

Glimpses of Our God Lesson 12 1Q 2012

Love Stories

SABBATH

Read memory text:

The LORD has appeared of old to me, *saying*: “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you. Jer 31:3

Thoughts about this passage? What do you hear?

Anyone want to share how in their life they have experienced God draw them with lovingkindness?

- God’s acceptance of me after I have fallen, made bad decisions, “sinned” yet, He gently picks me up, bandages my emotional wounds and let’s me know He loves me. I have never experienced God say, “I told you so” or rub my nose in my mistakes – have you?
- Through friends and people who know God and who know my mistakes and yet they still love me and don’t condemn me.
 - One of ways people are often drawn away from the church, is when they have made a mistake, when they have violated their own morals, values, principles, is to be “accepted” by those who don’t believe in God and don’t hold those values, while they feel judged and fear condemnation from people in the church!
- Through my wife, Christie, who shows me God’s love all the time!
- Through numerous events where God has shown His personal interest in my life

Do you hear anything in this passage about how love works?
Does this passage give any insight into what method love uses?

How does God reach us? With lovingkindness! What does that look like?

It reminds me of Romans 2:4 “The kindness of God leads us to repentance.”

Do you believe this is true? Is love always kind? Or is love ever unkind?

Consider discipline –

- If a parent loves their child, will the parent discipline or not discipline?
- Is discipline loving or unloving, kind or unkind?
- Does discipline take away freedom, or assist the child in gaining freedom? How?

So, if love always seeks to draw with loving kindness, can we use this fact as a measuring stick to test certain doctrines or theories taught about God?

Does love use power to inflict harm for the purpose of causing torture, with no hope of recovery?

- A doctor will reduce a dislocated hip, which is quite painful, is the doctor trying to inflict pain?
- Will a doctor, get a whip and beat a terminal patient to death who refuses treatment?
- A loving parent may discipline a child who is disobedient, and the discipline may be painful for the child (and parent)
- But will a loving parent torture and execute a disobedient child?

Does the fact God always acts with lovingkindness rule out certain interpretations of scripture?

Then how do we understand this passage:

And that servant, who knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*; ⁴⁸but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more. Luke 12:47,48

Is this passage suggesting God is using power to inflict torture upon unrepentant sinners at the end of time to punish them for sin?

Does the passage say the servants were killed? Were servants valuable? Did owners of slaves generally kill their slaves who disobeyed?

If we interpret this passage as infliction of punishment to destroy, what does it do to our understanding of God's character of love?

If a man says to a woman, "with lovingkindness have I drawn you" I have pursued you with patience, kindness and love, but if you don't love me, if you don't do as I say, I will beat you until you die." What happens in the heart of the woman?

Can God's kindness lead us to repentance, if He is also saying to us, "if you don't love me I will torture and kill you?"

Why do some insist God is a torturer?

Perhaps it is because of misunderstanding of the divine character, Read first paragraph, "Love, is perhaps..."

Thoughts? What do you think about the way this is stated, "Love, is perhaps, the most readily recalled attribute of God?"

I am not an English professor, so some of you help me out. Is saying “God is love,” the same as saying “love is an attribute of God?”

To me, saying love is an attribute, diminishes God’s character from love, to an admixture of various attributes, “loving” being one attribute among many.

I think this is a fundamental mistake of those who believe God will torture His children in the end. Could it be they see God’s character as something other than love, rather than seeing all aspects of His being, all His “attributes” as expressions of His character of love?

I have heard it expressed like this, “God is not only loving, He is also just.”

Think of this statement, what it means, and how severely it undermines God’s character?

- You and I can be loving, but are we love?
- To change “God is love,” to “God is loving” is an infinite diminishment of God’s character, and then to split His character and say “He is not only loving, He is also just,” diminishes Him further.

Why? Because love is always just, or another way to say it is, justice is an expression of love.

What is Biblical Justice? It is always an expression of selfless love!

