

God Is Fair



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 1

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Psalm 33:5; Deuteronomy 32:4; Malachi 3:6; Numbers 23:19; Matthew 5:43–48.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘But if someone wants to brag, let him brag about this: Let him brag that he understands and knows me. Let him brag that I am the Lord. Let him brag that I am kind [loving] and fair. Let him brag that I do things that are right [fair] on earth. This kind [type] of bragging pleases me,’ says the Lord” (Jeremiah 9:24, ICB).



Spiritual leaders commanded the followers of these gods to kill their own children and offer them as gifts to the gods.

IN BIBLE TIMES, the “gods” that the non-Jews worshiped did evil things. People couldn’t trust these gods or depend on them. Spiritual leaders commanded the followers of these gods to kill their own children and offer them as gifts to the gods. But even someone who killed his child and offered its dead body to the gods couldn’t depend on the god’s favor or blessing. So, the people were afraid to do anything to make the gods angry.

Deuteronomy 32:17 tells us that these gods were really demons (also read 1 Corinthians 10:20, 21). The people who worshiped these demons were confused about good and evil and right and wrong.

The God of the Bible is very different from those demons. Yahweh is perfect, holy, and never changes. Because God doesn’t change, we can trust God. He gives us hope, now and forever. Yahweh cares about people who suffer. Yahweh wants things to be fair. He judges against evil, suffering, and decisions and actions that aren’t fair. Most important, in the future, God will end these things forever.

GOD IS LOVING AND FAIR (Psalm 33:5)

All through the Bible, God is both fair and loving. God's love must always be fair. Also, God can be fair only if He shows love and mercy when He judges. We often think about being fair as separate from love. But that's because, as sinners, we don't understand how to be both fair and loving without God's help.

Read Psalm 33:5; Isaiah 61:8; Jeremiah 9:24; Psalm 85:10; and Psalm 89:14. How do these verses help us understand how much God cares about being fair?

These verses announce that God loves being fair (Psalm 33:5; Isaiah 61:8). In the Bible, the ideas of love and being fair are connected and can't be separated from each other. God's love and His holy life are connected, too. God cares very much about what happens to His people on this earth. He wants us to be holy and fair in everything we do.

God's prophets or special messengers warn us against not being fair. We must make fair laws and fair decisions. We must not hurt or cheat the poor, the widows, or the weak. People do much evil on this earth. But God is "always kind, fair and right" (Jeremiah 9:24, NIV). The Bible shows us that God's followers trust in Him to judge and punish evil people. God's work as judge is always fair. He saves people from the ones who steal from them and hurt them.

God's law and His work as judge are an important part of His government. God's decisions are holy and fair and come from His love. God's government is different from the governments that control this earth. Many of the leaders of this earth care more about getting riches and power. But God is not selfish the way they are. "God's [Bible] truth and faithful [dependable] love join together. His peace and holiness kiss [join together with] each other" (Psalm 85:10, NIV).

God tells us what He expects from us: "The Lord has told you what is good [holy]. He has told you what he wants from you: Do what is right [be fair] to other people. Love being kind [nice] to others. And live humbly [with no pride in your heart], trusting your God" (Micah 6:8, ICB). We need to show God's love and mercy. We need to be fair to other people. When we do these things, we show people who God is.



Many of the leaders of this earth care more about getting riches and power.

GOD IS PERFECT AND HOLY (Deuteronomy 32:4)

As we saw already, God loves being fair. He also commands us to be fair. God **always** is fair. The Bible teaches us that God is fully holy, dependable, and loving. God always does what is loving, holy, and fair. God never does any wrong or evil.

Read Deuteronomy 32:4 and Psalm 92:15. What do these verses teach us about God?

These verses (and many other verses in the Bible) announce that God is fair and loving. “There is no evil in him” (Psalm 92:15, NIV; compare with Psalm 25:8; Psalm 129:4). “He never does anything that is wrong [evil]. Every morning he does what is fair. Each new day he does the right [correct] thing. But those [people] who do what is wrong aren’t even ashamed of it” (Zephaniah 3:5, NIV). Do you see that God is very different from those who are not fair?

God knows what is best for everyone. God also wants the best life for everyone. God always works to make the best things happen for people.

Read Psalm 9:7, 8 and Psalm 145:9–17. What do these verses teach us about God?



Many men and women worship power and powerful people.

The God of the Bible is a fair Judge (Psalm 7:11). There is no evil in God’s heart (Psalm 5:4). As 1 John 1:5 teaches, “God is like [much the same as] light and he is not dark [filled with sin or evil] at all” (1 John 1:5, WE). Yes, God is perfect and holy. James 1:13 tells us that “God cannot be tempted [led into sin]. He will never tempt anyone” (NIV; compare with Habakkuk 1:13).

