation.

SECTION IV – Scriptural References of God’s Love

Just as God loves us, He longs for us to love Him. The promises to those who love God are endless.

1. LOOK-UP the following Scriptures, and WRITE how God rewards those who love Him.

Example: Deuteronomy 7:9 *God . . . keeps His covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.*

Psalm 5:11c, 12 _____

Psalm 31:23 _____

Psalm 91:14-16 _____

Psalm 145:20a _____

James 1:12 _____

James 2:5 _____

In God’s Word we are commanded to demonstrate God’s love which is sacrificial, deep, constant, and selfless to others. This way God’s love is perfected in us.

2. MATCH UP the following statements with their corresponding Scriptures. PONDER whom you are to love.

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| _____ you are to love the Lord your God | a. Deuteronomy 10:19 |
| _____ you are to love your neighbor | b. Leviticus 19:18 |
| _____ you are to love strangers | c. Matthew 5:44 |
| _____ you are to love one another | d. Deuteronomy 6:5 |
| _____ you are to love your enemies | e. I John 4:7 |

PERSONAL

God commands us to love one another, what has kept you from loving others? _____

God chastens those that He loves. The Scriptures say that not only is He *love*, but also that He is holy. *Be ye holy, for I am Holy* (I Peter 1:16 - NKJV). Therefore God's love is governed by His holiness. It is always pure and not mixed with sentimentality. He loves the sinner, but cannot tolerate sin. When He chastises His children, the motivation behind it is His pure, holy love.

3. WRITE what you can learn from the following verses that deal with God's chastening love.

Deuteronomy 8:5 _____

Proverbs 3:11, 12 _____

Hebrews 12:5-11 _____

What does God's chastening accomplish in us (v. 11)? _____

THEME SCRIPTURE

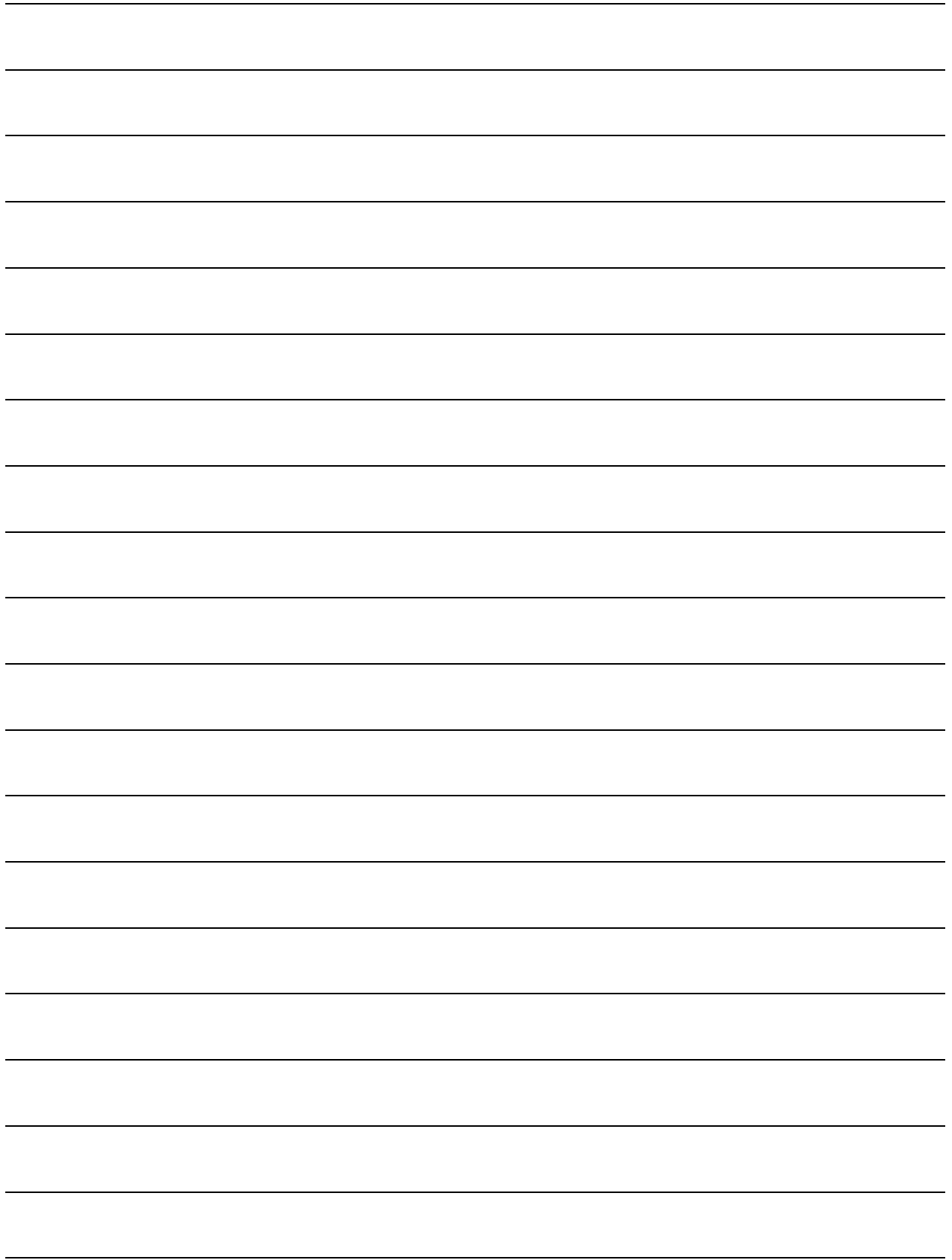
WRITE the THEME SCRIPTURE.

_____ (I John 4:16b).

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,
that whoever believes in Him should not perish
but have everlasting life.*

John 3:16

NOTES: _____



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Due to the holy nature of God, the first letter of all references to Him,
His holy name, and His Word have been capitalized.

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