

# A HEART FOR PEOPLE



A HEART FOR GOD  
A HEART FOR PEOPLE





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## INTRODUCTION

We come to the end of a wonderful study with the title: “A Heart for God – A Heart for People.” We have discovered who God is and what His characteristics are. God is compassionate, caring, loving, merciful, good and full of grace. We have learned that Jesus is the exact image of God and that Jesus showed us the heart of the Father. God has a heart for people and He gave us a new heart and a new spirit; His Spirit is in us, to develop a heart for people – His heart for people.

*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws (Ezekiel 36:26–27)*

Max Lucado asks the following question. “*What if, for one day, Jesus were to become you?*” He continues and asks: “*What would you be like? Would people notice a change?*” He goes further and asks: “*And you? How would you feel? Would you still dread what you are dreading? Better yet, would you still do what you are doing?*” (Lucado, 2014).

Paul wrote the following in his letter to the Ephesians:  
*“Your hearts and minds must be made completely new, and you must put on the new self, which is created in God's likeness and reveals itself in the true life that is upright and holy. (Ephesians 4:23-24. GNB).*

God's plan for us is a new heart. He wants us to have a heart like Jesus. And that is what the last study of this series is all about. To have a heart for people. What does it mean? It means to see people's needs, to hear and feel their pain, and to develop a heart, Jesus's heart, for them. And then to do something about it. Our world is in desperate need to see the true God, as He is revealed through Jesus and through His children.

God did not only give us His Spirit; His Spirit is daily transforming us into the image of God.

*“We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18).*

As His Spirit is daily transforming us, from glory to glory, the world needs to see more of Christ's love, care, peace, grace and mercy.



May you discover God's heart for the people that you journey with and may you be God's ambassador to them, showing them God's heart for them.

Soli Deo Gloria!  
To God alone all the glory!



# A HEART FOR PEOPLE

**Week 1**

## **Examine your heart!**

**Memory verse:**

*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

*Psalms 51:10 (NIV)*



A HEART FOR GOD  
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## Day 1:

# What is the Condition of Your Heart?

**Begin today's study with prayer.**

**Read Psalm 26:1-2, Psalm 139:1-4 and 2 Corinthians 5:5-10**

Do you like to be tested? If so, why? If not, why not?

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Being tested is part of everyday life. We are regularly tested on various levels. Sometimes it is to test our academic skills, sometimes we need to go for medical testing. If you want to drive a vehicle, you must first pass a series of tests before you can get a license.

Life sometimes tests you too. Things like illness, broken relationships, failures and temptations are also part of our everyday testing. We also need to be tested spiritually.

Before we can develop a heart for people like Jesus, we need to examine our own hearts. A sinful, self-centred heart will never be useful to God. The people that we share our lives with are in desperate need for God's people to have a pure heart; a loving heart for them.

Is your lifestyle in obedience to Jesus Christ?

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Are you committed to follow God's word?

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**Read Psalm 51:1-5**

What is the condition of your heart?

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The condition of your heart depends on the things you allow in your heart. These things shape your thoughts and attitudes and ultimately form the deepest part of your being. If your heart is focused on God, no matter what the circumstances are, things will be alright. But if you focus on the wrong things, sin will become deeply rooted and an unsteady spirit will be part of your life. Then your heart will be impure, unsteady and you will not experience the joy of being a child of God.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 2:

# Guard Your Heart

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

**Read Proverbs 4:23 and Psalm 51:6-8**

What do you think David means by “inner parts” and “inmost place?”

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God’s Spirit works in our inner parts and the inmost place. If the inmost part (your heart) is under the control of the spirit of this world and evil spirits, or your evil desires, the presence of God’s Spirit is not visible anymore. You are either under the control of your own and the world’s evil desires, or under the control of God’s Spirit. That is why we must guard our hearts against this sinful world.

Ask God to show you what is going on in the inner most parts of your heart.

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There's nothing more important than your inmost life, that is in your heart. Life is not your circumstances, the kind of house you live in, the kind of job you have or how much money you have. You can have the best of these things and still be miserable.

On the other hand, it's amazing how happy and peaceful you can be in the middle of the lousiest circumstances, including the turmoil that's going on in the world today, if you keep your heart focused on God.

### **Read Matthew 5:8**

Joyce Meyer says: "Do you want to hear from God? Keep your heart pure. Do you want to know God's secrets? Keep your heart pure.

Make time to make sure your heart is pure. Ask God to search your heart and if He shows you impurity in your life and in your inner most place; do as David did. Ask God to create in you a pure heart

Take time and listen to the song by Casting Crowns –  
*Here's my heart.*

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**





## Day 3:

# Create in me a clean heart

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

**Read Matthew 5:27-30**

What causes your heart to be impure?

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Jesus states clearly that sin starts in the heart and He goes even further and says that even if you just think evil thoughts, it is a sin. Start early in the morning by asking God to capture your heart. Do that by reading the Scripture and through prayer. Ask God to protect your heart. Every time you make a choice for the right thing, you are growing spiritually and every time you allow the sinful part of your life to take control of your life, your heart becomes impure. If you want to be a victorious Christian, guard your heart, even when you feel reluctant.

**Read Psalm 51:10-12**

Make a list of the results of an impure, sinful heart?

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David felt that it wasn't enough if God simply cleansed his heart. The plea "create" indicated he needed a new heart from God, a pure heart. An impure, sinful heart is unclean, and unclean people do not have free access to the living God. Their spirit will become unaware of God's will. That causes us to become unsure and to easily sin or doubt God and ourselves.

David seriously worried that God might take His Holy Spirit from Him and desperately desired to have the joy of his salvation restored. Sin and an impure heart don't mean that we have lost our salvation, but only that the joy in it is gone. Ask God daily to cleanse your heart and to restore the joy of your salvation. With a new and pure heart, ask God to give you a steadfast spirit to continue in the way of godliness; to abide in God's way.

**Read Psalm 51:13**

What is the result of a pure heart? Is there anything that keeps you from teaching other people the "right" way; God's way?

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When we allow sin in our hearts it is difficult to teach those who are far from God to walk in God's way. God's

blessing will not be on people who wilfully sin and don't want to confess their sins. Doing what God wants us to do, is the key to effectiveness in your spiritual work and life. Non-believers will not be convinced if we allow sin in our lives.

Those who overcome sin are the ones God can use in helping others to discover His heart for them. They are true witnesses of God's restoration because they have experienced it. Only people who have experienced God's redemption are useful witnesses of His redemption. Only they have seen his work and can know the shame of guilt and appreciate the triumphant message of grace.

We need to overcome our fallen nature that suggests that people are too evil to be redeemed, or that believers who sinned, are beyond hope. We should never forget that these are exactly the kind of people God promises to redeem and to restore. God is able and his promises can never fail.

After we confess and ask for restoration, we should teach others God's ways. If we share our testimony, life, struggles and triumphs to obey and trust God; other people struggling with sin will return to Jesus.

Listen to the song *Create in me a clean heart* by Ralph van Manen.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 4:

### Joyful heart

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

**Read Psalm 40:3, 51:12-16, Proverbs 15:13 and Philippians 4:4-9**

What is the result of a heart full of sin and guilt? Do you experience the same emotions as those of David about your sins? If you don't, why not?

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Sin and guilt close the lips of the believer. Sin causes a rift between believers and God. Sin makes people's hearts heavy. Sin stops us from praying and causes us to be full of shame and fear. Sin takes us out of the Holy presence of God. It casts a cloud over our praises. Then we lose the joy of spending time with God. Only God can restore a heavy, guilty heart, and that is what the prayer of David is about.

When we sin, as we all do, our humble confession and praise is a good lesson to the world and to other struggling believers. Because God cleanses us from sin and restores our heart, we have good reason to thank

and praise God for who He is and what He is doing!  
Jesus said that those who are forgiven much; love much!

A heart that is forgiven can praise God again. And that is what God really misses in times of sin and that is what He wants instead of sacrifices. God wants a change of heart and a different attitude.

### **Read Psalm 51:16 and 1 Samuel 15:25-26**

How do you understand Psalm 51:16 in our context?  
What does it mean to you?

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We can do nothing to earn God's forgiveness or make up for our sin. God doesn't want you to sacrifice your time, money and effort. He doesn't want you to suffer because of your sin, though your sins might bring suffering. God's heart is for you to turn away from your wicked ways and give Him your heart. The only thing God wants from us is a humble, broken heart that is truly sorry for our sins.

The Message translation states it beautifully.

*Unbutton my lips, dear God; I'll let loose with your praise. Going through the motions doesn't please you, a flawless performance is nothing to you. I learned God-worship*

*when my pride was shattered. Heart-shattered lives ready for love don't for a moment escape God's notice. (Psalm 51;15-17, The Message)*

The question we must truly answer is: What are we doing in times of disobedience and sin? Often, in times of sin and failure, we run away from God and hide from His presence. We learn in this Psalm that God invites us to run to Him and seek forgiveness and restoration. The message of the cross of Jesus is that we can run to God in those times when we have sinned. We can know that He is faithful to forgive us and restore a right relationship with Him.

May you run to God this week and seek refuge in Him!

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 5:

# A broken spirit and a contrite heart

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

**Read Psalm 51:17-19**

What do you consider a broken and contrite heart to be? Have you ever come to God with a broken and contrite heart? If not, why not?

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Contrite means to feel regret and sorrow for one's sins or offenses. A contrite heart is a crushed heart and a broken spirit is brokenness over our sins. The best sacrifices we can offer God are "a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart." God accepts that more than any other sacrifice. God doesn't desire our offerings or sacrifices as much as He does our obedience. God wants your heart. God wants us to have a genuine and deep sorrow for our rebellion against God and a determined desire to walk away from sin.

