

God's Love and Justice

God Loves Freely

Lesson #1 for January 4, 2025

Scriptures: Exodus 33:15-22; Hosea 14:1-4; Revelation 4:11; Matthew 21:1-14; John 10:17-18; 17:24.

1. Many times, God's incredible love is best demonstrated by those who turn against Him, deny Him, or seem to forget Him. But then, as God's love reaches out to them, marvelous changes sometimes take place. For example, we already know Peter vehemently asserted that he would follow his Lord even to death. (John 13:36-38) Unfortunately, as we also know, when the finger of scorn was pointed at him a few hours later, after Jesus's arrest, he denied his Savior and Friend three times. God's love is proven because that is not the end of the story. God's love needs a positive response. At their meeting in Galilee after the resurrection:

John 21:15-17: ¹⁵ After they had eaten, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love [*agapao*] me more than these others do?"

"Yes, Lord," he answered, "you know that I love [*phileo*] you." [These variations of *love* are Greek terms. Peter and Jesus were speaking Aramaic, not Greek. However, John reproduced the conversation as best he could using Greek.]

Jesus said to him, "Take care of my lambs." ¹⁶A second time Jesus said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love [*agapao*] me?"

"Yes, Lord," he answered, "you know that I love [*phileo*] you."

Jesus said to him, "Take care of my sheep." ¹⁷A third time Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love [*phileo*] me?"

Peter was sad because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" so he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you!"

Jesus said to him, "**Take care of my sheep.**"—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., John 21:15-17). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].^{†‡}

2. How often have we—by our words or by our actions, like Peter—denied our Christianity? God is still reaching out to us, imploring us to come back to Him. Do we really love Him? Everything depends on our answer to that question.
3. Let us evaluate some Old Testament experiences that talk about people who had wonderful relationships with God—Abraham, Moses, and Hosea. Did Abram have a Bible or a pastor?

Genesis 18:23-33: ²³Abraham approached the LORD and asked, "Are you really going to destroy the innocent with the guilty? ²⁴If there are fifty innocent people in the city, will you destroy the whole city? Won't you spare it in order to save the fifty? ²⁵Surely you won't kill the innocent with the guilty. That's impossible! You can't do that. If you did, the innocent would be punished along with the guilty. That is impossible. **The judge of all the earth has to act justly.**"

²⁶ The LORD answered, "If I find fifty innocent people in Sodom, I will spare the whole city for their sake." [God told Abraham what He was going to do. (See verse 17.)]

²⁷ Abraham spoke again: "Please forgive my boldness in continuing to speak to you, Lord [*sic*] [Abraham was NOT knowingly referring to *YAHWEH*]. I am

only a man and have no right to say anything. ²⁸But perhaps there will be only 45 innocent people instead of fifty. Will you destroy the whole city because there are five too few?"

The LORD answered, "I will not destroy the city if I find 45 innocent people." ...

³² Abraham said, "Please don't be angry, Lord, and I will speak just once more. What if only ten are found?"

He said, "I will not destroy it if there are ten." ³³After he had finished speaking with Abraham, the LORD went away, and Abraham returned home.—*Good News Bible*. *†‡

4. ***What do you think of that encounter of Abraham and God? We talk about prayer as "speaking to God as to a Friend." Was that conversation prayer?***

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] The notion that God's love does not follow the logic of cause and effect means that it should not be calculated, leading, therefore, to a presumable, reasonable, expectation. Two instances of intercession before God in the Pentateuch exemplify the problem of such a presumption.

