

God's Love and Justice

Covenantal Love

Lesson #2 for January 11, 2025

Scriptures: 2 Peter 3:9; Deuteronomy 7:6-9; Romans 11:22; 1 John 3:16; 4:7-20, John 3:16; 14:23; 15:12.

1. We will discuss three main points in this lesson: (1) God's love is always unconditional. Whether we love Him or do not love Him, He still loves us. (2) God will never force us to love Him; however, that is what He really wants. (3) We are to show God's love to others.
2. God loves every being in the universe. If salvation only depended on the love of God, everyone would respond to God's love and would be saved. God loves everyone, even the Devil; God wants the best for all of us. God hates sin because it destroys His children. One of the best verses in the Bible to describe God's love is found in John 3:16.

John 3:16: "For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life."—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., John 3:16). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].[‡] [How many are included in that love of God?][‡]

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] Many have been taught that the Greek word *agape* refers to a love that is unique to God, while other terms for love, such as *phileo*, refer to different kinds of love, more deficient than *agape*. Some claim, too, that *agape* refers to unilateral love, a love that only gives but never receives, a love entirely independent of human response.

However, **careful study of divine love throughout Scripture shows that these ideas, though common, are mistaken.** First, **the Greek term *agape* refers not only to God's love but also to human love, even sometimes misdirected human love (2 Tim. 4:10).** Second, throughout Scripture, **many terms other than *agape* refer to God's love.** For example, Jesus taught, "The Father Himself loves [*phileo*] you, because you have loved [*phileo*] Me" (John 16:27, NASB). Here, **the Greek term *phileo* is used not only of human love but also of God's love for humans.** Thus, *phileo* does not refer to a deficient kind of love but to God's love itself.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, January 4.^{†‡Ω§}

2 Timothy 4:10: Demas fell in love [*agapao*] with this present world and has deserted me, going off to Thessalonica. Crescens went to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia.—*Good News Bible*.^{*‡}

John 16:27: "For the Father himself loves [*phileo*] you. He loves you because you love [*phileo*] me and have believed that I came from God."—*Good News Bible*.^{*‡}

[BSG:] Scripture also teaches that God's love is not unilateral but deeply relational, in that it makes a profound difference to God whether or not humans reflect His love back to Him and to others.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, January 4.[‡]

3. In the Old Testament, God used special terms to try to describe His love.

Psalm 145:8-9: ⁸ The LORD is loving and merciful,

slow to become angry and full of constant love.

⁹ He is good to everyone

and has compassion on all he made.—*Good News Bible*.*

[BSG:] Psalm 145:8, 9 highlights the remarkable and all-encompassing reality of God’s love: “The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy. The LORD is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works” (NKJV). The idea of love in this passage is spelled out in terms of graciousness, compassion, patience, mercy, and goodness. This list echoes the revelation of God’s glory and character to Moses in Exodus 34:6. In Psalm 145:8, the Hebrew term *khesed*, which also appears in Exodus 34:6, is rendered by the NKJV [sic] as “mercy” and translated as “love” in several other versions: “**lovingkindness**” (NASB1995), “**steadfast love**” (ESV, NRSV), “**loyal love**” (NET), and “**rich in love**” (NIV). **The term *khesed* conveys the notions of loyalty, faithfulness, goodness, and graciousness** (Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000], pp. 336, 337) **and belongs to the semantic domain of (loyal/faithful) love** (James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains: Hebrew [Old Testament]* [Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997]).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 26-27.^{†‡Ω§} [Note that *khesed* is sometimes spelled *hesed*.][‡]

4. God stated specifically in both the Old Testament and the New Testament that He feels very badly when any of us reject Him and choose to die.

Ezekiel 33:11: “Tell them that as surely as I, the Sovereign LORD, am the living God, I do not enjoy seeing sinners die. I would rather see them stop sinning and live. Israel, stop the evil you are doing. Why do you want to die?”—*Good News Bible*.*

2 Peter 3:9: The Lord is not slow to do what he has promised, as some think. Instead, he is patient with you, because he does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants all to turn away from their sins.—*Good News Bible*.*

1 Timothy 2:3-4: ³This is good and it pleases God our Saviour [sic-Br], ⁴who wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the truth.—*Good News Bible*.^{*‡}

5. The northern kingdom of Israel had continually departed from God. So, God was about to let them go into captivity and destruction by the Assyrian army, to never be heard from again. Hosea, a prophet of God who prophesied to the northern kingdom of Israel, told us how God feels when we repeatedly turn away from Him and refuse His love. Hosea 11 records God’s final words to the northern kingdom of Israel!