- ▶ “Defend the poor and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and needy.” (Psalm 82:3)
- ▶ “Wash yourselves clean. Stop all this evil that I see you doing. Yes, stop doing evil and learn to do right. See that justice is done---help those who are oppressed, give orphans their rights, and defend widows.” (Isaiah 1:16-17 – GN)

- ▶ “The LORD is waiting to be kind to you. He rises to have compassion on you. The LORD is a God of justice.” (Isaiah 30:18 – God’s Word)
- ▶ “This is what the LORD says to the dynasty of David: ‘Give justice each morning to the people you judge! Help those who have been robbed; rescue them from their oppressors.’” (Jeremiah 21:12 – NLT)
 - ▶ What do you hear? Is justice punishing the oppressors, or delivering the oppressed?
 - ▶ The Jewish word for Justice is Tsedaka, and means charity, the giving of your resources, time, energy to help someone else, without expecting something in return.
 - ▶ So Biblical Justice is *delivering the oppressed NOT punishing the oppressor!*
 - ▶ Where did the idea originate that Justice is punishing the oppressor rather than delivering the oppressed?
 - ▶ Acceptance of Imperial Rome’s change to God’s law
 - ▶ If God’s law is the law upon which life is built, when someone breaks that law, the just or right action to take is to heal them, save them, deliver them.
 - ▶ If we saw a suicidal person jump off a building, it would not be right to seek to punish, them, it would be right to seek to save them.
 - ▶ if we saw a suicidal person hang themselves, i.e. breaking the law of respiration, what would the “just” or “right” action be? Would it be “right” or “just” to punish them or to save them if we could?
 - ▶ But if we accept Imperial Rome’s version of God’s law, as an imposed law, then when the law gets broken we must inflict punishment. In

this view God is no longer love, but something else, in the image Satan has cast of a god who is punishing, powers over, an authoritarian being.

Thoughts?

SUNDAY

Describes the first human love relationship – Adam and Eve, who were made in the image of God, and told to be fruitful and multiply.

God designed us to, not only experience emotional love, but physical union within that love relationship.

Why? What does it say about God that He created us this way?

God wants us to experience love, unity, intimacy, trust, peace, joy, pleasure, happiness, all of which is best experienced in relationship.

Why does He want us to experience these things? Because God is love and we are made in His image and when we live in harmony with His methods it is designed to be joyous, pleasurable, fulfilling, rewarding, happy.

How does Satan attack God's design for pleasure?

God designs us to experience pleasure as a *result* of living in harmony with His methods, design, and natural law.

- If we exercise regularly, we naturally experience endorphins, enkephalins, elevations in dopamine all of which cause elevations in mood
- If we help another person we naturally experience calming of fear circuits and activation of ACC with subsequent increase joy, pleasure, and happiness.

- If we love another person, genuinely we experience dopamine and oxytocin increase, calming of amygdala and peace, joy and pleasure
- Sex, within a healthy selfless marriage, not only brings the physical pleasure, but results in bonding, brain changes with increase oxytocin and dopamine which results in abiding trust, peace, joy, contentment and eradication of anxiety and fear.

How does Satan attack God's design for pleasure?

- By getting people to seek to simulate the pleasure circuits of the brain directly, not as a result of right doing, or a consequence of healthy action.
- Drugs cause an artificial increase in dopamine, without exercise, which damages the pleasure centers of the brain, increases activity in the fear circuits, impairs development of prefrontal cortex, causing us to be more selfish and less able to think rationally.
- Sex, outside a healthy marriage relationship, brings momentary pleasure, but also increased anxiety, worry, fear of rejection, guilt.
- Dominating another person, revenge seeking, can give a momentary sense of gratification and pleasure, but with subsequent fear, worry of retaliation, guilt, fear of getting found out etc.
- Satan's methods bring momentary pleasure, but activation of fear circuits, worsen anxiety, elevate inflammatory cascades, damage body, and ruin character as we become more and more self protective and self focused.

Read the fourth paragraph, "In verse 24..." thoughts?

Question, what happens when a spouse marries, but doesn't leave mother and father, usually emotionally, and continues to put the desires, wishes, feelings, needs, and expectations of the parents ahead of the spouse?

Do healthy relationships, with parents or spouse, result if this occurs?

Why do some people do this? Fear, not love, it is fear of rejection, fear of disappointing someone, fear of hurting someone's feelings, fear of abandonment etc., that motivates such action, not love.

Read bottom green section, "Romantic love..."