The first instance is **Abraham's intercession** (*Gen. 18:23–33*) in the context of the divine judgment announced against Sodom and Gomorrah (*Gen. 18:20*). Initially, Abraham appeals to God's justice and asks whether He would actually destroy the city if there were 50 righteous people in it (*Gen. 18:24, 25*). Arguably, 50 sounded like a reasonable number to Abraham in his invocation of divine justice. However, inasmuch as this number progressively decreases in the persistent continuation of Abraham's intercession, from 50 to 45 (*Gen. 18:28*), from 45 to 40 (*Gen. 18:29*), from 40 to 30 (*Gen. 18:30*), from 30 to 20 (*Gen. 18:31*), and from 20 to 10 (*Gen. 18:32*), **he does not appeal to divine justice anymore but rather to God's mercy** (*Gen. 18:27, 30, 32*). It seems that 50 would be reasonable for justice, but 10 is way beyond a fair expectation. If the beginning of the intercession gives the impression that Abraham was trying to convince God to be just and then merciful, the progression of the intercessory dialogue reveals that such an intention is definitely not the case. Rather, the intercession process actually reveals that God's loving mercy is higher than could be reasonably expected or presumably calculated.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 15.†§ [This was true mercy!][‡]

5. Another example is as **Moses** came down from Mount Sinai after God had given him the Ten Commandments. He discovered that the children of Israel were dancing, drunk and naked, around a **golden calf** that they called **YAHWEH!** God then said that He would destroy Israel.

Exodus 32:11-14,31-33: ¹¹ But Moses pleaded with the LORD his God and said, "LORD, why should you be so angry with your people, whom you rescued from Egypt with great might and power? ¹²**Why should the Egyptians be able to say that you led your people out of Egypt, planning to kill them in the mountains and destroy them completely?** Stop being angry; change your mind and do not bring this disaster on your people. ¹³Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Remember the solemn promise you made to them to give them as many descendants as there are stars in the sky and to give their descendants all that land you promised would be their possession for ever

[sic-Br].” ¹⁴So the LORD changed his mind and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened....

³¹Moses then returned to the LORD and said, “These people have committed a terrible sin. They have made a god out of gold and worshipped it. ³²Please forgive their sin; but if you won’t, then remove my name from the book in which you have written the names of your people.”

³³ The LORD answered, “It is those who have sinned against me whose names I will remove from my book.”—*Good News Bible*. *†‡

6. God suggested to Moses that he should step aside and allow God to destroy the children of Israel and make a great nation out of Moses and his descendants!

Exodus 33:15-23: ¹⁵ Moses replied, “If you do not go with us, don’t make us leave this place. ¹⁶How will anyone know that you are pleased with your people and with me if you do not go with us? Your presence with us will distinguish us from any other people on earth.”

¹⁷ The LORD said to Moses, “I will do just as you have asked, because I know you very well and I am pleased with you.”

¹⁸ Then Moses requested, “Please, let me see the dazzling light of your presence.”

¹⁹ The LORD answered, “I will make all my splendour [sic-Br] pass before you and in your presence I will pronounce my sacred name. I am the LORD, and I show compassion and pity on those I choose. ²⁰I will not let you see my face, because no one can see me and stay alive, ²¹but here is a place beside me where you can stand on a rock. ²²When the dazzling light of my presence passes by, I will put you in an opening in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³Then I will take my hand away, and you will see my back but not my face.”—*Good News Bible*. *† [Compare Revelation 14:1.]‡

[BSG:] The second instance of intercession is Moses’ intervention on behalf of the Israelites at Sinai. To be sure, the initial impression is that he was trying to convince God to be merciful toward them (*Exod. 32:11–14, 31–33*). But again, this is not the case. The climax of the interaction between Moses and the Lord is the revelation of divine glory, which is a remarkable manifestation of God’s love (*Exod. 34:6, 7*). Besides the affirmation of the divine freedom to be merciful to those who clearly do not deserve God’s love (*Exod. 33:19*), the acute asymmetrical comparison between “ ‘keeping mercy for thousands’ ” and “ ‘visiting the iniquity . . . to the third and the fourth generation’ ” (*Exod. 34:7, NKJV*) suggests that, ultimately, the scope of God’s love cannot be calculated, which particularly highlights the freedom of His love.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 15.†§ [God’s love is beyond any estimation!][‡]

