

Jesus Christ Shows Us the Love of God

~Lesson Five~

We try to understand God in human terms, but we fall short of who God really is when we do this. Romans 1 tells us God can be seen in His creation. Yet God is so much more than His creation. God is God, so we can't put Him into a box that our human reasoning invents. Isaiah 40 makes it clear we can't compare God to us or to any of His creation. Isaiah goes on to say, God's power, His understanding, His knowledge, His justice and so on are far beyond ours.

I know we struggle with understanding God's love, because His love is so different from ours. Our love is permeated with conditions and selfishness, and God's isn't. God's love is unconditional and unselfish. His love doesn't depend on what a person does or who she is, but on Him loving you.

You might be thinking, "Can any of us really comprehend God and His love?" Praise the Lord it is possible, but only through Jesus Christ! John 1:18 tells us, it is Jesus Christ who has explained God to us.

No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. John 1:18 (NASB)

In Exodus and in other scriptures, we are told that no one has seen God the Father on this earth. Yet, John the Apostle in his gospel (the book of John), very plainly teaches that Jesus has revealed God to us, because He is God in bodily form or flesh. Jesus Himself said clearly in John 14:9, "he who has seen Me has seen the Father." We can know God (even physically touch Him) through Jesus Christ. If Jesus reveals God to us, what should we be doing? Of course, we should be learning about Jesus from God's Word, and this week we will do just that. We will look at how Jesus has revealed God's love and forgiveness. In days 2 - 5 we will discuss, how God's love is shown to us by what Jesus gave up by becoming Man and living among us and dying for us.

Day One We are Completely and Fully Forgiven and Loved in Jesus Christ

God knew we were powerless to earn His forgiveness. He knew our sin and its consequences could be taken care of only through His mercy, so He sent Jesus Christ to this earth to die for us (Ephesians 2:1-9). He did this so He could show us His love and forgiveness instead of His wrath.

If you have believed that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins, you are a Christian and all your sins are forgiven! Do you believe all your sins are completely forgiven through Jesus Christ? There have been a few sins in my life that I struggle with believing God would forgive, because they seem so dreadful to me. I know this is because of a wrong mindset on my part and it has nothing to do with God! God forgives us because of what Jesus Christ did, not because of what we have done (1 John 4:10). Remember, all sin is the same to God, and He died for all our sins, not a select few.

All of our sins are forgiven through Jesus, but as Christians it is important we confess our sins that the Holy Spirit points out to us. Remember what 1 John 1:9 tells you: Agree with God about your sin, then trust you are forgiven.

1. **Read Psalms 103:1-14, Isaiah 53:4-6, 10-12, Matthew 1:21, Acts 10:43, Colossians 1:13-14, and Revelation 1:5b** and then explain in your own words why and how God forgave your sins.
2. Sometimes I *feel* I am not deserving of His love and forgiveness. Can you relate? As women we need to remember we have many feelings, and some are very deceiving! Our emotions can take us on roller coaster rides. To battle your wrong feelings, you need to trust in what God says, even though your feelings are telling you otherwise. You need to also keep in mind that God doesn't lie like we do! So, when He says, "your sins are forgiven and you are loved," you can trust in His statement! When you allow God's Word to rule your mind then when your emotions say, "God doesn't love me," or "God won't forgive me," then your mind can say, "Oh yes, look at what God's Word says!" (Just to make you aware - our thinking changes first but our feelings may take a while to catch up with our new mindset.)
3. God's Word will transform our wrong mindset or thinking. **Read Romans 12:2, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and Hebrews 4:12.**

To encourage you, God does understand all our doubts and struggles, and still loves us very much in spite of them. However, you need to remember (me too), if you don't believe God when He says something (like He loves you), you are calling Him a liar. Ouch! I know that's a heavy statement, but it is a true one.

Numbers 23, through Moses, God makes it very clear that He doesn't lie and that what He says to us is the truth.

God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? Numbers 23:19 (NASB)

Days Two and Three Jesus, Who is God, Became Man too!

Jesus Christ, who is the God of the universe became man so He could die for you and me. This is sacrificial love, or what the New Testament Greek would call *agape* love! (If you remember from lesson 1, *agape* means unselfish, unconditional and sacrificial love.) The passage of scripture that to me best sums up the sacrificial love of God is Philippians 2:6-8.

...who, although He [Jesus] existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (NASB)

If you truly come to grasp the heart meaning of this passage it will help you to greatly understand how much God loves you!

