

THE LOVE OF GOD

PURPOSE: To convince us of God's love and demonstrate how we can love God in return. **Mat. 22:37-40**

THE FATHER'S LOVE: Read John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son..."

Illustration: A father had one son. The father was a drawbridge operator for a railroad. He brought his only boy, a five year old, to work one day. The son got his leg caught in the bridge gears and cried out to his father to help him. The signal came to notify the bridge operator to lower the bridge; a train was approaching. If the father tried to save his son, then 1,000 people would crash into the river. He pulls the lever to lower the bridge and crushes his son. He cries and agonizes over his son. The train roars by and he looks up to see three types of people on the train. 1. Some laugh and make fun. 2. Others look up briefly from their newspapers, but immediately go on with their busy lives. 3. Some are moved with compassion and go back to find the father & express their gratitude and live lives thankful for His sacrifice.

QUESTION: How do you think the father felt when he saw the first ^{type laughing?} 2nd ^{type busy?} 3rd ^{grateful?} (This is how God feels - He sacrificed His son!) Are we all on this train? Can we all see the Father crushing His Son? Which type has been your response to the Father? Which one of these types of people are you now? Question: Which of these three responses will be in Heaven? What does God want in return from us? ANSWER: LOVE HIM AND HIS SON.

QUESTION: What is something almost everyone is looking for? ANSWER: Love.

QUESTION: Where are people looking for love? ANSWER: (Bars, church etc...)

QUESTION: Who do you know that would lay down their life for you? Who would you give your life for?

THE SON'S LOVE: Read 1 Jo. 3:16: "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.

ILLUSTRATION: A man named Jim was walking across the street and a truck was about to hit him, when a fireman named Ron ran up from behind and shoved him out of its path. Ron was killed instantly. Neighbors who saw what had happened came out and told Jim that Ron lived down the street and had a pregnant wife and three other little children. This family would soon be in need and hungry. Jim said, "Boy, he sure saved my life, but that's not my responsibility." After dusting himself off, he began walking away. He felt no responsibility for Ron's family and had no sense of debt.

QUESTION: How do you feel about Jim's attitude? What do you think he should have done? Do you feel that he has a moral responsibility to Ron's family? If you had been in Jim's place what would you do for Ron's family?

EXPLAIN: The word ought is the Greek word *Opheilo* and means to be obligated, indebted, dutifully bound, or morally obliged. **Now read the verse again!** Can a person be saved(?) and walk away from the needs of the lost and of his Christian family to live a selfish life and say, "That's not my responsibility!" Do we have a spiritual obligation? What?

FIVE ASPECTS OF LOVING GOD

- 1. OBEDIENCE** 1 John 5:3 (*What if your child told you, "I don't care what you want - I'm doing what I want!"*)
 - a. How can obedience to God seem to be burdensome? What are your burdens if you don't obey? What do you experience when you obey God?
 - b. How do you feel when your child obeys? Disobeys? What is rebellion?
 - c. Why set limits?
 - d. Why does God want us to obey?
- 2. HUNGER AND THIRST** Psalm 119:97 Mat. 5:6
 - a. Example: Cutting the grass under the sun in 95-degree temperature, and thinking of ice-cold lemonade. (It's the "I can't wait to" attitude.) Describe being ravenous or starving - How do you feel?
 - b. The love letter: Have you ever received a love letter? If you just threw the love letter in a closet, and said, "I may read it later." What would that say about your love for that person? The Bible is a love letter from God. What are you doing with it now? Can we have 2-way communication with God? Do you really love God if you make no time to be with Him? Will you commit to daily reading & prayer?
- 3. GET RID OF SIN** Colossians 3:5-10, "put to death". (*What does "put to death" mean?*)
 - a. How should you kill? *Would you torture something to death over time? Would you slowly kill or instantly?*
 - b. Do you see your sins as driving the nails in Jesus' hands? c. What sins need "killed" in your life?
- 4. SEEKING GOD** Matthew 6:33 *What does the word "first" imply? What must be done to seek these first?*
 - a. If you don't go to church, what does this say about your priority? Does God want you to be in Bible studies and develop Christian friendships? Can other people encourage us to seek God and His help?
- 5. LOVING OTHERS** 1 John 4:19-21 Matthew 6:14-15 *If I don't forgive others will I be forgiven?*
 - a. Is it possible to love God if we don't love others? Do grudges affect our relationship with God?
 - b. Are there "sin-wounded" relationships that you need to repair? (*Fences to mend?*)

DRAWING CONCLUSIONS AND CHALLENGES FROM THE "LOVE OF GOD" STUDIES

- a. Do you believe God loves you? Are you willing to love God & others in return?
- b. How much time will you devote to God for Bible studies each week?
- c. Can you come to church this Sunday with a friend?
- d. Will you begin to read the Bible and pray daily? (Suggest John or Mark.) *Describe Quiet Time Meditations.*