7. Considering all that God had done for the children of Israel up to that point by getting them safely out of the land of Egypt, surely, He had every reason for giving up on them. However, God shows His love and compassion to anyone He thinks might respond. (*Exodus 33:19*) Historically, we know that God continued to lead the children of Israel and work with them for 1400 more years.
8. Another example of unbelievable love on the part of God is demonstrated in the almost

horrific **story of Hosea and his wife.**

Hosea 1:2: When the LORD first spoke to Israel through Hosea, he said to Hosea, “Go and get married; your wife will be unfaithful, and your children will be just like her. In the same way, my people have left me and become unfaithful.”
[Footnote: *get married; your wife ... her; or marry a prostitute, and have children by her who will be just as bad as she is.*]—*Good News Bible*.*†§

9. To understand the story of Hosea, we need to realize that Hosea was ministering to the people of the northern kingdom of Israel where he lived. The very powerful Assyrians were rising up to the north. History tells us that about 10 years after this story of Hosea takes place, Assyria conquered the country of Israel and forever scattered the northern 10 tribes. They have never been seen or heard from again. There had been one continual downward trend from the days of Ahab and Jezebel to that point in history. The moral situation was so bad that Hosea’s wife may have been just like every other woman in Israel and may have been the best option for a wife! But, even at the end of the book of Hosea, **God was still pleading with Israel to return to Him.**

Hosea 2:14-23: ¹⁴ So I am going to take her into the desert again; there I will win her back with words of love. ¹⁵I will give back to her the vineyards she had and make Trouble Valley a door of hope. She will respond to me there as she did when she was young, when she came from Egypt. ¹⁶Then once again she will call me her husband — she will no longer call me her Baal. ¹⁷I will never let her speak the name of Baal again. [Baal was the fertility-cult “god” they worshiped.]

¹⁸ At that time I will make a covenant with all the wild animals and birds, so that they will not harm my people. I will also remove all weapons of war from the land, all swords and bows, and will let my people live in peace and safety.

¹⁹ **Israel, I will make you my wife;**

I will be true and faithful;

I will show you constant love and mercy
and make you mine for ever [*sic-Br*].

²⁰ I will keep my promise and make you mine,
and you will acknowledge me as LORD.

²¹⁻²² At that time I will answer the prayers of my people Israel.

I will make rain fall on the earth,
and the earth will produce corn and grapes and olives.

²³ I will establish my people in the land and make them prosper.

I will show love to those who were called “Unloved”, [*sic*]
and to those who were called “Not-my-People”

I will say, “You are my people,”

and they will answer, “You are our God.”—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

10. God was making one last, final appeal to those rebellious people.

Hosea 3:1-5: ¹ The LORD said to me, “Go again and show your love for a woman who is committing adultery with a lover. You must love her just as I still love the people of Israel, even though they turn to other gods and like to take offerings of raisins to idols.”

² So I paid fifteen pieces of silver and 150 kilogrammes [*sic-Br*] of barley to buy

her. ³I told her that for a long time she would have to wait for me without being a prostitute or committing adultery; and during this time I would wait for her. ⁴In just this way the people of Israel will have to live for a long time without kings or leaders, without sacrifices or sacred stone pillars, without idols or images to use for divination. ⁵But **the time will come when the people of Israel will once again turn to the LORD their God**, and to a descendant of David their king. Then they will fear the LORD and will receive his good gifts.—*Good News Bible*.*††

11. Jesus referred to this part of Hosea in an appeal for His disciples to reach out to Gentiles.

[BSG:] “This is a love which will not be earned—what could Israel possibly present to Yahweh [*sic*] as an acceptable payment?” Instead, the Hebrew term *nedabash*, which emphasizes that God will love Israel *freely*, conveys the idea of a “‘voluntary offering’ or ‘offering made out of generosity.’” —Douglas Stuart, “Hosea–Jonah,” *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), vol. 31, p. 215.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 14].‡§

12. God’s love was being (and is being) poured out without measure on undeserving people!

Hosea 14:1-4: ¹Return to the LORD your God, people of Israel. Your sin has made you stumble and fall. ²Return to the LORD, and let this prayer be your offering to him: “Forgive all our sins and accept our prayer, and we will praise you as we have promised. ³Assyria can never save us, and war horses cannot protect us. We will never again say to our idols that they are our God. O LORD, you show mercy to those who have no one else to turn to.”