Hosea 11:1-8: ¹ The LORD says,

“When Israel was a child, I loved him
and called him out of Egypt as my son.

²But the more I called to him,
the more he turned away from me.

My people sacrificed to Baal;
they burnt incense to idols.

³Yet I was the one who taught Israel to walk.

I took my people up in my arms,
but they did not acknowledge that I took care of them.

⁴I drew them to me with affection and love.

I picked them up and held them to my cheek;

I bent down to them and fed them.

⁵ “They refuse to return to me, and so they must return to Egypt, and Assyria will rule them. ⁶War will sweep through their cities and break down the city gates. It will destroy my people because they do what they themselves think best. 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*.^{*†} [God was weeping over Israel!][‡]

6. Surely, it is clear that God loved them, even as they had left Him for the worship of the fertility “god” Baal. No matter how much God loved them, they rejected Him.

7. God’s love for Israel was also spelled out in some detail in Psalm 136.

Psalm 136:1-26: ¹ Give thanks to the LORD, because he is good;

his love is eternal.

²Give thanks to the greatest of all gods;

his love is eternal.

³Give thanks to the mightiest of all lords;

his love is eternal.

⁴He alone performs great miracles;

his love is eternal....

²⁵He gives food to every living creature;

his love is eternal.

²⁶Give thanks to the God of heaven;

his love is eternal.—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

[BSG:] However, if we as individuals could learn to experience the reality of that love—that is, to know for ourselves God’s love—how differently we might live and treat others.

If God loves everyone, this means He must love some pretty despicable characters because there are some (a lot, in fact) despicable characters out there. What should God’s love for these people teach us about how we should seek to relate to them, as well?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} for Sunday, January 5.[‡]

8. The Bible often uses family-relationship metaphors to describe God’s love for us. The loves of husband and wife and of mother and child are loves that humans have for each other. Although they are very inadequate, God used them to illustrate God’s love for all people.

[BSG:] These metaphors are used particularly to depict the special relationship between God and His covenant people. This is a relationship of covenantal love, which involves not only God's love for His people but also expectations that people will accept this love and will love Him (and one another) in return.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, January 6.‡

Deuteronomy 7:6-9: ⁶ “Do this because you belong to the LORD your God. **From all the peoples on earth he chose you to be his own special people.**

⁷ “The LORD did not love you and choose you because you outnumbered other peoples; you were the smallest nation on earth. ⁸But the LORD loved you and wanted to keep the promise that he made to your ancestors. That is why he saved you by his great might and set you free from slavery to the king of Egypt. ⁹Remember that the LORD your God is the only God and that he is faithful. He will keep his covenant and show his constant love to a thousand generations of those who love him and obey his commands.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

[BSG:] **This idea of a measure of reciprocity in a genuine loving relationship is crucial for the understanding of God's covenantal relationship with His people.** First of all, this covenant is based on God's unconditional love. As Deuteronomy 7:6–8 points out regarding Israel: [quoted from *NKJV*] However, even though God's love is not based on what Israel is or does, the covenantal relationship between God and Israel requires some level of loving reciprocity as a response to God's love. God certainly keeps His covenant with faithfulness and mercy. The people's adequate response is to love God and keep His commandments. As Deuteronomy 7:9 emphasizes, God is “faithful” and “keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments” (*NKJV*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 28.†‡§

[BSG:] Deuteronomy 7:9 describes a special kind of love that God has with His covenant people, a relationship that is partially dependent on whether or not they remain faithful. **God's love is not conditional, but the covenant relationship with His people is.** [What does that mean?]

The word translated “lovingkindness” or “mercy” in Deuteronomy 7:9, *hesed*, itself exemplifies the covenantal aspect of divine love (and much more). The word *hesed* is often used to describe the greatness of God's mercy, goodness, and love. Among other things, *hesed* refers to the loving-kindness, or steadfast love, for another within an existing reciprocal love relationship. It also initiates such a relationship with the expectation that the other party will show this loving-kindness in return.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, January 6.†‡§ [Note that *khesed* is sometimes spelled *hesed*.]‡

9. In his prayer of dedication for the temple that God directed him to build, King Solomon said:
- 1 Kings 8:23:** And prayed, “LORD God of Israel, there is no god like you in heaven above or on earth below! **You keep your covenant with your people and show them your love when they live in wholehearted obedience to you.**”—*Good News Bible*.*† [See also 2 Chronicles 6:14. Does God love only the obedient?]‡

10. Although we may establish relationships with family and friends that are deep and loving, they cannot match God's love. In Jesus's prayer before His crucifixion (See John 17.), He said that God wants to have the same kind of relationship with us that He has with His Son!