A contrite heart does not seek to rationalize or explain or excuse or defend or justify sin. It does not try to fool God or others or us. It recognizes that God demands truth



and honesty. A contrite and broken heart does not mean merely feeling bad or remorseful about sin! It does not seek to blame circumstances or other people or God for our own failure.

A contrite heart recognizes that sin is “to stab God in the back”. It recognizes that it is morally wrong and against the will of God. It recognizes that sin is to be disobedient to God’s will and law. God doesn’t want to hear our empty apologies, cheap promises and our resolution to do better. God desires one thing and one thing only: a broken and contrite heart. He is interested in you changing your attitude about the world and sin and He wants your heart to thirst after Him and Him alone.

Sir Richard Baker said: *“Is a thing that is broken good for anything? Can we drink in a broken glass? Or can we lean upon a broken staff? But though other things may be the worse for breaking, yet a heart is never at the best till it be broken; for till it be broken we cannot see what is in it; till it be broken, it cannot send forth its sweetest odour; and therefore, though God loves a whole heart in affection, yet he loves a broken heart in sacrifice. And no marvel, indeed, seeing it is himself that breaks it; for as nothing but goat’s blood can break the adamant, so nothing but the blood of our scapegoat, Jesus Christ, is able to break our adamantine hearts. Therefore, accept,*

*O God, my broken heart, which I offer thee with a whole heart; seeing thou canst neither except against it for being whole, which is broken in sacrifice, nor except against it for being broken, which is whole in affection.”*

## **Read 1 John 1:8-9**

What does Psalm 51 have in common with 1 John 1:9?

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1 John 1:9 is a summary of Psalm 51. David confesses his sins in detail and he asks for cleansing, renewal, restoration and being made clean again and thereby experience God's forgiveness

We believe that Jesus paid for our sins. Why is it then necessary to confess our sins?

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Jesus paid for our sins, once and for all, by his life and death. In view of God's holiness, it is fitting that we confess our sins on a regular basis. We can add nothing to His forgiveness, but we will be strengthened if we accept and confess our sin.

No sin is too big to be forgiven by God. If we don't experience forgiveness and cleansing it is usually because we won't forgive ourselves. Not forgiving ourselves is the sin of pride, because in affect we are saying that Jesus's death was not enough to pay the penalty for our sins. We are capable of any sin! It is only God's grace that keeps us from horrible and despicable sins, not our own goodness.

God will accept our confession of sin if our heart is in the right place. Pride and arrogance make our sacrifices unacceptable, no matter how great they are. Humility and sincere sorrow make our sacrifices acceptable to God.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**





## **GROUP STUDY:**

### **Prayer**

#### **Memory verse:**

*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

*Psalms 51:10*

#### **Reflection:**

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

#### **Scripture Reading:**

Read Psalm 51

## Discussion questions

Read Psalm 51:1-4 (3-6). On what basis does David approach God? Why might it be hard for a person to approach God on this basis? What does David's threefold description of "transgression", "iniquity" and "sin" tell us about ourselves?

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Read Psalm 51:7-12. How is God's forgiveness described in vv7-9? What is the process of forgiveness? (vv10-12)? Where are you in that process?

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Read Psalm 51:13-16. What is the outward effect of forgiveness according to vv13-15? What does this imply about how to witness and share your faith?

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Read Psalm 51:17-19. What does it mean to come to God with a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart?

What should the characteristics (marks) be of a community of genuinely forgiven sinners according to vv18-19? Does our church bear those marks? How can we increase them?

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**Close in prayer**





# A HEART FOR PEOPLE

Week **2**

## A heart for people

**Memory verse:**

*For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.*

*2 Corinthians 5:14(NIV)*

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## Day 1:

# Compelled by the Love of Christ

**Begin today's study with prayer.**

**Read 2 Corinthians 5:11-15**

Does the unbelief and consequent fact that the people around you are lost, bother you at all? Motivate your answer.

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To share the love of Christ with people should be in the heart of every believer. God didn't save us and give us a "don't care" attitude. He didn't call us to share our ideas about Christianity, our church in general. He called us to be His witnesses. Witnesses of the saving power of Jesus Christ. Paul had a passionate desire to share with people the love of Christ and consequently to bring them to accept Christ as their Saviour. That must also be our daily focus and intention, to have a heart for people! Better still, to have God's heart for His people.

What drives you? In other words, what motivates you?

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Paul said is this passage that he is compelled by the love of Christ

The word compelled means: *to exercise continuous control over someone or something.* In 2 Corinthians 5:14 ‘Christ’s love controls us’ may be rendered as ‘the fact that Christ loves us, causes us to act as we do.’

Something bigger than ourselves is pushing us to be willing to share the love of Christ with people. It is as if Paul said he had to do what he did, because he had received so much love from Jesus that it compelled (forced) him to serve others.

This is the greatest foundation of our Christian ministry, wanting to give something to others because Jesus has given us everything. When we have really received the love of Christ, it touches us and makes us want to serve others.

What will your answer be if people ask you why you are a Christian and why you go to church and why you talk about God?

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Will it be: I must? *"I have no control over my actions, because I am pushed towards other people because I received the love of Christ. I have Jesus' heart for people, because I experienced the love of Christ in my heart."*

Charles Spurgeon once said. *"The love of Christ had pressed Paul's energies into one force, turned them into one channel, and then driven them forward with a wonderful force, till he and his fellows had become a mighty power for good, ever active and energetic."*

The world that we live in desperately needs to hear the message of the love of Christ and that the reason for salvation is Jesus' death on the cross. Paul says in verse 15 that Jesus died that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised again. Our lives are not our own. God created us and He bought us and therefore we are called to serve Jesus and not ourselves or even the church as institution.

William Ernest Henley said: *"I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul."* *If we are not serving Christ, we are serving another master. To live for ourselves, is to serve sin. To live for Christ is to serve Him."*

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 2:

# What is the Love of Christ?

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

**Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-17**

What do you think is the “love of Christ” and the “love for Christ?”

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We often feel so grateful for what God did for us through Christ and we love God for that. We are glad to serve Him and do things for Him. We do it because of our love for Him. But the “love of Christ” is different. We saw in yesterday’s study that that kind of love, controls us. It compels us to do the things that are on God’s heart and on His agenda and it is sometimes not so easy. God’s ever constant and never-ending love is a love that is ours in Christ Jesus. And this love has at its centre the cross and God’s love for people. This is what this study is all about: to have a heart for people; but not your own heart for people, God’s heart.

**Read Ephesians 5:1-2**

What does it mean to be an imitator of Christ in respect of the “love of Christ?

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The phrase “love of Christ,” can be described as God’s willingness to act in our best interest. Especially in meeting our greatest need, even though it cost Him everything and even though we were the least worthy of such love.

If we want to have God’s heart for people and want to learn to love people with the love of Christ, our love for one another will flourish. It will grow if we consider other people’s needs above our comfort. To become a loving person means living with the roots of your love sunk deep into the love of Christ for you.

Jesus’s love is shown in His leaving His home in heaven. There He was worshipped and honoured. He came to earth as a man: He was mocked, betrayed, beaten and crucified to pay the penalty for our sin. He considered our need of a Saviour from sin and its penalty, as more important than His own comfort and life. That is the love of Christ. It is Godlike love and has no source in a human’s heart.

To love someone with the love of Christ is counter-cultural. The culture of our time is that instinctive sense that love is focused primarily on us.

We need to become imitators of Christ in the way we love.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**





## Day 3:

### A new creation

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

**Read 2 Corinthians 4:18, 5:16-19 and Ephesians 4:22-24**

How do you regard the people that you share your life with? Do you see them as people in need of Christ or doesn't it bother you where they will eventually end up? Do their troubles and pain trouble you at all? Explain your viewpoint?

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To be a new creation in Christ means that the way we regard people must change. We do not look at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen. Because God gave us a new heart, we start to see other people's hearts. We do not judge people on their behaviour anymore. We know that the driving force behind a person's action is either the Holy Spirit or his own sinful desires and the evil force of the devil.

What does it mean to be a new creation?

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A new life supposes a new heart. It is to receive God's heart as we saw in the introduction. As people who are loved by God, we have a new way of life and a new character. We live by new rules and follow new principles. Our choices are new and we have new companions.

To be renewed is to recognise that your old lifestyle is something of the past. You develop a new outlook and get God's heart and Jesus's love for people around you. You start to see people through the eyes of God. You start to feel God's compassion for His people.

The love of Christ reigns in your heart now. You allow the Holy Spirit to influence your decisions and actions towards people. To be a new created person is not according to your own design.

How does the fact that you are a new creation compels you to love people with the "love of Christ?"

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The work of the new creation is even greater than God's work of creating the world. When God created the world there was nothing to begin with. People are sinners and their inherent nature is to oppose all that is good and all that is from God. They are stubborn and want to do what they want to do. To create the world was an amazing miracle from God, but to create a new creature in Jesus Christ is even more so.

As a new creation in Christ, compelled by His love; our choices are now determined by our love for Christ. Not by what we think are good for God and for people and us. As new creation of God, we must learn to submit.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 4:

# The ministry of reconciliation

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

**Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-19**

How has God reconciled us with Himself?

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God is the initiator of the ministry of reconciliation. No human can come up or could come up, or ever will come up with a plan to reconcile people with God. Sin caused a rift between God and humans. Humans are now far from God and are not in His presence any more. Only God was able to change the situation and therefore, through Christ, He initiated the ministry of reconciliation that dramatically changed everything.