⁴ The LORD says,

“I will bring my people back to me.

I will love them with all my heart;

no longer am I angry with them.”—*Good News Bible*.*

13. The entire Old Testament is a history of the many times that Israel and Judah rebelled against God; and then, sometimes, later, they came back. (Especially see Judges 1-3.)

14. How did God feel about all of that back and forth?

[BSG:] Many people think of God as a distant and harsh ruler and judge. How does the imagery of God’s being scorned and grieved as the unrequited lover of an unfaithful spouse help you see God differently? How does it change the way you view your own relationship with God?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, December 30.‡

15. So, how does God feel when we repeatedly turn away from Him to our favorite “idols”?

Hosea 11:7-8: ⁷ “**They insist on turning away from me.** They will cry out because of the yoke that is on them, but no one will lift it from them.

⁸ “**How can I give you up, Israel?**

How can I abandon you?

Could I ever destroy you as I did Admah,

or treat you as I did Zeboiim?

My heart will not let me do it!

My love for you is too strong.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

16. Admah and Zeboiim were two of the small towns located near Sodom and Gomorrah and were also destroyed at the same time because they were just as wicked.
17. Sometimes, we get the almost unconscious impression that God loves faithful Christians but that He hates sinners. God loves every single being on this earth. He even loves the Devil because all of us are His children. However, God hates sin because of what it does to His children.
18. Some might think that this is because there is some kind of special love response that God is awaiting from His children.

Acts 17:25: “Nor does he need anything that we can supply by working for him, since it is he himself who gives life and breath and everything else to everyone.”—*Good News Bible*.*

19. Compare these verses.

Revelation 4:11: “Our Lord and God! You are worthy to receive glory, honour [*sic-Br*], and power.

For you created all things,

and by your will they were given existence and life.”—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

Psalms 33:6: The LORD created the heavens by his command,

the sun, moon, and stars by his spoken word.—*Good News Bible*.*†

20. In His prayer just before His crucifixion, Jesus Himself talked about the kind of relationship and love that He wants to have with each of us.

John 17:21-26: ²¹ “**I pray that they may all be one.** Father! May they be in us, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me. ²²I gave them the same glory you gave me, so that they may be one, just as you and I are one: ²³I in them and you in me, so that they may be completely one, in order that the world may know that you sent me and that you love them as you love me.

²⁴ “Father! You have given them to me, and I want them to be with me where I am, so that they may see my glory, the glory you gave me; for you loved me before the world was made. ²⁵Righteous Father! The world does not know you, but I know you, and these know that you sent me. ²⁶I made you known to them, and I will continue to do so, in order that **the love you have for me may be in them, and so that I also may be in them.**”—*Good News Bible*.*†

21. Let us remember that God’s omniscience means that He knew before He created anything on this earth as well as the angels even earlier exactly what was going to happen. Would you have proceeded as He did? If we understand all that has happened, is there any way that we can doubt His love? How would you feel if you were in God’s place dealing with us?

[BSG:] God did not need creatures as an object of His love. But, in accordance with His character of love, God chose to create the world and enter into a love relationship with creatures.

Not only did God freely create this world as a bestowal of His generous love, but God also continues freely to love humans, even after humans fell into sin in Eden, and even after we personally sin.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, December 31.‡

22. God created Lucifer and humans in spite of His foreknowledge of their rebellion to come.

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] **The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam.** It was a revelation of “the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.” Romans 16:25, R. V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God’s throne. **From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, “that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”** John 3:16.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 22.2.†

<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.36&index=0>†

23. Despite His incredible behavior which was exhibited again and again, it is possible for us to reject God’s love as illustrated by Jesus’s parable of the wedding feast.

