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Introduction



Our Fair and Loving God

God is love. So we read in 1 John 4:8 and 16. The whole Bible tells us that God is love. God's love is the beginning of the Christian faith. Love is who God is. Love is part of everything we believe and do. If we believe that God's love must be earned, we may think that God doesn't love us because we are filled with sin and are not worthy. This thinking is a mistake.

What we believe and how we live our faith depend on our understanding of God's love. So, we must ask the question: What is love? If you ask ten people to tell you what love is, you may get ten different answers. Sad to say, many Christians have false ideas and beliefs about love, too.

Christians offer different answers to these questions:

- "Does God's love only give but never get?"
- "Is God's love only about dying on the cross?"
- "Is God also delighted and happy with humans?"
- "Does God really care about people?"
- "Can people reject God's love or lose it?"
- "Can God feel angry if He is loving?"
- "How are love and being fair connected?"
- "If God is love, why is there evil in this life and so much of it?"
- "Can humans love the way God loves?" "If so, what would that love look the same as?"

The answers to some of these questions may seem easy. But some of the answers don't agree with what the Bible teaches about God's love.

We won't answer all these questions at one time. We will look at them and other questions during our study this quarter. We will see that God's love is more important than we think. God's love in the Bible is far better and more powerful than the popular ideas about love today. In the coming weeks, we will look more closely at some of the most beautiful and important parts of God's love in the Bible.

As we continue our study, we will see how God is both loving and fair. The Bible shows that these two things about God can't be separated. The God of the Bible is fair. He loves fair decisions (Isaiah 61:8). Because God is love, He cares about the suffering on this earth. He feels pity for people who are hurt and in pain. God feels their pain in His heart. Evil causes people and God this pain. God suffers more than anyone else from the evil that sin causes.

Again and again, the Bible shows us that God feels pain because of the evil and suffering on this earth. God loves each person so much. We can see that God deeply loves us when Jesus said, " 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You kill the prophets [God's special messengers] and kill with stones those men God sent to you. Many times I wanted to help your people! I wanted to gather [collect] them together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you did not let me' " (Matthew 23:37, ICB).

The God of the Bible is love. The Bible shows us that God often gets His heart broken. He feels sad. He feels rejected. The whole story of the Bible is about everything God did, and is doing now, to fill every part and corner of heaven and earth with love. This story, and so much more, is the topic for this quarter's Bible study guide.

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