The Good News is that God so loved sinners, (not that sinners so loved God, but God so loved sinners) that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. It is in God's nature to love people and to save them from hell and then to reconcile them with Him. Paul makes it clear that God, through Christ, reconciled the world with Himself. They

were working together. Though Jesus was treated as if He was an enemy of God; He was not. Even as Jesus was being punished as if He was a sinner; He was performing the most holy service unto God the Father ever offered. As it accomplished the work of reconciling the world to Himself, it was completely pleasing to God, the Father.

In this process of reconciliation, God forgives the sins of people who believe in Him. He doesn't count the trespasses of believers anymore. That's the only way there can be a reconciliation, because sin has created the separation and alienation. God had to remove what alienates people from Him and He did that by the forgiving of sins.

What role are you supposed to play and are you playing with regards to the "ministry of reconciliation"?

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Paul uses the word "reconciled" five times. The ministry of reconciliation is God's heart for people and therefore it is at the heart of our responsibility as Christians. God has called us to preach the message, the Good News of reconciliation.

The world and the people that share your life with you ought to know that God, in His great love and mercy, reconnected people from whom He had been separated by sin, to Him. Reconciliation is the opposite of alienation. It is to bring peace between enemies. Our mission and our ministry are to tell people who are alienated from God, that they can be reconciled with God.

No other religion can give people this message of hope, love, restoration and reconciliation.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 5:

# Ambassadors for Christ

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

**Read 2 Corinthians 5:19-21, Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8**

What does it mean to be an ambassador of a country?

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Every government sends its ambassadors into foreign countries to represent their country. As ambassador for your country you end up in a strange culture and a foreign environment. As an ambassador, you do not speak and act on you own behalf, but on behalf of your country. An ambassador simply says what he/she has been commissioned to say. An ambassador is more than a messenger; the honour and reputation of his/her country are in his/her hands.

What does it mean to be an ambassador for Christ? How can you be an ambassador for Christ?

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Our citizenship is in heaven. Heaven is our true home. We are aliens and strangers in this world. We are not supposed to like and follow the way of and act according to the world. We are strangers on earth, representing the Kingdom of God and acting according to its principles and rules. We speak on behalf of our King and our culture is to follow the culture of love and kindness. We live a different lifestyle. We have a different spiritual understanding.

John MacArthur says: *“Evangelical Christianity today is spending too much time, too much money, and too much effort trying to change the culture rather than preach the ministry of reconciliation. The sovereign has given us the message. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ.”*

We have been sidetracked into moralistic and political efforts. We often want to change people’s moral views and actions. We put effort into changing the political system. However, our mandate is not to change the world and its systems. Our mandate, as ambassadors for God, is simply to love people with the love of Christ and be ambassadors of the ministry of reconciliation. We are here to proclaim the Good News of Jesus. As ambassadors, we don’t bring our own message. We bring the message of hope, love, mercy and reconciliation. We are not called to bring our own



message or the messages of our church; we are called to bring and show the heart of God to people.

What is the great commission? Do you think God called you to be part of the great commission and to help make? Motivate your answer.

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We are called to show people the way to a new life and the way to salvation. We must help people to recognize their sin, without judging them, but by showing them the heart of the Father, who doesn't want anyone to be lost.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**





## GROUP STUDY:

### Prayer

#### Memory verse:

*For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.*

*2 Corinthians 5:14 (NIV)*

#### Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

#### Scripture Reading:

Read 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 and Ephesians 4:22-24

**Discussion questions**

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-16. What is the difference between your love for Christ and the love of Christ? What does Paul mean when he says that “if one died for all, then all died”?

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Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Ephesians 4:22-24. If you are a new creation, how radical is the change you underwent? What kind of “old things” are passed away in Christ?

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Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-29. What is meant by reconciliation? Why is the Old Testament essential for us and for the world to be reconciled to God?

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Read 2 Corinthians 5:20-21. What is an “ambassador?” What three parties are involved in any situation where an

ambassador serves? How ought we to be ambassadors for Christ?

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**Close in prayer**



# A HEART FOR PEOPLE

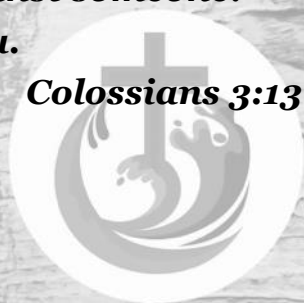
## Week 3

### A heart that forgives

**Memory verse:**

*Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

*Colossians 3:13*









## Day 1:

# God's heart of forgiveness

**Begin today's study with prayer.**

**Read Colossians 3:12-14 and John 3:16**

Forgiveness is powerful, it breaks the chains of sin, it restores relationships and it brings healing. People struggle to forgive others. For us to be able to forgive, we first need to grasp what forgiveness is and where it derives from.

Why do we need forgiveness?

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What was the reason God forgave us?

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In the context of this study there are predominantly two words used with regards to forgive:

1. The word *Charizimai*, which means to grant as a favour, gratuitously, in kindness, in pardon or to rescue. It also means deliver, (frankly) forgive, (freely) give, or grant.

2. The word *Aphiemi*, which means to set free.

Both these words are verbs, they are “doing” words. In other words: Forgiveness is not having a feeling to forgive; but TAKING ACTION by forgiving.

God acted through love. The reason why God forgave us, was because of His love. By forgiving us He not only pardoned us, that is forgave us our wrong doings. No, He went a step further. He set us free as well. He set us free from sin, the bondage of which leads to death and He set us free from paying the price for sin. He forgave us and set us free from guilt.

This is the exact opposite from the way the world and mankind think and act. When someone is found guilty of wrong doing, then there is a price that must be paid by the guilty party. Whether it is paying for damage caused to a car in an accident or time in jail for committing an offence, there is always a price.

With God there is no payment due from us. Jesus has already paid the price.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 2:

# The price of forgiveness

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

**Read 1 John 1:7-9 and Isaiah 43:25**

How do we receive forgiveness?

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Have you been forgiven?

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The Bible tells us that we are all in need of forgiveness from God. We have all committed sin. Ecclesiastes 7:20 proclaims: *"There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins."* 1 John 1:8 says: *"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."* All sin is ultimately an act of rebellion against God (Psalm 51:4). As a result, we desperately need God's forgiveness. If our sins are not forgiven, we will spend eternity suffering the consequences of our sins (Matthew 25:46 and John 3:36).

We can't earn God's forgiveness. It is paid by Christ who was the sacrifice (the payment).

Do you feel the weight of guilt and that you are not good enough for God to forgive you?

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Do you sometimes wonder if you are really forgiven?

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God's word confirms that He loves us and He is faithful to us. When we confess our sins, He forgives them immediately and the weight of guilt, is taken away. He not only forgives us, He does not remember our past wrongs.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 3:

# The commandment to forgive

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

How easy or difficult is it for you to forgive someone?

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Keeping in mind the previous days' studies, how easy should it be to forgive someone?

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**Read Matthew 6:10-12 and Mark 11:25**

What does this part of scripture command us to do?  
Why?

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**Read Matthew 18:21-35**

What happens if we don't forgive others?

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When someone orders us to do something, or imposes an obligation, it is natural for us to ask two questions. The first question is, “Why should I?” and the second is, “Who says so?” The why and the authority behind the mandate are very important to the question of forgiveness.

In this parable, the point of Jesus’ teaching is clear. The why for forgiving others is rooted in the fact that we have been the recipients of extraordinary mercy and compassion. We are all debtors who cannot pay their debts to God. Yet God has been gracious enough to grant us forgiveness in Jesus Christ. It is no wonder that in the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus instructs His disciples to say: *“Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.”* There is a parallel, a joint movement of compassion, that is first received from God and then we in turn exercise the same compassion to others. God makes it clear that if we lack that compassion and harbour vengeance in our heart, rather than being ready to forgive again and again, we will forfeit any forgiveness that has been given to us.

On the website, Focus on the Family, we find the following very important insights about forgiveness:

- *Forgiveness is not letting the offender off the hook.*
- *Forgiveness is returning to God the right to take care of justice.*

- *Forgiveness is not letting the offense recur again and again.*
- *Forgiveness does not mean we have to revert to being the victim.*
- *Forgiveness is not the same as reconciling.*
- *We must forgive every time.*
- *Forgetting does not mean denying reality or ignoring repeated offenses.*
- *Forgiveness is not based on others' actions but on our attitude.*
- *If they don't repent, we still must forgive.*
- *We don't always have to tell them we have forgiven them.*
- *Withholding forgiveness is a refusal to let go of perceived power.*
- *We might forgive too quickly to avoid pain or to manipulate the situation.*
- *We might be pressured into false forgiveness before we are ready.*
- *Forgiveness does not mean forgetting.*
- *Forgiveness starts with a mental decision.*

If possible listen to the song “*Forgiveness*” by Matthew West.

**End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**

## Day 4:



# God's forgiveness brings healing and restoration

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

**Read Luke 7:36-50 and Colossians 3:13-15**

What was the difference between Simon and the woman?

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What was the result of the woman's action?

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What is the effect of Jesus' forgiveness?

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What a trio! Christ stands here as a manifestation of the divine love, as it is bestowed on sinners. The love of God is not dependent on our merits. It is not turned away by our sins. It always manifests itself as the clearing of debts. But it demands recognition and service.



The woman represents those who remorsefully and lovingly recognize the divine love. She was not forgiven because of her love; but her love was the sign that she had been forgiven and she recognized it. How great is God's love! What Jesus did for her, He can do for your many sins. His pardon will lead to much love and love becomes the gate to knowledge and the source of obedience.

What is the effect of us forgiving others?