11. The ultimate example of God's love for us is Jesus Christ's sacrificing His life for us.

John 15:13: "The greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give his life for them."—*Good News Bible*.*

12. Let us be very clear. God invites every single human being to that love relationship that He wants to pour out on us. Unfortunately, because this relationship is conditional, we have the ability to reject that love. This was illustrated by Jesus in the parable of the wedding guests.

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**. ³He 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. ⁹Now go to the main streets and invite to the feast as many people as you find.' ¹⁰**So 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?' 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.**"—*Good News Bible*.*† [Why would anyone refuse to wear the free wedding garment?]*‡

13. On one occasion when Jesus was asked to describe the greatest commandment, He said:

Matthew 22:37-39: ³⁷ Jesus answered, " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' ³⁸This is the greatest and the most important commandment. ³⁹The second most important commandment is like it: 'Love your neighbour [*sic*-Br] as you love yourself.' "—*Good News Bible*.*†

14. While God has eternal love for us, we can reject that love from Him. God's love is meaningful only if we respond. We know how much effort God went through to get the children of Israel out of Egypt. He did not choose them because they were special in some way even though their ancestors had been good friends of God. He treated them the way He would treat anyone and everyone. But, again, we can reject that love from God.

Psalms 145:10-11: ¹⁰ All your creatures, LORD, will praise you, and all your people will give you thanks.

¹¹ They will speak of the glory of your royal power

and tell of your might.—*Good News Bible*.*

15. What do the following verses teach us about rejecting God's love?

Hosea 9:15: The LORD says, "All their evil-doing began in Gilgal. It was there that I began to hate them. And because of the evil they have done, I will drive them out of my land. I will not love them any more; all their leaders have rebelled against me."—*Good News Bible*.*

Jeremiah 16:5: "You must not enter a house where there is mourning. Do not grieve for anyone. I will no longer bless my people with peace or show them love and mercy."—*Good News Bible*.*

Romans 11:22: Here we see how kind and how severe God is. He is severe towards those who have fallen, but kind to you — if you continue in his kindness. But if you do not, you too will be broken off.—*Good News Bible*.*

Jude [1:]21: And keep yourselves in the love of God, as you wait for our Lord Jesus Christ in his mercy to give you eternal life.—*Good News Bible*.*

16. These verses imply that **God will never try to force us to love Him**. In other words, our relationship to God depends on our response. He is always trying to woo us.

17. At the very end of his book, Hosea talked about how God will respond if we respond to Him.

[BSG:] **In these and other texts, enjoying the benefits of a love relationship with God is repeatedly depicted as conditional upon the human response to His love.** Yet, we should not make the mistake of thinking that God ever actually stops loving anyone. As we have seen, God's love is everlasting. **And, although Hosea 9:15 includes God saying of His people, " 'I will love them no more,' " it is important to remember that later in the same book God declares of His people, " 'I will love them freely' " (Hos. 14:4, NKJV). Hosea 9:15 cannot mean that God entirely ceases to love His people. It must refer, instead, to the conditionality of some particular aspect or benefit of a love relationship with God. And how we respond to His love is crucial for this relationship to continue.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, January 7.†§

Hosea 14:4: 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*.*

18. **The love of God intends to initiate a conditional relationship. God's loving benevolence is universal and unconditional; however, He desires to have a specific and intimate relationship with human beings. That implies conditionality.** That is, He expects a response to the love that they receive from Him, a spontaneous corresponding love in the form of obedience and loyalty.

19. Some people make fun of the Bible by quoting verses like John 14:21.

John 14:21: "Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. My Father will love those who love me; I too will love them and reveal myself to them."—*Good News Bible*.*

20. They say that God only loves those who obey His commandments! **What God was saying is that in order to experience the full benefits of His love, we must learn to live in the ways that He describes, obeying His commandments.**

21. In the upper room at that last supper that He had with His disciples before He was arrested and crucified, Jesus spoke these incredible words which are recorded in John 16:25-27:

John 16:25-27: ²⁵ “I have used figures of speech to tell you these things. But the time will come when I will **not** use figures of speech, but will speak to you plainly about the Father. ²⁶When that day comes, you will ask him in my name; and I do **not** say that I will ask him on your behalf, ²⁷**for the Father himself loves you. He loves you because you love me and have believed that I came from God.**”—*Good News Bible*.*†