I am going to break up Philippians 2:6-8 into three phrases and talk about them so you will more easily gain insight from them:

Phrase 1- "who, although He existed in the form of God"

The Greek word *form* refers to the outward expression which a person gives of his inmost nature. In other words, *form* means nature and character, not shape, as we would think. This phrase means Jesus had the very nature and very character of God. Let's reason this out a bit. Only you have your nature and your character so only you are you. Jesus has God's nature and character, so He is God.

1. **Read John 14:7-11.** What do these verses say about Jesus?

Jesus Christ is God and has all of the characteristics that God has. We are going to cover several characteristics here.

Jesus is Sovereign just like God which means He is the supreme ruler of the universe

1. **Read about Jesus being Sovereign from Isaiah 43:10-13 also Titus 3:4-7, Revelation 5:6-14 and Revelation 19:7-16.** Write down any insights and applications the Spirit is giving you from these verses.

Jesus is eternal just like God, which means He is without beginning or end.

1. **Read about Jesus being eternal in Isaiah 9:6-7, Hebrews 13:8 and Revelation 22:1-5.** Write down any insights and applications the Spirit is giving you from these verses.

Jesus is Self-existent just like God; LORD, I AM God's formal names, describe His self-existence.

1. In Exodus 3, God remarkably tells Moses His formal name - I AM WHO I AM, or it could be translated, I am He Who exists. I AM is closely related to God's personal name Yahweh (Hebrew). In English Bibles the word LORD (in all capitals) is Yahweh, and is used over 6,000 times in the Old Testament. Both LORD and I AM emphasize God's self-existence. Jesus is called LORD and I AM in places in the Bible. Several times in John 8, Jesus calls Himself, "I am". **Read Exodus 3:1-15, Isaiah 9:6-7, Jeremiah 23:5-6, John 8:24, 28, 58.** Write down any insights and applications the Spirit is giving you from these verses.

Phrase 2 – “did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself”

The word *emptied* in the Greek means - to empty oneself, to divest (strip) oneself of rightful dignity by descending to an inferior condition, to abase (humiliate) oneself. This phrase means Jesus willingly stripped Himself of His self-interests, not His deity, when He was on this earth. It also means He let go of His rights as God, and willingly allowed Himself to be humiliated while on this earth.

Daniel 4:34b-35 beautifully highlights what privileges, power and sovereignty God has.

...I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What hast Thou done?' (NASB)

When we compare these verses with Who Jesus is, and that He laid aside His rights as God, and willingly allowed Himself to be humiliated for us, we start understanding the love that God has for us.

I try my best not to get myself in a humiliating situation. However Jesus, because He loves you and me so very much, allowed Himself to be humiliated for us when He was on this earth. I don't know about you, but the thought that Jesus was willing to be humiliated for me touches my heart so much! It makes me want to love Him. How about you?

Phrase 3 – “taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross”

Paul uses the same word *form* again in this phrase “*taking the form of a bond-servant*”. The word *form* means the same thing as above: When Jesus took on the new inmost nature of a Man at His incarnation, His outward expression as a Man was that of a servant. Paul wanted us to know that Jesus had the nature and character of a servant on this earth as well. We are told, Jesus was in our *likeness*, but we need to understand *likeness* in the Greek has a meaning of similarity with differences. The difference is pretty obvious - He is God and we aren't and we will never be God.

Some people think Jesus was just kinda like God on this earth. However, from Philippians 2 and many other scriptures it is plain Jesus was and is God. There is no way God could become ungod for a while, because God cannot be any less than who He is (Hebrew 13:8).

Some people think that Jesus was a pseudo man. However, scripture is very clear that He became Man on this earth so He could die in our place (Matthew 1:20-23, Hebrews 2:14). Jesus also lived on this earth so He could experience personally all that you experience, so He could sympathize and care for you.

Therefore, He (Jesus) had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted... For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 2:17-18 and 4:15-16 (NASB)

What did Jesus do as God, to become Man? This is a complex question we could speculate about until Jesus comes back, but let me try to answer this very simply here. First of all, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and thus born of a virgin (Luke 1). This allowed Him to be both God and a sinless man. He also willingly laid aside His right on this earth to manifest Himself visibly as God, which means that He stripped Himself of His glory and splendor. Isaiah 53 tells us as a man, He had no dignity or beauty that we would be attracted to Him. We could say His human appearance was plain or possibly even ugly. (If you are wondering what Jesus looks like in His glorified state as God read Revelation 1:12-18.)