Matthew 22:1-14: ¹ Jesus again used parables in talking to the people. ² “The Kingdom of heaven is like this. Once there was a king who prepared a wedding feast for his son. ³**He sent his servants to tell the invited guests to come to the feast, but they did not want to come.** ⁴So he sent other servants with this message for the guests: ‘My feast is ready now; my bullocks and prize calves have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast!’ ⁵**But the invited guests paid no attention** and went about their business: one went to his farm, another to his shop, ⁶while others grabbed the servants, beat them, and killed them. ⁷The king was very angry; so he sent his soldiers, who killed those murderers and burnt down their city. ⁸Then he called his servants and said to them, ‘My wedding feast is ready, but the people I invited did not deserve it. ⁹**Now go to the main streets and invite to the feast as many people as you find.**’ ¹⁰So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, good and bad alike; and the wedding hall was filled with people.

¹¹ “The king went in to look at the guests and saw a man who was not wearing wedding clothes. ¹² ‘Friend, how did you get in here without wedding clothes [that the king supplied]?’ the king asked him. But the man said nothing. ¹³Then the king told the servants, ‘Tie him up hand and foot, and throw him outside in the dark. There he will cry and grind his teeth.’ ”

¹⁴ And Jesus concluded, “Many are invited, but few are chosen [because few accept God’s invitation].”—*Good News Bible*.*†

24. To understand this story, we need to realize that each person who was invited to the king’s banquet was provided with a new wedding garment.

[BSG:] What does this mean? Those who are finally “chosen,” the “elect,” are those who have accepted the Lord’s invitation to the wedding. The term translated “call” and “invite” throughout the parable is the Greek term *kaleo* (to call, invite), and what determines who is finally “elect” (*eklektos*) is whether one has freely accepted the invitation.

In fact, God calls (that is, invites) *everyone* to the wedding feast. However, **any one of us can refuse God's love. Freedom is essential to love. God will never force His love on anyone.** Sad to say, we can reject having a love relationship with God.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, January 1.^{†§}

25. See the handout entitled “Love” on www.Theox.org. Freedom is required for one to love. (https://www.theox.org/images/uploads/bbk/KHart_BTGG_PDF_Gnrl_Love_16.pdf)

[BSG:] The “elect” are those who accept the invitation. For those who love God, **God has prepared things more wonderful than anything that we could possibly imagine.** Once again, it all comes down to the question of love and the freedom inherent in love.

What about your life reveals that you have accepted the wedding invitation and have come appropriately clothed?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, January 1.[†]

26. Shortly before His death, Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem.

Matthew 23:37: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You kill the prophets and stone the messengers God has sent you! How many times have I wanted to put my arms round all your people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not let me!”—*Good News Bible.**

27. So, what did God do to reach out to people like that? Do you agree with the following terminology?

[BSG:] Yet, Christ went to the cross for these people and for us. Amazing love! While human sin merits death, God Himself (in Christ) **paid the price** and has made a way to repair the ruptured relationship between heaven and earth. Meanwhile, He continues to bestow His love on us, though He is under no obligation beyond His own free commitment to do so.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, January 2.[†]

28. Did Christ pay “the price”? If He “paid the price,” to whom did He pay it?

29. Let us dig a little deeper into the message of the cross and the death of Jesus.

John 10:17-18: ¹⁷ “The Father loves me because I am willing to give up my life, in order that I may receive it back again. ¹⁸**No one takes my life away from me. I give it up of my own free will. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it back.** This is what my Father has commanded me to do.”—*Good News Bible.*†*

Galatians 2:20: So that it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. This life that I live now, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave his life for me.—*Good News Bible.**

[BSG:] In the ultimate display of God's love—the Cross—we see that Christ gave Himself for us of His own free will. Christ laid down His life of His “own initiative.” **No one took His life from Him; He freely offered it, according to the plan of redemption agreed upon in heaven before the foundation of the world.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, January 2.[†]

30. God needed to show once and for all eternity the consequences of sin and rebellion.

Romans 16:25: Let us give glory to God! He is able to make you stand firm in your faith, according to the Good News I preach about Jesus Christ and according to the revelation of **the secret truth which was hidden for long ages in the past.**—*Good News Bible*.*†