Many men and women worship power and powerful people. God is all-powerful, but He uses His power in ways that are fair and loving. When Moses asked God, “Now show me your glory,” God said, “I will make all my goodness [love and mercy] pass in front of you” (Exodus 33:18, 19, NIV).

Why does a loving God allow so much of the evil that is on our earth? Talk about your answer in class.

GOD DOESN'T CHANGE (Malachi 3:6)

Read Malachi 3:6 and James 1:17. What do these verses teach us about God and who He is?

In Malachi 3:6, God announces, “ ‘I am the Lord. I do not change’ ” (ICB). Some people think this verse means that God doesn't change in any way. But when we read the whole verse, we understand that Malachi is saying that God is always holy and does what is correct. The rest of Malachi 3:6 teaches us that God's feelings may change in His relationship with us: “ ‘That is why I have not destroyed you members of Jacob's family’ ” (NirV). In the next verse, God announces to His people, “ ‘Come back to me, and I will come back to you’ ” (Malachi 3:7, ERV).

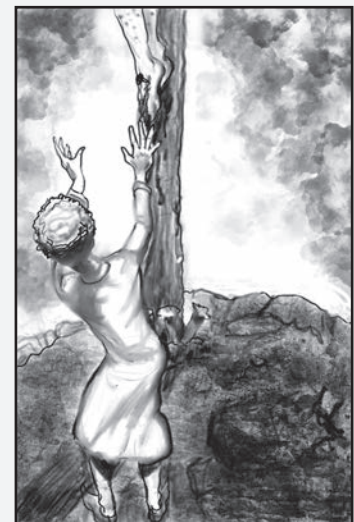
So, God can, and does, enter into relationships with people who aren't perfect. These relationships aren't perfect. So, things in the relationships may change between God and His people. But God's love doesn't change. James 1:17 tells us this same Bible truth. This verse announces that every wonderful and perfect gift comes from God, who doesn't change. God isn't the cause of evil.

In this verse and elsewhere in the Bible, we learn that God doesn't change. In other words, God's love and His holy life stay the same. At the same time, God can enter into real relationships with people who aren't perfect. God always answers us with His love. He is always fair.

Read 2 Timothy 2:13; Titus 1:2; and Hebrews 6:17, 18. What do these verses teach us about God?

God can't lie. God keeps all His promises. He can't break them. We can trust that the God of the Bible is the same God who (in Jesus) gave Himself for us on the cross because He wanted to. So, we can depend on Him and trust Him without any doubt or fear. We can trust and hope for the future because, as Hebrews 13:8 puts it, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (ERV).

How can you learn to trust in God's promises when you are in trouble and your life is a mess? Make a picture in your mind of God on the cross. How does this picture help you to learn to trust in God's love and mercy?



We can trust that the God of the Bible is the same God who (in Jesus) gave Himself for us on the cross because He wanted to.

GOD DOES NOT LIE (Numbers 23:19)

Can God feel sorry about something He said? Can He change His plans and decide not to do something He promised? If so, what does that change really mean? We have seen that God is always the same and dependable. But some Bible verses talk about God choosing not to do something He said He would do. As humans, we often feel sorry about things that we did wrong. God can't sin or do wrong. So, what does the Bible mean when it says that God feels sorry about something He did or said He would do?

Read Exodus 32:14 and compare it with Jeremiah 18:4–10. What do these verses teach us about God's feeling sorry about something He said or did?



God promises that He will not punish His people for their sins if they stop doing evil.

In these verses and in other verses in the Bible, we read that God decides not to punish His people anymore when they show Him that they are sorry for their sins. God promises that He will not punish His people for their sins if they stop doing evil. So, God will not judge them or punish them as He planned to do.

Read Numbers 23:19 and 1 Samuel 15:29. What do these verses teach us about God and His decisions or plans?

These verses announce that God “is not a man. So he does not change his mind as men do” (1 Samuel 15:29, ICB). And “God is not a man, that He should lie. He is not a son of man, that He should be sorry for what He has said. Has He said, and will He not do it? Has He spoken, and will He not keep His Word?” (Numbers 23:19, NLV). When we read these verses and other ones, we understand that they are not saying that God can't change His plans or decisions. But God doesn't change His mind about sin in the ways that people do. God always keeps His promises. He may change His decision to judge His people if they stop doing evil. Then He may decide not to punish them. God is loving, holy, and filled with mercy. God's decisions always agree with His love and the Bible. That's why God may choose not to punish His people when they confess their sins and stop doing evil.