- 1. Read about Jesus being God and Man in Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:18-25, John 1:18, and Colossians 2:9.** How does what Jesus did for you, show you how valuable and loved you are to Him? Since Jesus was willing to be humiliated on this earth for you, do you feel He truly loves and cares for you? Since He laid aside His rights as God for you on this earth, can you lay aside your rights for Him when He asks you to? Since Jesus laid aside His glory and splendor as God on this earth for you and became an ordinary man, can you have confidence (trust Him) in how He created you - your looks, personality, your abilities...? Jesus' love for you drove Him to be born, live and die for you. Can what He did for you, drive you to follow Him out of love?

Days Four and Five What Jesus Did for Us while on this Earth

In days four and five, I will be comparing Jesus' characteristics as God to circumstances from Jesus' life on this earth. Hopefully my thoughts will get you thinking about how much you are loved by Jesus and what it meant for *you* that the God of the universe lived and died for you.

There are quite a few verses to look up in these 2 days but if you are willing to spend the time, you will see God's love by what He did for you! I think you would agree He is worth our time!

1. **Jesus created everything. Jesus is the reason everything exists. He is the eternal God.** Yet, He became one of the tiniest pieces of life, an embryo, so He could be born, live and die for us. **Read Isaiah 9:6, John 1:1-4 and Luke 1:41-42.** Since the God of the universe did whatever He needed to, to become one of us, do you think this shows He loves you?
2. **Jesus formed every detail of a woman's body, because He is the Creator.** Yet, Jesus willingly allowed Himself to become a fetus, which is absolutely dependent upon a woman for survival. He placed His survival and security into the arms of a woman, like you and me. (I wonder how it was for Mary to hold the God of the universe in her arms. Did His tiny hand grab her finger? Did His smile touch her heart?) **Read Genesis 2:21-22 and Colossians 1:15-16.** How big of sacrifice do you think it was for Him to do this?
3. **Jesus sits upon the throne of heaven, in glory and splendor, as King of kings and Lord of lords.** Nonetheless, He allowed Himself to be born into and live in poverty on this earth for us. **Read Isaiah 6:1-7, also John 12:41 and 2 Corinthians 8:9.** Jesus also came to be a servant (not to be served) and to give His life to save us from our sins. **Read Matthew 20:28.** Isaiah the prophet in Isaiah 6 saw Jesus in His glorified state and was terrified because of his sin. What does it mean to you that Jesus let go of His rights and glory as God to serve you?

4. **Jesus is the everlasting God, who is the source of life.** Yet, on this earth He allowed His life to be cut short for us. He lived just 33 years and died a very painful and emotionally distressing death. **Read Isaiah 43:10-13, John 1:1-4, John 10:17-18 and 1 Peter 2:21-25.** The Source of Life willingly suffered for you, so you could be with Him. How much does this show He values you? How much does your life show you value Him?

5. **Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords of the universe.** However, on this earth He was a carpenter and unofficial pastor teacher. He was plain to look at, and possibly ugly. He was despised by many of His own people, and was not particularly esteemed. He was a man acquainted with sickness and pain. He also had no degree, no income, no wife or children, no house to call His own, no means of travel but His feet, no retirement fund, no official building whatsoever to use for His ministry. The only material possessions that He had at His death were His clothes off His back. He had only 12 men who were committed to Him and His ministry. One of these men ended up betraying Him, so that they could put Him to death. Think about this statement: "Would you think His life was a failure by our human standards today?" **Read Isaiah 53:2-6, Matthew 8:20, Mark 14:43-46 and John 19:17-24.** When you are struggling with how you feel, your financial situation, how bad your career or ministry is going, how you look, or in an unloving relationship, remember He has experienced all of these things for you because He loves you. He is more than willing to empower you to have peace, joy and even victory through these trials and any other. Just ask for His help! **Read Hebrews 2:17-18 and 4:15-16.**

6. **Jesus destroyed Satan's forces by just being Who He is, God.** Yet, He allowed His people, the Jews, to blaspheme Him (without destroying them), when they said, "He was of the devil Himself." **Read Mark 1:21-27 and Mark 3:22-30.** What does this tell you about Jesus?

7. **Jesus is God Who knows our sinful hearts (better than we do) and can change them into godly hearts if we want.** However, many of His people hardened their hearts so much against Him that they called for His crucifixion over another man who was a real criminal and deserved to be crucified. **Read Jeremiah 17:9-10, Ezekiel 36:26-28 and Mark 3:1-6, 15:6-15.** Jesus was crucified for you because He wants you to be His Bride. **Read Ephesians 5:25-27.** Because of everything Jesus did for you, are you willing for Him to transform your heart and mind? If you are, tell Him...