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Forgiveness restores peace, peace between God and us as our relationship is re-established and inner peace is restored. God promises this.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## **Day 5:**

### **Now, forgive!**

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

Today is all about forgiving others. Now, take a few minutes to pause and reflect on this past week's truth about forgiveness and on God's forgiveness. Ask God to come and search your heart. Allow Him to show you if you have any unforgiveness in your heart.

Norman Vincent Peale said: *"Thinking about forgiving is not enough. You must come to a moment when you say, 'With God's help I now forgive.'"*

**Read Colossians 3:13, Mark 11:25 and Matthew 6:14**

Ask God to show you who you must forgive. Be bold, contact the person and forgive them. Now pray for them.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## GROUP STUDY:

### Prayer

#### Memory verse:

*Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

*Colossians 3:13 (NIV)*

#### Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

#### Scripture Reading:

Read Matthew 6:9-15, Mark 11:25 and Colossians 3:12-15

**Discussion questions**

What does God’s forgiveness mean to you?

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Does forgiveness mean you have to let that person back into your life again?

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How can you forgive and love someone but protect yourself from his or her actions?

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*Optional:* Share personally, honestly without judgement or share outside the group, if you are struggling to forgive someone or if you have been able to forgive this week.

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**Close in prayer**

# A HEART FOR PEOPLE

Week **4**

## A heart for your family

**Memory verse:**

*Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain.*

*Psalm 127: 1(a)*



A HEART FOR GOD  
A HEART FOR PEOPLE





## Day 1:

# God's design for the family

**Begin today's study with prayer.**

**Read Genesis 1:26-28, 2:24 and 1 Corinthians 11:3**

What picture of the Godly design for families do you find in these verses?

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When we consider the biblical narrative, we see many family relationships that are broken by sin. Today's story is no different; sin still destroys family relationships, and therefore we don't have great models of God's design. In fact, today we even see the effects of sin in the redefinition of marriage. In some cultures, men take many wives and for others homosexual marriage is acceptable.

**Read Colossians 3:1-2**

What responsibilities does a Christian have to his family based on his identity in Christ?

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Often our responses are based on what other people do to us instead of our relationship with Christ. We cannot control others, but we can control our faithfulness to Christ as we seek to walk in God's original design for the family.

**Read Colossians 3:18-21**

What are the responsibilities of each member of the family according to Paul?

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How does the Christian view of marriage conflict with the world's understanding of marriage?

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We are all part of a family. Take time to reflect on the dynamics of your family and reflect on how close to or far from God's design for a family you are.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**





## Day 2:

# Pursuing God in your family

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

There is an saying that says “compassion grows with distance.” The further people are away from us the easier it is to have compassion; the closer they are to us the more difficult and challenging it can be. Our family is one place we need to consider how to apply love.

### Read Mark 5:19-20

What was the reaction of the man that was healed by Jesus? What command did Jesus give him?

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Here is one of the first lessons in the Primary School of Christian life. We shall, of course, enlarge our circle of Christian behaviour as time goes on and as opportunity occurs, but apply these principles to our homes first.

Why do people find it so difficult to display the true Spirit of Christ to their family?

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We have all heard of some Christians who seem to have thought of their home as the place wherein there is no need to display the true spirit of CHRIST - it is often the most difficult place in which to do it. But let us always bear in mind this "first" rule of faith. Remember, showing piety does not mean talking about religion, but living it.

**Read Psalm 68:5-6(a)**

What does this verse teach us about how important families are to God?

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Read the following verses and see if you can identify the rules to help your family pursue God:

Philippians 4:1	
Philippians 4:7	
Philippians 4:8	
Colossians 3:16	

Colossians 3:17	
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Name a few practical ways to ensure that you and your family follow these rules.

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When the Word of God is in residence as the centre, the harmony of heart and home is assured. Let us, then, not merely read, but study, ponder and practise the Scriptures. This will help us that we may not have a poor knowledge of the Bible, but come increasingly to possess its abounding wealth.

**End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 3:

# The new man makes a new home

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

The major problem in the world, is people. And the major problem with people is this: people can't get along with people. This can be seen all the way from the lowest level of a relationship between a brother and a sister when they are children to the high-level wars that occur in our world. It's all basically the same problem: people can't get along.

Paul has been discussing the character of the individual Christian and now he talks about the Christian as he/she lives in this world. He talks about how Christianity relates to society. It isn't enough to be a Christian – Christianity always has a flow-on effect in your relationship to other people because it changes who you are.

### **Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21**

What effect should a spiritual renewal in your life, have on your family?

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When you become a new creation in Christ, it should introduce a new presence into your home.

**Read Philippians 2:1-8**

In what way should the presence of Christ affect your home and your relationships? What should change?

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For Christianity to influence the world, it should start at individual families. If families can become what God wants them to be, they can become the catalyst to change the world.

If we are risen with Christ, our lives must show it. Put aside the old man; become a new man. Set our families in order and they can become a testimony to the world. Then, maybe, we can save this world before it's so far gone that we lose it all together.

**End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 4:

# Shepherding your family

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

Steven Cole said the following: *“I find that many men have a nagging anxiety about the matter of leading their families. They know that they are supposed to lead their families spiritually, but they’re not sure what that means or how to go about it. They know that they will answer to the Lord for this important task, but they feel very uncertain and uncomfortable about doing it. The task could be summed up with the phrase, “Shepherding your family.”*

## Read John 10:1-18

A shepherd is someone who tends, feeds, guides and guards his herd. Therefore, shepherding your family means to lead, guide, feed and protect them. What does this parable teach us about shepherding in the way that Jesus taught us?

Verse 3-5 & 14	
Verse 4	

Verse 11 & 17	
Verse 12 & 13	
Verse 15	

Evaluate your family and your relationship with them.  
Are you a shepherd to them? If not, why not?

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List a few practical ways in which you can change your  
interaction with your family.

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Does your family read the Bible together and pray  
together? If not, why not?

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Our goal is that each of our family members live for the  
glory of God. That's a very different goal than using

Christ to make us happy. It is very important that we should start with the changes immediately. This parable (and therefore Jesus) wants to motivate us to change. Do not put this off. Start today.

If you've never read the Bible and prayed together as a family, make time for it. Hold each other accountable to do that – and try for at least four nights each week.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**





## Day 5:

### A well-balanced family

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

Much of life is a question of maintaining balance. Any athletic team knows that they need a balance between offense and defence; and between speed and strength. In teaching we try to keep the proper balance between content and creativity. We all need to find the balance between diet, exercise and rest. Too much towards one extreme and we begin to hamper healthy living.

In the same way, there must also be balance in our Christian life. There must be balance between knowledge and application. Balance between information or awareness (our knowledge and understanding) and how we live (application). The two go together.

**Read Colossians 3: 16-17**

Here Paul gives us four characteristics of a well-rounded or balanced Christian. Can you identify the four characteristics?

Verse 16(a)	
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Verse 16(b)	
Verse 16(c)	
Verse 17	

Paul urges us to have such a relationship with God's Word that we feel at ease with it. The Bible should be at the heart of our existence.

**Read Psalm 1:2-3**

How can being “Bible-saturated” help us in our daily lives?

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To be “Bible-saturated”, we must:

- **know** the message. In other words, we must read the Bible. A Christian is a person who knows God's Word. The person who is saturated by God's Word will never find dust on their Bible.
- **Understand the message.** Hearing and understanding are two different things.
- **Apply** the message practically. The Word of God should influence our lives.

The person or family who is well balanced, should be revealing Christ consistently.

Kent Hughes writes: *"There are few exhortations in Scripture that are more comprehensive than this one. "Word or deed" takes in everything in life. "Deeds" can be preaching, teaching, eating, exercising, driving, cleaning house, shopping, visiting, working, playing (basketball, soccer, tennis, fishing, even watching) - everything! Our words are everything that passes our lips, even in unguarded moments. Everything we say or do is to be done "in the name of the Lord Jesus."*

Can you say with absolute honesty, that everything you do or say is done in the name of the Lord Jesus?  
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Remember, the world will never believe what we say about Jesus until they see that WE believe what we say about Jesus.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**





## GROUP STUDY:

### Prayer

#### Memory verse:

*Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain.*

*Psalm 127: 1(a)*

#### Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

#### Scripture Reading:

Read Psalm 1, Psalm 127 and Psalm 128

**Discussion questions**

Can you identify the downward spiral that is mentioned in Psalm 1:1?

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How would you describe God’s design for the family? Do you think it is still the right design for today?

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What affect should a spiritual renewal in your heart have on your family?

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What blessings are promised to people who fear the Lord? Do you think it is still applicable today?

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**Close in prayer**

# A HEART FOR PEOPLE

## Week 5

# A heart for broken people

**Memory verse:**

*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

*Psalm 34:18*

A HEART FOR GOD  
A HEART FOR PEOPLE







## Day 1:

# Brokenness

**Begin today's study with prayer.**

The book of Psalms is filled with laments. God has given them to us to read (or sing). For most people it may be challenging and uncomfortable. Unfortunately, to experience brokenness at some stage is a part of life.

### Read Psalm 13

Name the different examples of brokenness that we find in the following verses. Describe it in your own words.

Verse 1(a)	
Verse 1(b)	
Verse 2(a)	
Verse 2(b)	
Verse 2(c)	

The words “*how long*” occur 22 times as part of the lament psalms. It indicates the psalmist’ brokenness and the feeling of distance between him and God. However, nowhere else in the Old Testament is the question: “How long” posed with such urgency and in quick succession as the four times in psalm 13:1-2.

Lament strips back our shiny veneer to lay bare the darkness that lies within each of us and which most of us (most of the time) successfully conceals. Lament strengthens us to keep living and hoping – even when darkness presses in with no sign of relief. The God we cry to in our despair, is the Lord who has walked this dark road ahead of us and who now shines a word of promise back along the path to direct our feet safely.