31. **Satan did everything he could to convince Jesus on the cross that if He died, He would be dead forever. Satan claimed that the dead and the world of the dead belong to him; and Satan claimed that if Jesus Christ died, His body would belong to Satan.**

[EGW:] Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. **The Saviour [sic-Br] could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 753.2.†
<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.3719&index=0>†

32. ***How did Jesus survive and claim the victory against that terrible onslaught of Satan?***

[EGW:] Amid the awful darkness, apparently forsaken of God, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours **He had relied upon the evidence of His Father's acceptance heretofore given Him.** He was acquainted with the character of His Father; He understood His justice, His mercy, and His great love. **By faith** He rested in Him whom it had ever been His joy to obey. And as in submission He committed Himself to God, the sense of the loss of His Father's favor was withdrawn. **By faith,** Christ was victor.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 756.3.†
<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.3735&index=0>† [Christ's faith was based on evidence. Our faith should be based on the same evidence!][†]

33. **Jesus Christ was able to survive that death and that awful attack from Satan because He knew His Father, and He refused to accept Satan's lies about His Father. Satan wanted Him to believe that the Father had permanently abandoned Him because Jesus had taken on the position of a sinner. (That death is what we call *the second death*.) But, Jesus clung to the truth that He had learned about His Father. He knew that despite everything that Satan claimed, He, as the divine Christ, had the power to overcome the second death, destroy Satan's claims over the dead, exert His divine power, arise from the grave, and escape Satan's grasp.**

[EGW:] **When the voice of the mighty angel was heard at Christ's tomb, saying, Thy Father calls Thee, the Saviour [sic-Br] came forth from the grave by the life that was in Himself.** Now was proved the truth of His words, "I lay down My life, that I might take it again.... I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Now was fulfilled the prophecy He had spoken to the priests and rulers, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." John 10:17, 18; 2:19.

Over the rent sepulcher of Joseph, Christ had proclaimed in triumph, "I am the resurrection, and the life." These words could be spoken only by

the Deity. All created beings live by the will and power of God. They are dependent recipients of the life of God. From the highest seraph to the humblest animate being, all are replenished from the Source of life. Only He who is one with God could say, I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again. In His divinity, Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 785.2-3.†‡

[<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.3866&index=0>]‡

34. ***Is it becoming clear in your mind exactly what happened at the cross?***

[EGW:] It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth.

This is the work outlined by the prophet Isaiah in the words, “O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.” Isaiah 40:9, 10.

Those who wait for the Bridegroom’s coming are to say to the people, “Behold your God.” The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them.

The light of the Sun of Righteousness is to shine forth in good works—in words of truth and deeds of holiness.—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons** 415.3-416.1.‡ [<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p15.1873&index=0>]‡

35. Many people in our world do not believe that God exists. Would it even be worse than that to believe that God hates us? Or, that He has abandoned us? **Or, that He tortures us forever?**
36. Is it possible to prove to someone without a biblical background and convince him/her of the incredible love that God has shown?
37. In this lesson, we have seen three principles demonstrated: (1) God did not need to create human beings to cause all this trouble so that He could demonstrate His love to us. He chooses to love us, despite all our problems. (2) God’s love is impossible to measure. There is no special reason outside of God why He should love us like this. (3) But, unfortunately, God’s love can be resisted. God’s love is not dominating or coercive in any way. How would you have responded to Hosea’s story as you understand it?
38. Surely, the full story of the children of Israel is proof that God’s love can be resisted.
39. Do we want to join the children of Israel and their rejection of God’s love and compassion? Or, do we want to accept God’s love and watch it transform our lives?

©2024, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution of all or of a portion of this material such as to a Bible study class is encouraged. *Electronic version. †Bold type is added. ‡Brackets and content in brackets are added. §Italic type is in the source. [sic-Br]=This is correct as quoted; it is the British spelling.

Last Modified: December 9, 2024

Email: Info@theox.org