[BSG:] These and other texts teach that maintaining the benefits of a saving relationship with God depends upon whether we will accept God’s love (which involves willingness to be vehicles of that love, as well). Again, this does not mean that God’s love ever ceases. Rather, just as we cannot stop the sun from shining but can cut ourselves off from the rays of the sun, we cannot do anything to stop God’s everlasting love, but we can finally reject a relationship with God and, thus, cut ourselves off from what it offers, especially the promise of eternal life.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday.‡

22. God will never cut us off; but, we can cut ourselves off from His love if we choose to do that.

[BSG:] **God’s love is everlasting and always unmerited. However, humans can reject it.** We have the opportunity to accept or reject that love, but only because God freely loves us with His perfect, everlasting love *prior to anything we do* (*Jer. 31:3*). Our love for God is a response to what has already been given to us even before we asked for it.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, January 8.†‡§ [God loves us before we can love Him!]*‡

23. Jeremiah, writing shortly before the captivity of the southern kingdom of Judah, said:

Jeremiah 31:3: “I [the LORD] appeared to them from far away. People of Israel, I have always loved you, so I continue to show you my constant love.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

24. Experiencing God’s love means that we turn around and reflect that love to others. We must not be like the servant which Jesus described in Matthew 18:23-35.

Matthew 18:23-35: ²³ “Because the Kingdom of heaven is like this. Once there was a king who decided to check on his **servants’ accounts**. ²⁴He had just begun to do so when one of them was brought in who **owed him millions of pounds**. ²⁵The servant did not have enough to pay his debt, so the king ordered him to be sold as a slave, with his wife and his children and all that he had, in order to pay the debt. ²⁶The servant fell on his knees before the king. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay you everything!’ ²⁷**The king felt sorry for him, so he forgave him the debt and let him go.**

²⁸ “Then the man went out and met **one of his fellow-servants who owed him a few pounds**. He grabbed him and started choking him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he said. ²⁹His fellow-servant fell down and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back!’ ³⁰But he refused; instead, he had him thrown into jail until he should pay the debt. ³¹When the other servants saw what had

happened, they were very upset and went to the king and told him everything. ³²So he called the servant in. 'You worthless slave!' he said. 'I forgave you the whole amount you owed me, just because you asked me to. ³³You should have had mercy on your fellow-servant, just as I had mercy on you.' ³⁴The king was very angry, and he sent the servant to jail to be punished until he should pay back the whole amount."

³⁵ And Jesus concluded, "That is how my Father in heaven will treat every one of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."—*Good News Bible*.*†
[BSG:] In the parable, we can see that there was no way the servant ever could have repaid what he owed the master [if he was a laborer]. According to Matthew 18, the servant owed his master 10,000 talents. One talent amounted to about 6,000 denarii. And one denarius was what an average laborer would be paid for one day of work (*compare with Matt. 20:2*). So, it would take an average laborer 6,000 days of labor to earn one talent. Suppose, after accounting for days off, that an average laborer might work 300 days per year and, thus, earn 300 denarii in a year. So, **it would take an average laborer approximately 20 years to repay one talent**, which consisted of 6,000 denarii (6,000/300 = 20). In order to earn 10,000 talents, then, an average laborer would have to work 200,000 years. In short, the servant could *never* repay this debt. Yet, the master felt compassion for his servant and freely forgave his huge debt.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, January 8.†‡§

Matthew 20:2: "He agreed to pay them **the regular wage, a silver coin a day [one denarius]**, and sent them to work in his vineyard."—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

25. Think about all that God has done for you. Is there any way that you could reject that love? How foolish would that be? Think what it cost Jesus to make that love and healing and forgiveness available. It was clear in the story we just reviewed that the evil servant could never repay his debt. The same is true about us. However, when we talk about God's love for us, it is even more amazing. We need healing or to be changed, not forgiveness alone.

Romans 5:8: But God has shown us how much he loves us — it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us!—*Good News Bible*.*

1 John 3:1: See how much the Father has loved us! His love is so great that we are called God's children — and so, in fact, we are. This is why the world does not know us: it has not known God.—*Good News Bible*.*

26. Recall that the servant forfeited his master's compassion and forgiveness because he failed to bestow compassion and forgiveness on his fellow servant. If we truly love God, we will not fail to reflect His love to others. How are we doing on that as individuals? And as a church?