Make a list of the things that describe your brokenness. Talk to God about it. Lay it before Him and pray for His healing.

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**End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 2:

# What does the Bible say about Brokenness?

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

In this world, broken things are despised and thrown out. Anything we no longer need, we throw away. Damaged goods are rejected, and that includes people. The world is full of people with broken hearts, broken spirits and broken relationships. When we study the Bible, we find that it teaches us about brokenness.

**Read the following verses and write down what it teaches us about God's attitude towards brokenness.**

Psalm 34:18	
Psalm 51:17 & 19	

There is something about reaching a breaking point that causes us to seek the Lord more sincerely. God can take what has been broken and remake it into something better; something that He can use for His glory. Broken things and broken people are the result of sin. Yet God sent his Son, who was without sin, to be broken so that we might be healed.

**Read Isaiah 53:5**

What picture of the brokenness of Jesus’s body do you find in these verses? How does it make you feel to hear these words, describing what pain He had to endure for you?

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God draws us near, He calls us. He longs for us to come to Him, so He can heal us. Often, we are unable to hear His call because we’re so busy with other things – our lives, our families, our work, our own problems and unhappiness. Sometimes we must be broken before we realize our need. And our deepest need is to be reconciled to God.

**Read Matthew 5:3 & 4**

Which people are healed? How can we be made whole?

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The solution can never come from our own efforts or strive, but comes only from Him. Only when we recognize

our need for God are we able to take our eyes off ourselves and focus them on God and Jesus Christ. Only when we stop thinking about ourselves and start thinking about what Jesus did for us, we can begin to heal. Only when we admit our need and ask God into our life, can God begin to make us whole. Only when we confess that we are broken, can God make us into what He wants us to be.

**Read Matthew 6:33**

What does it mean to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness?

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Once we let go of self and place God at the centre of our lives, everything else falls into place.

**Read Romans 8:28**

What important promise from God do we find here?

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Surrender to God and allow Him to make you whole, to give your life meaning, purpose and joy. Trust Him.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 3:

# A heart for the broken

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

I suppose there is nothing more touching than the moving witness of people who need our help. People the world over are suffering. They lack so many of the necessities of life. And their lack and need are impossible to blot out of our memory. This is also true of our Almighty God. Human need moves the heart of God.

**Read Matthew 25:31-46**

This is the parable of the sheep and the goats and it describes the final judgement that will take place.

What examples of works of mercy by the blessed do we find in these verses?

Verse 35(a)	
Verse 35(b)	
Verse 35(c)	

Verse 36(a)	
Verse 36(b)	
Verse 36(c)	

The NIV Zondervan Study Bible says: *The examples Jesus gives all involve the works of mercy needed by the socially and economically destitute. This is not salvation by works, but the fruit of repentance that demonstrates an individual's right relationship with God through Christ.*

Why were the righteous people surprised? (verses 37-40)

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Why were some people cursed? (verse 41-45)

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What does this curse entail? (verse 46)

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The word mercy points us with compassion to people's miseries. A heart filled with the love of Christ should be ready to bestow mercy on those who are suffering and need help.

Are you aware of any broken people in your family, church, community or friendship group? In what way can you show mercy to them? Be practical in your answer.

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It is not always easy to know what good there is in the complexities of pain and suffering, or what mercy should look like. But Christ never said it would be easy, He simply said: *“Love your neighbour as you love yourself.”* And then He died and rose again to cover all our sin and make mercy possible.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**





## Day 4:

# Rebuilding brokenness

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

If we are true disciples of Jesus, then we will be drawn to show mercy to some suffering people precisely because they are Christians. And we will be drawn to show mercy to other suffering people, because they are not Christians. We will be like our Heavenly Father, when we love His children and love our enemies. And that love means “*doing good*” to them.

**Read Matthew 10:42 and James 2:15-17**

What do these verses teach us about helping fellow believers in need?

Matthew 10:42	
James 2:15-17	

Do you agree with the statement of John Piper: “*If we don’t ever bear the fruit of practical love towards brothers and sisters – the least of them – our faith is dead and we are not saved*”? Why? Why not?

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Jesus says that true Christians help other broken Christians, because they are Christians. That is one of the main ways that your Christianity is shown to be real.

**Read Luke 6:27-30**

What should a Christian outlook be on helping non-Christian people that are broken?

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What practical guidelines do we find in these verses regarding helping broken people rebuild their lives?

Verse 27	
Verse 28(a)	
Verse 28(b)	
Verse 29(a)	

Verse 29(b)	
Verse 30(a)	
Verse 30(b)	

Jesus felt very strongly about this matter. He said that if we only love those who love us; if we only do good to those who do good to us, we are no different from unbelievers. As believers, we are called to spread the love of God and to act on the brokenness around us.

We know that good deeds do not necessarily mean that you believe. However, the Holy Spirit that lives in us produces deeds (works) that are pleasing to God.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 5:

# Make me an instrument

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

### **Read Galatians 6:1-10**

Paul concludes his letter to the Galatians with ethical instructions by encouraging the believers to support each other. Do you think it is important to support each other?

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What kind of support is mentioned in this passage?

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What warnings do we find here?

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The anonymous text that is usually called the Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi, is a widely known Christian prayer for peace. It clearly reflects the Christian attitude that believers should have towards brokenness and suffering.

Read the prayer and ask our Father to give you such an attitude towards brokenness and suffering.

**The Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi**

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is error, the truth;  
Where there is doubt, the faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
And 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.

**End today's study by praying this prayer.**





## GROUP STUDY:

### Prayer

#### Memory verse:

*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

*Psalms 34:18*

#### Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

#### Scripture Reading:

Read Isaiah 53:3, Matthew 25:32-40

## Discussion questions

Read Isaiah 53:5. What picture of brokenness do we find here?

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Read Matthew 25:31-46. Discuss the examples of brokenness as well as the acts of mercy that we find in this parable. Do you think it is still applicable to us today?

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Why do believers have to address the brokenness of unbelievers?

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In what way do your church address the brokenness of the world?

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**Close in prayer**



# A HEART FOR PEOPLE

## Week 6

# A heart that brings love

### Memory verse:

*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.*

*1 John 3:16*







## Day 1:

# Love or Hatred

**Begin today's study with prayer.**

The two most powerful forces at work in the world today are love and hate. The conflict between love and hate can be traced back in history to Cain and Abel, and it still exists today.

### **Read 1 John 3:11-18**

What is the message that we have heard from the beginning – the message that Christ gave to his followers?

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The possibility of real love begins at your conversion. According to the Bible, only a Christian can show genuine love and it is impossible for a non-Christian to love in the highest sense of the word. This can be seen in two Greek words for love:

1. *Philia*: This is a natural love of warmth and closeness of affection. It is a love that responds to

attractiveness. This type of love is natural for all humans.

2. Agape: This love applies only to a Christian. It is the highest expression of love because it is a God-given love that expects nothing in return. At conversion, God gives a new capacity for love. This is a love that never varies; it is greater than family ties and it finds no sacrifice too great. It is a love that loves the unlovable, the unkind, the unqualified, the ungrateful, the selfish and the difficult. It is a supernatural love given by God.

What motivated Cain to kill his brother Abel?

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Hatred is always of the Devil. Cain was responsible for his acts, but he permitted Satan to control his life. The result was hatred and murder. Cain's hatred developed because there was no love in his heart for Abel. Without love in the heart, a human being is capable of any horrible, sinful act.

What drives your life and actions? Is it love or is it hatred?

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There can only be one driving force in your life.

The Bible tells us that God loves, and God has proved His love in sending His Son, Jesus Christ to be a Saviour for the world. Through the death of Christ, God has devised a way where sinful men can find the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. The sinner must only believe in Christ alone as Saviour and Lord to be saved. The forgiven sinner will then experience God's love and will begin to love those about him with a real, genuine and true agape love.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## **Day 2:**

### **Christian love**

**Begin today's study with prayer.**

We often wonder about love – is it a warm fuzzy feeling, a flutter in your stomach or a giddiness? The media and worldly view support the idea of this warm, fuzzy feeling. However, when we talk about Christian love, the “agape love,” the Bible is very clear on how we should love our brothers and sisters.

**Read John 13:35 and 1 John 5:2-3**

What is at the heart of Christian love?

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God's Love is unselfish and unconditional. That is what is meant when we speak about Christian love.

**Read the following verses and write down what it reveals about Christian love.**

Matthew 22:39	
Luke 6:30-36	
Romans 13:8-10	

Christian love is giving to others those things that you would want them to give you if you were in their situation -- and it's doing so even if they can't pay you back. In fact, it's doing so especially if they can't pay you back! Christian love is respect for others. It is mercy. It is charity.

Love is therefore not so much a warm and fuzzy feeling, but rather a grateful heart looking to please God and others at our expense.

Is your heart filled with gratitude and love? Are your actions driven by Christian love? Is there something that needs to change? Talk to the Father about it.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 3:

### Qualities of love

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

St. Augustine said: *"There is no gift of God more excellent than love. It alone distinguishes between the children of the everlasting kingdom and the children of the everlasting perdition".*

What do we say to the person who makes the statement:  
*"I love humanity, but I can't stand people?"*

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#### **Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3**

What spiritual gifts are mentioned in these verses? What is the greatest according to Paul?

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In saying love is the greatest, Paul is not belittling spiritual gifts. He merely seeks to put spiritual gifts into perspective. Spiritual gifts are a gracious provision of God, but they are never to be pursued or practiced at the



expense of love. Love is the attitude of heart that adds value to the gifts.