What can we do to enhance the likelihood of having healthy, Godly relationships?

1. Healthy relationships require healthy people, the number one action you can take is to, through God's grace, become the healthiest person you can be.
2. Honesty, communicate openly, truthfully in love.
 - a. If wife cooks a meal and you really don't like it, what do you do when she asks? Thank her, love her for her energy to provide, but tell her that that particular dish doesn't stimulate your taste buds in enjoyable ways.
 - b. If she asks you if you like her hair, or a dress, etc. If you don't, tell her. She might be disappointed in the moment, but if you are lovingly honest, when you do tell her she looks great, or you like you hair she will know you mean it.
 - i. Further, if you always say yes, avoid telling her things you don't like, she will lose respect for you and your ideas become meaningless.
 - ii. If you act in fear of your spouse's responses, then you are not acting in love.
3. Affirm each other regularly, purposely find aspects of each other that you genuinely appreciate and tell each other, on a daily basis.
4. Pray and study God's word together
5. Have joint mission, projects, endeavors, hobbies, recreation, share life together.

6. Respect the freedom of the other. If you disagree with your spouse on any aspect of life, diet, TV, church attendance, etc. lovingly share your concerns, but leave them free to make up their own mind. If you restrict liberty, love will be destroyed.
7. Work through problems together, don't try and protect the other by holding back on things that trouble you. All relationships have problems, what defines a relationship is how those problems are handled. If needed get professional counseling.
8. Don't try and fix your spouse, love them, share with them your understanding, ideas, perspectives, including your loving insights about them, but always leave them free to change themselves.

MONDAY

The lesson describes various Biblical romances, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, and asks what mistakes were made that caused problems in these relationships?

What mistakes were made?

- Lying
- Bringing other women into the bedroom
- Inequality
- Lack of trust in God
- Others?

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Genesis shows..." thoughts?

Would you agree that God's design for human romance is one man and one woman in a marriage relationship, in which children are born? Wasn't the original instruction to be fruitful and multiply? So wasn't it God's design, not only to experience romantic love, but the production of offspring?

How has sin damaged God's original design?

- Polygamy
- Homosexuality
- Celibacy
- Infertility
- Out of marriage sexual relationships
- Adultery
- Pornography
- Paraphelias (pedophilia, voyeurism, frotteurism) etc.
- Forced marriage
- Submission of one spouse to another
- Domestic violence (spouse abuse, physical, emotional, sexual, spiritual)

All of these are a result of sin? But, are all of these sin? Some are, some are not.

What would your hypothesis be regarding domestic violence in the church – same frequency as the non-believing world, higher or lower frequency for those who claim Christ as their savior?

Research done by Rene' Drumm, Chair, Department of SWS at SAU, documents that domestic violence in the SDA church is no different than the unbelieving world.

Why might this be?

Could it be that accepting a false view of God, a god who is wrathful, punitive, authoritarian, one who requires legal payment, fails to transform the heart?

It is a law that we become like the God we worship and admire, so what happens if we worship an authoritarian god, who must be appeased?

WEDNESDAY

Read paragraphs 3 and 4, “The answer...” thoughts?

According to Jewish tradition, which book of the Old Testament Bible is considered the Most Holy Place of the Bible?

Song of Solomon – and what is this book about?

Does it bother anyone that this book of Scripture, was written by someone who had 700 wives? Did it take that many wives to figure out the wisdom of this book?

What is the message of the Song of Solomon?

Close your heart to every love but mine;
hold no one in your arms but me.

Love is as powerful as death;
passion is as strong as death itself.

It bursts into flame
and burns like a raging fire.

⁷ Water cannot put it out;
no flood can drown it.
But if anyone tried to buy love with wealth,
contempt is all they would get. So 8:6,7

What is the message of these verses?

What are we to learn about God’s love for us from the way He designed marriage and romantic love to be?

- Love sacrifices self for the object of its love
- Love knows no fear
- Love never gives up
- Love seeks the best
- Love is patient
- Love is kind
- Love finds joy in the success of others

- Love builds up
- Love heals
- Love gives the benefit of the doubt
- Love forgives before it is asked
- Love leaves free

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions 1 and 2