

Living for Life

February's Theme: Love

Introduction

Love seems like a natural theme for February because of Valentine's Day on February 14. Love, though, is an ongoing theme in our faith as Christians, beginning with God, who loves us more than we can know. When we read Bible stories, often love has a part in the story. Love also holds us together as a community of family, neighbors, and friends. Love is probably the greatest power we know.

Package Contents

- Wondering Cards:** This package has six wondering cards. These are informal conversation starters to use either in a one-on-one situation, such as driving in the car, or as a group, such as at family meals. You can use them more than once. There is no particular order to them. Choose one that you think is right for the moment.
- Scriptures:** *(enter the color)* This package contains four scriptures all having to do with love. They are a short Bible study. Try to discuss at least two of the scriptures during the month. The questions are suggestions. You can rephrase them, too. Feel free to use your own, especially as you may have your own questions as you read these passages. You can also revisit the scripture at another time during the month if you want to ask other questions. Bear in mind that the answers are not clear cut, black and white. You can answer them too.
- Prayers:** *(enter the color)* These are prayers for different situations. A good activity is to have them write their own prayer for the situation.
- Activity Sheet:** *(enter the color)* The activity ties together this month's theme. One activity is to send Valentine's Day cards to the people named in this packet. We included some blank cards to use and suggestions for what to write on the cards. The people are those who are ill or who were born in 1946 or before.

See the obverse side for Bible information.

Basic Bible User's Instructions

The Bible contains writings that are thousands of years old. It is a sacred book containing wisdom, although written long ago, remains fresh as scriptures still can teach us how to live today. Some people call the Bible an operating manual for life.

The Bible contains "books." Each book has one or more chapters, and each chapter has verses.

When we reference a scripture, we cite the book, the chapter, and the verse or verses. Thus, if we see a reference to Luke's account of Jesus' birth, the citation would be Luke 2:8-20. It means:

- The Gospel According to Luke
- Chapter two
- Verses 8-20

Note that a colon separates the chapter and the verse(s).

Furthermore, the Bible we use as Protestants has two major sections: Old Testament and New Testament. The Old Testament has the same books as in the Jewish Bible (although in a different order). The section often called the New Testament is scriptures used by Christians to understand Jesus and our faith.

The first four books of the New Testament are known as the gospels. The first three gospels are known as the synoptic gospels because they present the life of Jesus. John, known as the fourth gospel, though presenting the life of Jesus, points the reader to Jesus as God.

Books of the Bible

Old Testament or Hebrew Scriptures		New Testament	
Genesis	Ecclesiastes	Matthew	Titus
Exodus	Song of Solomon	Mark	Philemon
Leviticus	Isaiah	Luke	Hebrews
Numbers	Jeremiah	John	James
Deuteronomy	Lamentations	Acts of the Apostles	1 Peter
Joshua	Ezekiel	Romans	2 Peter
Judges	Daniel	1 Corinthians	1 John
Ruth	Hosea	2 Corinthians	2 John
1 Samuel	Amos	Galatians	3 John
2 Samuel	Obadiah	Ephesians	Jude
1 Kings	Jonah	Philippians	Revelation
2 Kings	Micah	Colossians	
1 Chronicles	Nahum	1 Thessalonians	
2 Chronicles	Habakkuk	2 Thessalonians	
Ezra	Zephaniah	1 Timothy	
Nehemiah	Haggai	2 Timothy	
Esther	Zechariah		
Job	Malachi		
Psalms			
Proverbs			

Prayers

Thanksgiving Prayer for Love

I give thanks for the people who love me, O God. They help me when I can't do things by myself. They stand with me when I'm too scared to be alone. They listen to me when no one else will. Amen.

Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.

Prayer Seeking Forgiveness

Loving God, I messed up. I didn't intend to be bad, but things went wrong. I thought too much about me and not about others. I appeal to your loving kindness for your forgiveness. Teach me and help me to think how my actions affect other people. Give me courage to admit I was wrong and to apologize to all who got hurt. Amen.

Finding Love in Us

O God, you are the source of love. Jesus taught us to love one another, loving our neighbors as ourselves. Yet, I struggle to love others. Loving people, especially people I don't know very well, can be very hard to do. Why is this so hard? What makes me afraid to love? Please give me courage. Help me to face my fear. Assure me of your presence as I try to love others more fully as Jesus taught. Amen.

Forgiving Someone

Loving God, I've been hurt. How do I love someone who hurt me? Yet, I know I am to love this person. Help me to heal. Give me time to recover. Help me to forgive so the stain of anger does not color my life. Let me set aside my anger so I may see clearly. In due time, O God, give me strength to forgive. Amen.

Do we love all people the same way?

What can you do to show you love someone?

Can we love someone we don't know?

What is love?

How do we show our love to God?

If someone hurts you, can you still love them?

1 Corinthians 13:1-7

Questions:

- Paul wrote that love is our greatest spiritual gift. Without love, all the good things he described in the first paragraph are worthless. Why do you think love matters?
- Why is humility an important part of love?
- How can we grow love in us?

About 1 Corinthians:

This is a letter that Paul wrote to the church in Corinth. The people in that church came from many backgrounds. They didn't see things alike. Paul urged them to unite themselves in Jesus and his teachings.

1 John 4:7-12

Questions:

- What would life be like without love?
- God is love. Knowing that and that we are made in the image of God, what can you do to show God is in you?
- When we think about God as Jesus, what would Jesus tell us about the way love can affect the people around us?

About 1 John:

This is the first of three letters written to people who were connected to the people who followed John, the writer of the fourth gospel. In these letters John stressed Jesus as part of the Christian tradition itself.

Ruth 1:1-19a

Questions:

- Ruth left her homeland to remain with Naomi. Was that a demonstration of Ruth's love for her?
- Does love inspire us to do things we would not think of doing?
- What did Ruth give up for love?

About Ruth:

Ruth was Naomi's daughter-in-law. Ruth's husband was already dead at the start of this book. The story described the loving relationship the two women had with each other. Ruth later married Boaz. They had a son, Obed, who was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David, the great king of Israel.

Luke 10:27

Questions:

- The original quote, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength," comes from Deuteronomy 6:5. It is known as the *Shema*. Why do you think Jesus added, "Love your neighbor as yourself?"
- How important is loving yourself? What does "loving yourself" mean?
- If we are to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and all our mind, what's left in us to love other people? Or is loving other people the way we love God?
- Do we ever run out of love?

About Luke:

Luke was the third of the three synoptic gospel writers. He wrote his gospel primarily for Gentiles, people who were not Jewish.

Activities

- Find five songs about love. What do each of them tell you about love?
- Show someone that you love them.
- Since love is the greatest power we have, describe a superhero whose power is love. Draw the superhero.
- Enclosed are some names of people in our congregation on our prayer list. Please send each of them a Valentine's Day card (blank cards enclosed)



Suggestions for the Cards

A handwritten note is personal. It doesn't have to be long. It's a thoughtful reminder to someone that they are remembered. It is a loving kindness to be remembered.

Write a short note. If you need suggestions, choose any one of the following:

- Thinking of you on Valentine's Day
- Wishing you love and happiness today
- You are loved and cherished by God.
- Happy Valentine's Day
- May your day be filled with love and joy
- Sending love from our house to you
- Wishing you God's bountiful love today

Be sure to sign your name.