The essence of practical Christianity is loving people. With the new birth, which comes from the sovereign God, the Christian receives the capacity and ability to love people in a way that he could not do before his conversion to Christ. God has provided the power to love through the Holy Spirit. Love is the greatest thing in the world. It is the most powerful force in the universe and only the Christian has the capacity and power to produce this supernatural agape love.

**Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7**

Identify the qualities (character) of Christian love mentioned in these verses and rewrite it in your own words:

Verse 4(a)	
Verse 4(b)	
Verse 4(c)	
Verse 4(d)	

Verse 4(e)	
Verse 5(a)	
Verse 5(b)	
Verse 5(c)	
Verse 5(d)	
Verse 6	
Verse 7(a)	
Verse 7(b)	
Verse 7(c)	
Verse 7(d)	
Verse 8(a)	

God is far more concerned that Christians become loving people than that they become active, busy people. Both are necessary, but one is greater than the other. Paul

attempts to describe the character of love, to personify love, to show us love in action. Love is action, or it is not love at all.

What characteristics of love is still a problem in your life?  
What should you do to change that?

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**End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 4:

# God is looking at your heart

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

God can see things about you that no one else can see. Deep things. Hidden things. You know, those inner thoughts and desires that your family and friends have no idea are even floating around in your heart and mind.

### **Read 1 Samuel 16:7**

What does God look at when He looks at you?

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God is looking at that place inside you where your mind is constantly weighing various options. This means He is looking at more than just your behaviour. He is looking at why you do what you do. That goes to the level of the heart.

Amid our Christian freedom, we must be on our guard against the desires of sinful nature.

What does the following verses teach us about guarding our hearts:

Proverbs 4:23	
Proverbs 27:19	

Actions reveal a believer's spiritual maturity, or lack of it, but the heart reveals our deepest intentions. And the strength of those holy desires and the depth of our love for the Lord tell God a whole lot about us. Therefore, we need to guard our hearts.

### **Read Philippians 4:8**

On what should our hearts and minds be focused?

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A follower of Jesus Christ is first and foremost one who seeks to control his or her thinking. This discipline is far easier said than done, as each one of us knows from personal experience. The mental discipline can be rigorous at times. It is an hour-by-hour challenge, especially in our society today. But just because you

have some setbacks doesn't mean you should throw in the towel.

**Read John 3:16**

For us to be a channel of God's peace and love, we need to have a clean heart, overflowing with the love of God. As the Lord examines our hearts today, He will be pleased if He sees faith in Christ and motives that want to do His will. If there is an area of our heart where that holy reality is not freely flowing, God can fix it. He can heal it.

Listen to the song *Good, good Father* by *Chris Tomlin* and thank Him for His love and mercy.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 5:

# Love out Loud!

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

**Read 1 John 4:7-12**

How many times do we read the word “Love” in these verses?	
How many times do we read the statement: “Love one another” in these verses?	

Although the author of this letter does not identify himself by name, there is strong evidence that this letter was written by John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. He was also the son of Zebedee and the brother of James and Jesus gave them the nickname “sons of Thunder”. (Refer to Mark 1:19 and Mark 3:17)

**Read John 13:23 and John 19:26-27**

What do you think brought the change about in John’s life?

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John spends a lot of time in Jesus’ presence. Being in Jesus’s presence changed him from being the “son of thunder” – which described his true inner being; into the disciple of love.

**Read 1 John 4: 11,15-19**

What motivation do we have for loving others?

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In what practical ways can you show the love of God to others?

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In what practical ways can the church show the love of God to others?

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The word *love* is on everyone's lips, they are talking about it every day. We are the only channels by which the love the world is searching for can ever reach them. No one can



doubt the love God has for us. Christ loved us enough to bear our sin and die in our place. God's love reaches its conclusion when it becomes visible in us. The world needs to see and experience the love of God demonstrated by His people. Do not be scared to love people with the love of God.

Let us love one another and be known as people who love one another.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**





## GROUP STUDY:

### Prayer

#### Memory verse:

*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.*

*1 John 3:16*

#### Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

#### Scripture Reading:

Read 1 John 3:11-18 and 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

**Discussion questions**

What is the difference between *philia* love and *agape* love?

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Do you agree with the statement: God is far more concerned that Christians become loving people than that they become active, busy people? Discuss in your group.

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The properties of Christian love are discussed in 1 Corinthians 13:1-8. Do you think it is possible to love like that? How? Discuss.

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In what practical ways can the church show the love of God to others?

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**Close in prayer**

# A HEART FOR PEOPLE

Week **7**

## A heart that brings hope

**Memory verse:**

*But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

**1 Peter 3:15**



A HEART FOR GOD  
A HEART FOR PEOPLE





## Day 1:

# The meaning of Christian “Hope”

**Begin today’s study with prayer.**

Hope is an important aspect of Christian faith. However, many believers do not even know what it truly means. The Biblical definition of hope is “a *confident expectation*.” It is not an achievement of the creative human spirit, but a gift of God Himself. Biblical hope therefor does not focus on people, but on God. God who stays faithful forever and does not abandon the works of his hands. The origin of hope and the basis of our hope is thus the same: the triune God.

**Read 1 Corinthians 13:13 and Hebrews 11:1**

Name the 3 pillars on which Paul says Christianity rests.

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How does the letter to the Hebrews connect faith with hope? (Refer to Hebrews 11:1)

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## Read Romans 8:18-25

How many times does Paul use the word hope in these verses?

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How does Paul explain the word hope, according to verse 18(b)?

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We can firmly say that hope is the vision of the future, of the promised reality, the glory that is to be revealed to us - a new heaven and a new earth filled with righteousness. This new reality is therefore the content of hope. It is an inextricable connection to the God who exists and who will never cease with the work He began in creation. Hope is therefore a radical openness for the future - a fulfilled future. This future will be a fulfilment; as new reality it will also be a revelation.

John Piper writes that in our normal use of the word, hope is used to express a desire for something good in the future. He goes on to say: *Biblical hope is not just a desire for something good in the future. Biblical hope is a confident expectation and desire for something good in*



the future. Biblical hope not only desires something good for the future — it expects it to happen. And it not only expects it to happen — it is confident that it will happen. There is a moral certainty that the good we expect and desire will come true.

**Read Romans 5:5**

What does Paul mean when he says: *hope does not put us to shame?*

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It is clear that the future expectations of the Christian are based on the solid foundation of God's great act of love in the past, as it has been proven on the cross.

**End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 2:

# WHO is our Hope?

**Begin today's study with prayer.**

As believers, we cannot only ask "WHAT" does hope mean, but also "WHO" is our hope.

**Read Colossians 1:27 and 1 Timothy 1:1**

Who is our hope?

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**Read Titus 2:11-13**

Does the promise of Christ returning in any way fill you with hope?

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Identify those attributes and actions mentioned in this scripture that became part of your life, because of your hope in the salvation in Jesus.

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## Read Romans 8:17

Paul confirms that, as children of God, *we are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ*. How does it affect you realising that you will share an inheritance with Jesus Christ?

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## Read 1 Peter 1:4-5

List everything that is described and promised about your inheritance through Jesus Christ in these verses:

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That the Christian can believe and love, is made possible because there is something deeper; namely hope. Christian hope always concerns God and Christ. Therefore, Christian hope is never something that one might doubt. All that is uncertain is when what is hoped for will happen. That it is going to happen is certain, because God guarantees it. Therefore, Paul can say that hope is kept (saved) in heaven.

Is your heart filled with gratitude and love? Are your actions driven by Christian love? Is there something that needs to change? Talk to Father about it.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 3:

# Christian hope is a Living Hope!

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

Yesterday we were reminded that our real hope is not only an outcome, but rather a Person - Jesus our resurrected Saviour! This is much more than factual hope. Because we have a living relationship with the One we are putting our hope in OR placing our hope on, this is a relational hope and therefore a LIVING hope.

### **Read 1 Peter 1:3-5**

How do we receive this living hope?

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Write down the concepts/expressions used by Peter that explain why he describes the Christian hope as a LIVING hope:

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John Piper once said: *“Hope is faith in the future tense!”*  
The following Scripture is a wonderful description of this  
"living hope".

**Read Romans 4:18-22**

Living hope is not fuelled by circumstances but by Gods’  
promises. In your own words, write down the different  
actions by Abraham proving this.

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Count and write down the variety of expressions used to  
describe Abraham's faith-journey.

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The almighty God places you in his protection! This  
assures you that you will be faithful through the power of  
God until the end of time. Even if there is affliction,  
injustice and even a violent death, you will remain faithful  
until the end. Then you will receive what God promised.  
You must therefore not fear the coming judgment.

**End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 4:

# Living hope brings joy!

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

As believers, we have a “living hope” because we trust a living Christ. Because we have a living hope, we can experience hopeful living. It is therefore no surprise that the Bible refers to Christian hope as *the hope of glory (of God)*!

**Read Colossians 1:24-27**

Can you see that the revelation of the mystery of the message of Christ, the hope of glory, causes Paul to rejoice even in his sufferings? Write down his specific words and meditate on it. Does the Gospel of Hope also bring such joy to you as is described here?

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Write down Paul's words that indicate that he has developed a heart that brings hope (for people).

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In his letter to the Romans Paul encourages the congregation to rejoice in hope.

**Read Romans 5:1-5 and Romans 12:12-16**

How do you understand his encouragement to rejoice in hope? What does it imply for you?

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Write down all the actions that Paul mentions that involves other people.

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A heart that rejoices in hope of the glory of God, is a heart that brings hope to others!

**End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**





## Day 5:

# Living hope must be shared!

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

Hope is an essential and fundamental element of Christian life, so essential indeed, that, like faith and love, it can itself designate the essence of Christianity. In it the whole glory of the Christian vocation is centred.

