

Life: God is loving

May 26, 2014

• *The Bible Studies for Life lesson for June 8 focuses on 1 John 4:7-12.*

My first language is English. Although I know a few words from several different languages and am trying to learn Spanish, I am proficient only in my heart language. This can make it a great challenge to communicate with the many groups with whom I work across Texas.

I have found, however, those who belong to Christ have something stronger and deeper than mere words that enables us to communicate across many barriers. It is the love of God.

The source of love

In 1980, Johnny Lee made popular the song, *Lookin' For Love*. The gist of the song is about a guy spending his whole life looking for love and “playing a fool’s game” for “traces” of what he was dreaming of. Eventually, he found the girl in the right way. His search ended.

This song aptly describes every human being on the planet. We look in all the wrong places for love. The Apostle John says, “Love comes from God” (1 John 4:7). Love comes from God because “God is love” (1 John 4:8).

Holy God is distinct and stands apart. His love is holy love. It is unlike any other. It is unfailing. Psalm 130:7 reads, “O Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.” The psalmist declared in Psalm 13:5, “But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.”

The gift of love

God doesn’t just talk about love. We see it in action. Savor this picture from

John 1:14 in The Message, “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish.”

Why did Jesus come into this world? Our sin had separated us from God. 1 John 4:10 rightly says, “Not that we loved God, but that he loved us.” God’s holiness demands punishment for our sin. Out of his love for those he created, God sent his Son to be our atoning sacrifice (1 John 4:10). The Father poured the wrath we deserved on his Son. We earn death because of our sin (Romans 6:23). The sin of all mankind couldn’t kill Jesus. He defeated it when he rose from the dead and lives today seated at the right hand of the Father.

The most often quoted verse from Scripture is John 3:16. Don’t let its familiarity rob you of the depth of its message. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

The unconditional, unlike-any-other-kind of love went into action when God gave his singularly one-of-a-kind son to die in my place, in your place. The gift was not coerced from the heart of the Giver. The one who chooses to receive the gift does not earn it nor deserve it. It is freely given from a loving God.

Have you received the gift God is offering you? If not, today is the day to agree with God that you have sinned against him. Put your faith in Christ and ask him to forgive you and make you new from the inside out.

If you have already made that decision, who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this message of love? Everyone is looking for love. Some people simply are looking in the wrong place. Share God’s love with someone today.

The response to love

God's love in his followers reaches full expression when we love one another. In 1 John 4:7 and again in verse 11, John admonishes his readers to love one another. The Greek word for love in these two verses is the same word used for God loving us.

God loves us unconditionally, and we are to love one another the same way. These verses became incredibly real to me when one of my students in East Asia came to know Christ.

This young man was very intense in learning English. He put that same intensity to reading Scripture and following Christ. Even as he wanted to be obedient to Scripture, he also expected other Christians to do the same.

One night, the student asked another Christian to help him with an English project. For whatever reason, the friend wouldn't help him. My student was bewildered and hurt.

Three days later, the student arrived for our weekly time of Bible study. He announced he didn't want to study the Bible anymore because it was false. Imagine my surprise. I had no idea what had happened, but whatever it was had shaken his young faith.

Through the power and grace of God's Spirit the story was finally pieced together. The young man had been reading these verses from 1 John 4. "Love one another." He really expected Christians to follow that teaching. Who else do you know who expects the same? The situation was resolved through prayer and obedience to another verse of scripture about forgiveness. But I never will forget that lesson.

People are watching us to see how we treat one another. Do they recognize the love of God in us? "No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us" (1 John 4:12).