8. **Jesus is called the Lamb of God because He was willing to sacrifice His life for us.** Yet, when He needed His best friends to support Him the most, they thought sleep was more important than He was. One of His best friends denied knowing Him three times when Jesus needed his allegiance the most. **Read John 1:29 also Revelation 5:6-10 and Mark 14:29-37, 66-72.** When you are struggling with relationships that are discouraging, or even with a loved one betraying you, remember Jesus understands and went through everything on this earth to be your best friend.

9. **Jesus had all the angels of heaven at His command.** Nevertheless, He allowed a large group of religious leaders to arrest Him in a garden. They were led there by one of Jesus' friends who betrayed Him with a kiss! **Read Matthew 26:46-56.** Have you ever been unloving to someone, maybe even betrayed a person? Remember, because Jesus loved you - He allowed Himself to be betrayed even to the point of death on a cross, so you can be absolutely forgiven in Him.

10. **Jesus is Sovereign over all things.** Yet, He allowed His trial to be like a Hollywood circus. He also allowed His own countrymen, who wanted Him dead and out of their way for reasons of jealousy – to engineer His crucifixion. He allowed this all because of His love for us. **Read Mark 15:9-15.** I think you would agree, it's hard to grasp the humiliation-suffering Jesus willingly took for us, so we could be saved from death and eternal punishment. I know my explaining comes short... We need to ask ourselves, "What are we willing to give up to love Him back?" Maybe a half-hour of your time every day to read His Word? Maybe a regular daily prayer time? Maybe teaching that study in your church or watching your neighbors kids? Yes, maybe even going overseas to do free dental work or build a house that was destroyed by an earthquake?
11. **Jesus, since He is God, has a character that is completely absent of sin. Because He is holy, His whole being instinctively abhors sin.** Nevertheless, He willingly took our sin upon Himself when He died on the cross, so our sins could be forgiven. **Read Isaiah 6:3 and 2 Corinthians 5:21.** How do you think God feels when His Spirit is convicting you of a sin and you refuse to listen to Him?
12. **Jesus is the image of the invisible God.** Yet, He allowed Himself to die a criminal's death on a cross for us. As He was dying, He allowed His executioners and others to humiliate Him. They also played games for His only worldly possessions, the clothes off His back. He died alone except for a small group of people, mostly women (who were thought to be just a possession in that society). His tomb was someone else's because it only needed to be borrowed. This was because three days after Jesus' death, He took back His rights as the God of the universe. He also took back His splendor and glory as God when He rose from the dead in victory over our sin and our death. Even though He is the God of the universe, and is called by many wonderful names such as the Lord of lords and the King of kings. His favorite name for Himself is the Lamb of God. (Read Revelation if you doubt this.) This is because His sacrifice brought the people that He loves so very much back to Himself. **Read Matthew 27:23-28:10 and Revelation 22:1-5 also John 14:1-3.** Since Jesus was willing to

live and die for you, you can go from a state of eternal death to eternal life. You can go from never seeming to be able to change for the good, to having the power, strength and desire to live well for God. You can go from a future that promised hell, to the only happily-ever-after ending which is living throughout eternity with God who loves you! Take some time and thank Jesus for all He has done for you because you are His beloved. You might want to write a prayer and share it with your group.

We enjoy words of love no matter how they are said to us! But how do you feel when a person tells you they love you but act like they don't? When words of love don't have actions to back them up, we don't feel or think we are truly loved. We all know it is deeds of love that speak to our hearts the loudest, not fancy words or gifts. God has certainly backed up His Words of love with what He did for us! Hasn't He? I hope this lesson has given you concrete evidence of His love towards you through Jesus becoming one of us, living among us and dying for us. Do you now believe He loves you?

End of the lesson application: Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind one thing you learned from this lesson that He wants you to remember and make a part of your life. Be quiet before God and wait on Him to tell you. Write it down and ask Him to help you do it!

I hope I have given you at least a glimpse into what Jesus gave up and took for us on this earth because of His love for us. Try to watch the movie "The Passion" by Mel Gibson. Other than God's Word, I feel that this movie communicates vividly what God in His great love did for us. If you are doing this study in a group setting, you might want to watch the movie together or watch a piece of the movie each week or just agree to watch it separately. I would choose a time when you can discuss what the movie meant to each person concerning God and His sacrificial love for them.

Bibliography

My ideas on the following topics come from the following sources.

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Jesus emptying Himself

Spiros Zodhiates, **The Complete Word Study Dictionary - New Testament**, definition of keno, the Greek word for emptied. Strong's number 2758, p 857

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