*Andy Stanley said: "Jesus is the hope of the world and the local church is the vehicle of expressing that hope to the world.", and Billy Graham once wrote: "Our world today so desperately hungers for hope, yet uncounted people have almost given up. There is despair and hopelessness on every hand. Let us be faithful in proclaiming the hope that is in Jesus."*

**Read Ephesians 2:12 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13**

What does it teach us about unbelievers and hope?

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Our hope is living and active and still we often take it for granted.

## Read 1 Peter 3:15-16

Write down all the practical actions Peter mentions on how to share the hope that is in you with anyone around you who still does not share our inheritance with Christ!

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Louis Giglio said: *“Simply by our proximity to Jesus, we can bring hope and life to people and places trapped in discouragement and despair.”*

Ravi Zacharias said: *“Outside of the cross of Jesus Christ, there is no hope in this world. That cross and resurrection at the core of the Gospel is the only hope for humanity. Wherever you go, ask God for wisdom on how to get that Gospel in, even in the toughest situations of life.”*

Ask Father to show you where you can bring hope to the hopeless.

**End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## GROUP STUDY:

### Prayer

#### Memory verse:

*But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

*1 Peter 3:15*

#### Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

#### Scripture Reading:

Read 1 Corinthians 13:13 and 1 Peter 3:3-5, 15-16

**Discussion questions**

Read 1 Corinthians 13:13. Name the three pillars on which Christianity rests. Discuss the meaning of each.

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Read 1 Peter 3:3-5. Why is Christian hope a living hope? What does it mean to you?

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Read 1 Peter 3:15-16. How can we share the living hope with other people?

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Discuss this statement by John Maxwell: “Where there is no hope in the future, there is no power in the present.” Do you agree with him?

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**Close in prayer**

# A HEART FOR PEOPLE

Week **8**

## A heart that serves

**Memory verse:**

*I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*

*John 13:15*



A HEART FOR GOD  
A HEART FOR PEOPLE





## Day 1:

# The servant heart of Jesus

**Begin today's study with prayer.**

Even though Jesus is the Son of God, even though He created everything, even though He is all-powerful, even though He sits on the throne - He humbled himself and He served mankind. In the final hours of Jesus' life, He was not parading with pride or glorifying Himself. He was a humble servant, setting an example to His disciples and to us. His attitude of serving, His heart of serving, took Him from His earthly birth all the way to the cross. He served all of mankind through His love and sacrifice.

**Read Matthew 28:16-20**

What does it mean to love someone to the end?

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**Read John 13:1-3**

What was Jesus about to demonstrate by washing the disciples' feet? (Refer to verse 1)

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What made Jesus begin to wash the disciples' feet?  
(Refer to verse 3)  
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Love is key to serving and serving is sacrifice. Jesus was willing to serve and He demonstrated serving to His disciples as an example for them. This, however, was just the beginning of a long, painstaking surrender to His Father's will in the coming hours. Through being the servant His love for His Father and His love for us compelled Him to surrender; to surrender all to His Father and sacrifice himself for all for us.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**





## **Day 2:**

# **Jesus served humbly**

**Begin today's study with prayer.**

How do you prepare for special guests that you have invited for dinner?

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**Read John 13:3-8**

How did Jesus serve His guests?

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**Read Philippians 2:3-8**

What is one of the characteristics of a servant heart?

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**Read Matthew 23:10-12**

What is the result of our humbleness?

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We know from God's Word that he resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. How can we know that we are humble and ready to receive God's blessings?  
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A well-known Bible teacher once spoke to a men's group at a church in the Washington, D.C. area. Afterward he noticed a man who stayed behind to remove and stack the chairs. Upon inquiring he learned that the man stacking the chairs was a busy United States Senator. It did not take any talent or ability usually associated with being a Senator to stack chairs. But it did take the attitude of a servant.

Humility is the ability to be without pride or arrogance and it is a main characteristic that should be seen in those who follow Jesus Christ. Jesus is the best example of someone who humbly followed God's plan for His life.

Proverbs is filled with warnings of those who refuse to be humble. The New Testament is full of blessings for those who put others before themselves. You will miss out on

the blessed, abundant life that God wants for you if you refuse to let go of pride and follow His purpose for your life. Be encouraged by these Bible verses about humility and start choosing today to come humbly before God so He can lift you up!

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 3:

# Loving God, is serving Him

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

Yesterday we saw that it was not the disciples who washed the feet of the Messiah, it was the Saviour King who washed the feet of His disciples. Peter voiced his ignorance by asking, *“Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”* He then argues further, *“you shall not wash my feet.”*

What was Jesus’ response? *“Peter, your feet must be washed, or you will have no part in Me.”*

This statement was profound. Jesus was teaching Peter to be humble and *“unless you accept and learn that which I am teaching you to serve, you will have no part of My Kingdom”*. Jesus was symbolically cleansing Him, the same as Jesus does to all of us.

**Read 1 John 5:1-3**

How do we know who are children of God?

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How does this relate to serving Him?

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**Read Galatians 5:13-14**

How do we fulfil the law which 1 John 5:1-3 speaks of?

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**Read 1 Peter 4:10-11**

What is the effect of using our gifts in serving others?

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God has commanded us to love Him first and then to love others. The entire law is summed up in this commandment. Therefore, we can only serve others out of our love for God. A heart of serving flows out of a heart for God, otherwise our deeds, our actions will be done out of obligation and not out of love. By loving and obeying God, we serve Him. It's not so much the action that is important; it is rather our attitude, our heart towards God and others. The message describes Psalm

51:16-17 as follows: *Going through the motions doesn't please you, a flawless performance is nothing to you. I learned God-worship when my pride was shattered. Heart-shattered lives, ready for love, don't for a moment escape God's notice.*

God is not interested in a flawless performance of deeds,  
He is interested in your heart and attitude towards Him.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 4:

# Have a heart, man! Become a servant!

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

Service is not optional. We are here to make a difference by serving God and others.

### **Read Ephesians 2:10**

The transformation of believers from death to life in Christ is considered a new act of creation. Why were we created, according to verse 10?

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We weren't placed on earth just to breathe, eat, take up space and have fun. God fashioned each of us to make a unique contribution with our lives.

### **Read Matthew 20:25-28**

What should the believers' attitude towards service be?

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For Christians service is not optional, something to be tacked on to our busy schedules if we can spare the time. It is the heart of Christian life. Jesus came to serve and to give and those two verbs should define our lives on earth.

**Read Matthew 10:40 – 42**

Real servants make themselves available to serve, pay attention to needs, do their best with what they have and are faithful to the task they have been given. Which of these characteristics of real servants are the most challenging for you?

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How does serving others relate to serving God? (Also refer to Colossians 3:23)

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**Read Philippians 2:5**

To be a servant, you must think like a servant. God is always more interested in why we do something than in



what we do. Real servants focus on others, not themselves.

Are you more concerned about being served or about finding ways to serve others?

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Real servants focus on others, not themselves. This is what it means to set your own “self” aside. Jesus emptied himself by taking on the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7). You cannot be a servant if you are full of yourself. It is only when we forget ourselves that we do the things that deserve to be remembered.

Talk to Father about having a servant’s heart. Ask Him to show you practical ways in which you can serve others.

**End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 5:

# Serve the world

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

Oscar Thomas said: *Love is meeting needs.*

Think of a recent moment when someone loved you and served you sincerely. How did you feel?

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How did this person serve you that made you feel loved?

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**Read Luke 5:12-14 and Luke 9:10-17**

How did Jesus serve others?

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Jesus found practical ways to serve others. He took the time to care for others' needs practically. These practical ways were often an answer to their immediate needs.

How can you love your neighbour who is an unbeliever by serving them?

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In the area where we live, there are people all around us with needs. There is also a vast cultural diversity. In other words, there are various nationalities around us who do not know God. So, the world is on our doorstep, we do not have to travel far to serve the world, to love the world. All we need is have the right heart and serve them. It is difficult to know someone’s need without knowing them first. Start praying and asking God to show who you can help and in what ways. Often, the response from the person that Jesus served was one of thankfulness and a change of lifestyle. We can reach out to others by serving them, loving them.

Is there a possibility that servicing the needs of others can lead to not loving them?

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We can become so focused on the needs of people, that we neglect the people themselves. The needs become more important than the people. The need becomes a substitute for getting to know people who are dealing with those issues and needs. We need to be careful not to categorize and classify people by their needs, but to just love and serve them as people.

A servant heart is always driven by love – love for God and love for people.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## GROUP STUDY:

### Prayer

#### Memory verse:

*I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*

*John 13:15*

#### Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

#### Scripture Reading:

Read John 13: 1-17 and Philippians 2:3-8

**Discussion questions**

What does it mean to have a servant’s heart and how can you get it?

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How can we live with a greater awareness that as we serve others, and care for the needy, we are really serving Jesus?

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What practical things could we as a church/ small group do to demonstrate a greater concern for the poor and needy on a regular basis?

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**Close in prayer**

# A HEART FOR PEOPLE

## Week 9

# A heart for the lost

**Memory verse:**

*The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*

*Luke 19:10*



A HEART FOR GOD  
A HEART FOR PEOPLE







## Day 1:

# Jesus' heart for the lost

**Begin today's study with prayer.**

The word “lost” is used in different ways with different meanings. It can mean you have misplaced something and you just can't find it. Or if someone lost his life savings in the stock market crash, it means it is gone, forever. Or if we hear the dreaded words from the surgeon who comes into the waiting room and says quietly, “We lost her”, it means the person is dead.

In the New Testament, lost normally means those who are spiritually dead (dead in their sins), unresponsive to God. It could also mean to be without any direction, lost in your ways.

