

Th131 God's Plan

Lesson Th131-5 God Is Love

In our first four lessons we learned that God is eternal, that God is light, that God is holy, and that God is all powerful. In this lesson we will learn that God is love.

In a letter to the early church the Apostle John wrote a most amazing statement. He said that God is love (1John 4:16). What makes this statement so remarkable is that love describes the very essence of God. It is not that God can love, or that God has love, but rather, God IS love. And since God is perfect, we know that His love must be perfect also.

Jesus also taught us about love. When asked what God's greatest commandment was, Jesus said that to love God was the greatest command. He then said to love your neighbor as yourself was the second. He later gave His disciples a new command. Jesus commanded them to love one another. In these three commands to love, the entire law of God is complete. We are to love God, love the lost, that is those who are not of our family, and finally, we are to love one another, that is, we are to love our fellow Christians.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth and taught them about the nature of true love. He said that love is patient, and humble, and not selfish but rather generous. Love does not take offense when offended. Love rejoices in good behavior and in truth. Love willingly carries burdens, believes and hopes for good, and perseveres (1Cor 13:4-7).

The Apostle John wrote that God demonstrated this kind of love. He wrote, "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God" (1John 3:1).

Here is a story that John heard Jesus tell about the love of a father for his children (Luke 15:11-27).

There was a man who had two sons. He was a man of wealth who had much livestock as well as lands that had been handed down from father to son for many generations. Now the younger son came to his father with a request. He was tired of living in a small village and working hard. He wanted his inheritance now. This was an unheard of request. The young son was insulting his father. It would be as if he were saying that he wished his father was dead! The elder brother became angry. By asking the father for his share of the inheritance the younger brother was causing part of the family land to be sold and some of the flocks to be sold too.

But the father loved his sons. He would not force them to obey his will, but would allow them to make their own choices, even if those choices brought about great sorrow. So the father gave his younger son his share of the family estate.

Now the young man wasted no time in gathering together his wealth and leaving the small rural village of his family. He journeyed to a distant land, far away from his family and away from everyone who loved him.

He arrived as a stranger in a large city. It was obvious that he was from the country. His clothes and manners gave him away. But he did have wealth and soon he was spending his inheritance on all of the pleasures the big city had to offer. His old clothes were replaced with new clothes that were more in keeping with a man of his wealth. He was surrounded by everything new, including foreign gods in temples that no Jewish man should enter.

The young man made friends with other young men of the city who were more than willing to help him spend his money on the violent entertainment there.

But money that is spent on wine, rich foods, fine clothing and immoral friends soon runs out. And the day came when the young man had spent his entire inheritance. His money was gone and all of his friends were gone with it. Alone, and without money, the young man found himself in trouble. Soon he had nothing left but the clothes on his back.

And then the land went into a time of famine. His stomach rumbling with hunger, he attached himself to one of the farmers in the land and was given the job of feeding pigs. Can you imagine this young man's despair? He was a Jew. The Jewish law taught that pigs were unclean animals. No Jew would own pigs let alone touch them. But the young man had reached the very bottom.

He is so hungry he wants to eat the food that the pigs are eating. As he feeds the pigs his mind wanders back to his father's home. All of his father's servants have plenty of food to eat. And in that moment the young man makes a decision. He will return home and humble himself to his father. He will declare that he is not worthy to be called his father's son, but that he wants to become a servant in his father's house. And so he begins the long journey home.

How the father had grieved for his lost son! Each day he had kept watch hoping that his son would return to him. Can you imagine how angry the people of the village were when the young man came home? He had not only rejected his father, but had rejected them as well! But the father saw his son a long way off and ran to him. This was an embarrassing thing to do. He was a man of importance in the village and people of his stature just did not run!

The father's love for his son was so great that he was willing to embarrass himself and turn his son's shame upon himself. The young man cried out to his father and said, "Father, I am not worthy to be called your son!"

But the father embraced his son with deep love and called to his servants to get a new robe for his son and to place a ring upon his finger and sandals on his feet. He then commanded that a great celebration would be held. The fattened calf was to be slain and prepared for the party. Everyone in the village would be invited, for his son who was lost had come home.

Now while the villagers enjoyed the celebration the man's eldest son came in from working in the fields. He was shocked to hear that his younger brother had returned home in poverty and that his loving father, rather than punishing him for his foolishness, had instead butchered the fattened calf and was throwing him a celebration!

This parable of Jesus demonstrates God's love for mankind. He uses the example of the powerful love that a father has for his children to demonstrate God's love for mankind. This love is capable of great forgiveness when someone humbly returns to God.

This lesson is **important** because it teaches us that God is love. The greatest command He has given is to love God. Second is to love our neighbors as ourselves, and third is to love one another as Christians.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God, as a loving heavenly father, will forgive anyone who comes to Him and repents of their sins.

To **review** this lesson, answer the following questions:

1. We have learned various aspects of God's nature. John taught us that God is love. What was the other aspect of God's nature that the apostle John taught us? [Pause]
A. If you said that John taught us that God is love, you are right.
2. Jesus told a parable about a father and two sons. What did the younger son ask for? [Pause]
A. If you said that the younger son asked for his inheritance, you are correct.
3. In the parable of the father and two sons, the younger son spent his entire inheritance in wild living in a distant city. What did the father do when this son returned home? [Pause]
A. If you said that the father forgave him and held a celebration in his honor, you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to replay this lesson two or three times until you can repeat the story accurately and quote the verse, "God is love" (First John 4:16).

Then, find someone and tell them the story of the father who had two sons. Teach them the verse you have learned and describe to that person one way you have experienced God's love in your life.