John 15:12: "My commandment is this: love one another, just as I love you."—*Good News Bible*.*

1 John 3:16: This is how we know what love is: Christ gave his life for us. We too, then, ought to give our lives for our brothers and sisters!—*Good News Bible*.*

John 15:14: "And you are my friends if you do what I command you."—*Good News Bible*.* [How can we give our lives for others? Do we have to die?]†

[BSG:] In short, we should recognize that **we have been forgiven an infinite debt**, one that we can never repay, a debt paid only at the cross for us.

Therefore, we should love and praise God and live with love and grace toward others. As Luke 7:47 teaches, the one who is forgiven much loves much, but “to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little” (NKJV). And who among us doesn’t realize just how much he or she has been forgiven?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, January 9.^{†§}

Luke 7:47: “I tell you, then, the great love she [Mary] has shown proves that her many sins have been forgiven. But whoever has been forgiven little shows only a little love.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*‡} [Think of what Jesus had done for Mary! (See Luke 8:2.)][‡]

27. Since we have received God’s love, we should love others.

1 John 4:7-21: ⁷ **Dear friends, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Whoever loves is a child of God and knows God.** ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for **God is love.** ⁹And God showed his love for us by sending his only Son into the world, so that we might have life through him. ¹⁰This is what love is: it is not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the means by which our sins are forgiven.

¹¹ Dear friends, if this is how God loved us, then we should love one another.

¹²No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in union with us, and his love is made perfect in us.

¹³ We are sure that we live in union with God and that he lives in union with us, because he has given us his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and tell others that the Father sent his Son to be the Saviour [*sic-Br*] of the world. ¹⁵If anyone declares that Jesus is the Son of God, he lives in union with God and God lives in union with him. ¹⁶And we ourselves know and believe the love which God has for us.

God is love, and those who live in love live in union with God and God lives in union with them. ¹⁷Love is made perfect in us in order that we may have courage on Judgement Day; and we will have it because our life in this world is the same as Christ’s. ¹⁸**There is no fear in love; perfect love drives out all fear. So then, love has not been made perfect in anyone who is afraid, because fear has to do with punishment.**

¹⁹ **We love because God first loved us.** ²⁰If we say we love God, but hate our brothers and sisters, we are liars. For people cannot love God, whom they have not seen, if they do not love their brothers and sisters, whom they have seen.

²¹**The command that Christ has given us is this: all who love God must love their brother or sister also.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*‡‡}

28. Are we doing our best to share God’s love with others so Christ may come soon?

[From the writings of Ellen G. White:] **Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God** [in prayer]. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. “The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” James 5:11. His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. **Nothing is too great for Him to bear**, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. **Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice.** There is no chapter in our experience too dark

for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest. "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Psalm 147:3. **The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son.**—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ** 100.1.†‡

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29. Is it really possible that the relationship between God and "each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth." In human terms, that is impossible to understand; but, not for God.

30. **The love of God was intended to be reflected in human relationships.** God universally seeks a relationship of reciprocal love; the continuation of an intimate relationship implies an appropriate human response. **The human side of the covenant-maintaining love involves keeping God's commandments and loving one another. Those are human activities empowered by God's love.**

[BSG:] God unconditionally loves everyone. As we accept and respond to His love, in the sense of allowing a loving relationship with Him, we also feel, as a practical effect of our loving relationship with God, the desire to establish a loving relationship with others. Therefore, God not only bestows His love on His creatures but also lets them freely respond (either positively or negatively) to His love and is willing to enable each person to express love to Him and to others. Based on this idea, discuss the following ... :

How can we unconditionally show our love and respect for every human being, regardless of social position, individual characteristics, or personal achievements?—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 29.‡

31. ***Is it too much for God to ask us to love other human beings in response to His love? When we get to heaven, we will be expected to love all with whom we associate. If that is true, do we really want to go there? It will require a reciprocal response from us.***

32. Let us review. We sometimes talk about people who love themselves! That is not real love; it is selfishness! Real love must be between two separate beings. God has poured out His love on us in order to get a response from us.

33. We have considered these three points in this lesson: (1) God's love is always unconditional. Whether we love Him or do not love Him, He still loves us. (2) God will never force us to love Him; but, that is what He really wants. (3) We are to show God's love to others.

34. ***Would it be fair to say that if we do not learn how to express our love to others, we have not really understood God's love for us?***

35. ***In how many ways can God say that He loves us? And in how many ways can we be foolish enough to reject that love?***

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