**Read Luke 19:9-10**

Why did Jesus come to this world?

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**Read Matt 9:35-38**

Describe in your own words how you interpret Jesus' heart for the magnitude of *confused and helpless* people.

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When Jesus saw a crowd of people He was moved with compassion. A crowd of people represents so much of sorrow, so much pain, so much sin. What is your feeling when you look out over a crowd? What do you think when you see them?

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Jesus Christ did not go about His work because of a cold sense of duty. His own heart drew Him out towards those He helped and saved. His deeds of mercy cost Him something more than the sacrifice of leisure and the expenditure of effort and power. They cost him heartache. He made other people's sorrows His own sorrows, other people's agony His own agony, other people's sin and shame His own sin and shame. He could not look upon misery, pain, death or sin without His heart being touched.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 2:

# Paul's example of a heart for the lost Israelites

**Begin today's study with prayer.**

Paul was a remarkable man. Perhaps because he knew what it was to be lost himself. Before his conversion he was so absorbed in his Jewish religion, that he totally turned his back on the God of the religion - until he personally met Jesus and surrendered his life to him in a personal relationship. From then on, he could not consider himself above others anymore - he developed a compelling concern for the salvation of others.

**Read 2 Corinthians 5:11-14**

What became the driving force in Paul's life?

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What became his focus?

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**Read Romans 9:1-4(a) & 10:2-3**

What was Paul’s biggest concern for his people, the Jews, because of their unbelief?

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Paul tackles one of the most pressing theological problems of his day: how to reconcile God’s promises to Israel with Israel’s failure to believe the good news about Jesus, the Messiah.

**Read Romans 10:1, 14-15**

Describe what Paul desired for his people, and what solution he was praying for.

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God has completed all the steps needed for salvation. The problem with the Israelites was that they did not believe it. This compelled Paul to pray for them and appeal to them to be reconciled with God. (Refer to 2 Corinthians 5:20)

**End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 3:

# Joy in heaven when the lost is found

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

The way we perceive God will influence the way we serve Him. That was very clearly seen in the (re-)actions of the Pharisees and their attitude towards sinners and the marginalised people in society.

**Read Luke 15:1-2**

Why do you think the Pharisees had such an attitude?

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The message of Luke 15 is the truly tremendous truth that God is kinder than men. The orthodox would write off the tax collectors and the sinners as deserving of nothing but destruction; not so God. Men may give up hope of a sinner; not so God. God loves the folk who never stray away; but in his heart there is the joy of joys when a lost one is found and comes home. It is a thousand times easier to come back to God than to come home to the bleak criticism of men!

No Pharisee had ever dreamed of a God like that. A great Jewish scholar has admitted that this is the one new thing Jesus taught men about God - that he actually searched for men. The Jew might have agreed that if a man came crawling home to God in self-abasement and prayed for pity he might find it; but he would never have conceived of a God who went out to search for sinners. We believe in the love of God, because we see that love incarnate in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus, who came to seek and to save those who were lost.

**Read Luke 15:3-7**

What was the emotion the shepherd experienced and why?

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The shepherd in Judea had a hard and dangerous task. He was personally responsible for the sheep. If a sheep was lost, the shepherd must at least bring home the fleece to show how it had died.

Many of the flocks were communal flocks, belonging, not to individuals, but to villages. There would be two or three shepherds in charge. Those whose flocks were safe

would arrive home on time and bring news that one shepherd was still out on the mountainside, searching for a sheep which was lost. The whole village would be upon the watch, and when, in the distance, they saw the shepherd striding home with the lost sheep across his shoulders, there would rise from the whole community a shout of joy and of thanksgiving.

That is the picture Jesus drew of God; that is what God is like. God is as glad when a lost sinner is found as a shepherd is when a strayed sheep is brought home.

**Read Luke 15:8-10**

This picture is more personal and precious. What is the woman's reaction when she loses a coin? And when she finds it?

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The mark of a married woman was a headdress made of ten silver coins linked together by a silver chain. For years a girl would scrape and save to amass her ten coins, for the headdress was almost the equivalent of her wedding ring. When she had it, it was so solely hers, that it could not even be taken from her for debt. It may well

be that it was one of these coins that the woman had lost and so she searched for it as any woman would search if she lost her wedding ring. It is easy to think of the joy of the woman when at last she saw the glint of the elusive coin and when she held it in her hand again.

Jesus said God is like that. The joy of God and of all the angels, when one sinner comes home, is like the joy of a home when a coin which has stood between them and starvation has been lost and is found; it is like the joy of a woman who loses her most precious possession, with a value far beyond money, and then finds it again.

**End today's study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**





## Day 4:

# The heart of the Father

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

Many theologians and preachers prefer to call the parable of the Prodigal Son the parable of the Loving Father - because it tells us much about the forgiveness of God.

### **Read Luke 15:11-31**

Why was the youngest son's request such an insult to his father?

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What was the father's reaction when he saw his son returning? Describe each action in sequence.

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The father must have been waiting and watching for the son to come home, for he saw him a long way off. He then ignores the Near Eastern cultural protocol and ran to his son to welcome him home. He shows mercy and love

to his son by throwing his arms around him and kissing him.

Which act of the father was proof that the young man was restored to his position as son?

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The younger son was considered “dead” when he left his father’s household and “alive again” when he is reunited with his family. The life and death metaphor underline the importance of both his departure and his return. He was lost and now he is found.

When the youngest son came back, the father forgave him with no recriminations. However, there is a way of forgiving, when forgiveness is conferred as a favour. Or even worse, when someone is forgiven, but by hint and by word and by threat his sin is still held over him.

That is not the way the father forgave his son. The younger son is a member of God’s restored people. It is the wonder of the love of God that he treats sinners as if they had never been away.

**End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## Day 5:

# When the heart of the righteous becomes selfish

**Begin the study by spending time in prayer.**

There is also a lesson to learn from the reaction of the OLDER BROTHER in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. He did not share in the joy of the rest of the household now that his younger brother had returned and was accepted unconditionally despite his horrendous past.

**Read Luke 15:25-30** (to refresh your memory)

What was the eldest son's reaction?

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The oldest son's behaviour is a reference to the attitude and reactions of the Jewish leaders who claimed to be righteous in God's presence. He failed to understand the significance of the moment and insults his father by refusing to attend the banquet.

This should be a stern warning to us on how we consider and treat people who live in a way that we do not agree with; BUT still choose to join our worship service!

We should also learn from the mistake that Jonah made when the Lord sent him to people he did not approve of.

**Read Jonah 1:1-3; 3:1-3 and 3:10-4:2**

Explain what happened in your own words. Why was Jonah angry?

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**Read Jonah 4:10-11**

In your own words, write how the Father describes His heart for the lost and what breaks His heart about “saved” people with no heart for the lost.

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While Jonah welcomes salvation for himself, he does not welcome it for others, especially those he perceives to be his enemies. God has the final say and forgives those who repent.

**End today’s study by returning to the Lord in prayer.**



## **GROUP STUDY:**

### **Prayer**

#### **Memory verse:**

*The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*

*Luke 19:10*

#### **Reflection:**

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

#### **Scripture Reading:**

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4, 2 Peter 3:9, Philippians 2:3-8 and Jonah 4:10-11

**Discussion questions**

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4 and 2 Peter 3:9. Describe God's heart and will for every person who is not saved and forgiven.

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Read Philippians 2:3-8. Discuss what attitude Jesus had about it and the way He acted as a result thereof. What should change in your actions when you begin to have a heart for the lost?

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Read Jonah 4:10-11 and discuss: What is the priority for believers concerning people outside the faith if we have a heart like the Father?

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Pray as a group that God would cause every member's love for the lost to abound. Listen to Paul's prayer for us in 1 Thessalonians 3:12, "*May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else.*" Love for all men is a work of God in our hearts. It is not natural to us. It is a gift of grace. Could it be that we do not have this, because we do not ask for it?

**Close in prayer**



## Memory verses

### Week 1:

*Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
Psalm 51:10 (NIV)*

### Week 2:

*For Christ's love compels us,  
because we are convinced that one died for all,  
and therefore all died.  
2 Corinthians 5:14(NIV)*

### Week 3:

*Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of  
you has a grievance against someone.  
Forgive as the Lord forgave you.  
Colossians 3:13*



## **Week 4:**

*Unless the Lord builds the house,  
the builders labour in vain.*

*Psalm 127: 1(a)*

## **Week 5:**

*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted  
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

*Psalm 34:18*

## **Week 6:**

*This is how we know what love is:  
Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.  
And we ought to lay down our lives  
for our brothers and sisters.*

*1 John 3:16*

## **Week 7:**

*But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord.*

*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.*

*But do this with gentleness and respect.*

*1 Peter 3:15*

## **Week 8:**

*I have set you an example that you should do  
as I have done for you.*

*John 13:15*

## **Week 9:**

*The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*

*Luke 19:10*





## Resources

[www.allaboutgod.com](http://www.allaboutgod.com)

<https://answersingenesis.org>

<https://bible.org>

[www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

<https://biblehub.com>

[www.biblestudytools.com](http://www.biblestudytools.com)

[www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik\\_david](http://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david)

<https://carm.org>

[www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org)

[www.christianpost.com](http://www.christianpost.com)

<https://www.crosswalk.com>

[www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org)

[www.eaglechristianchurch.com](http://www.eaglechristianchurch.com)

<https://www.focusonthefamily.com>

<https://www.gotquestions.org>

<https://www.gty.org>

[www.isaiah61-3.com/biblestudies/psalms](http://www.isaiah61-3.com/biblestudies/psalms)

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Various commentaries and notes on the Preceptaustin.org website.

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