ALWAYS DOING WHAT IS LOVING AND FAIR
(Matthew 5:43–48)

The Bible teaches, “So I want you to realize [understand] that the LORD your God is God. He is the faithful [dependable] God. He keeps his covenant [Promise] for all time to come. He keeps it [His Promise] with those [people] who love him and obey his commandments. He shows them his love” (Deuteronomy 7:9, NIV). God showed His love for us at the cross when He gave Jesus to die for our sins (read Romans 3:25, 26; Romans 5:8). As Psalm 100:5 says, “The Lord is good. His love continues forever. His loyalty continues from now on” (ICB; compare with Psalm 89:2). So, we can trust God. God gives only good gifts to His children (James 1:17; compare with Luke 11:11–13). God also gives good things to His enemies.

Read Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 5:43–48. What do these verses teach us about God’s amazing love? What does Jesus teach us about how we should love other people?

Matthew 5 says that God’s love is perfect love. When we don’t have God’s perfect love in our hearts, we love only the people who love us. But God loves the ones who hate Him. God’s love is complete, and that’s why it is perfect.

God loves us more than we could hope for. But God’s love is always fair. God’s love is both fair and filled with mercy (Psalm 85:10). That’s why the Bible encourages us, “ ‘So come back to your God. Be loyal to him. Do the right [fair] thing, and always trust in your God!’ ” (Hosea 12:6, ERV). Or as another translation of this same verse says, “ ‘You must hold on to love and do what is fair’ ” (Hosea 12:6, NIV; compare with Luke 11:42).

In the end, God will make everything fair. Romans 2:5 teaches us, “The day of God’s anger is coming. Then his way of judging fairly will be shown” (Romans 2:5, NIV). Finally, the saved ones will sing: “ ‘You do great and wonderful things, *Psalm 111:2* / Lord God, the God of heaven’s armies. *Amos 3:13* / Everything the Lord does is right and true, *Psalm 145:17* / King of the nations. Everyone will respect you, Lord. *Jeremiah 10:7* / They will honor you. Only you are holy. All people will come and worship you. *Psalm 86:9, 10* / This is because he is a faithful [dependable] God who does no wrong. He is right [holy] and fair.’ Deuteronomy 32:4” (Revelation 15:3, 4, ICB).



**God loves the ones
who hate Him.**

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “God’s Love for Man,” pages 9–15, in *Steps to Christ*.

“The Bible tells us about God. God announces that His heart is filled with pity and love. When Moses prayed, ‘Now, please show me your Glory.’ Exodus 33:18 [ERV]. ‘The Lord answered, “I will cause all my goodness [love and mercy] to pass in front of you.” ’ Exodus 33:19 [ICB]. Then the Lord passed in front of Moses and announced His glory: ‘As he passed in front of Moses, he called out. He said, “I am the LORD, the LORD. I am the God who is tender [filled with mercy] and kind [loving]. I am gracious [forgiving]. I am slow to get angry. I am faithful [can be trusted] and full of [filled with] love. I continue to show my love to thousands of people. I forgive those [people] who do evil. I forgive those [people] who refuse to obey me. And I forgive those who sin.” ’ Exodus 34:6, 7 [NirV]. . . .

“God gives us many blessings from heaven and on earth to cause us to love Him. God uses nature and our loving relationships with other people to show Himself to us. At the same time, both nature and our loving relationships can’t show us fully who God is. God gives us much proof of His love, but Satan causes people to be afraid of God. Satan tricks people into believing that God is mean and nasty and won’t forgive them. Satan leads people to think that God is a mean judge. Satan made people think that God watches over them and waits for them to make a mistake, so He can punish them. But Jesus came to this earth to live among people to show us that God is love.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, pages 10, 11, adapted.



“God uses nature and our loving relationships with other people to show Himself to us.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Why is it important to understand that God’s glory and honor are connected to His love?
- ② Do you sometimes wonder why God allows so much evil to happen in life? Why does a God who is loving and filled with mercy let bad things happen? How do you answer these questions? How can you help someone who is asking the same questions, too?
- ③ How does the worldwide war between God and Satan help us understand all of the evil that we see on this earth now?

“YOU MUST HELP THIS MAN”

American Bible worker Joanne Park Kim walked to her rented apartment in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. It was winter. The midafternoon temperature was about –40 degrees.

Joanne saw a drunk man lying on the sidewalk. Some drunken men hurt Joanne over the past year. So, Joanne didn't want to stop to help this drunk man. What if the man also attacked her? Joanne started to walk past him, but then she stopped. A voice inside her heart said, “You must help this man.”

Joanne didn't want to help the man. She prayed, “Lord, this man weighs almost two times as much as I do. How can I help him?”

Joanne looked around. The street was empty. Joanne didn't see anyone else. She looked at the stranger again. She thought, “If I don't help him, he will die. His body will freeze in a couple of hours.”

Joanne saw apartment buildings all around. Each building had a small room on the first floor for a guard, so the entrance was warm. The nearest building was about 1,000 feet away. Joanne prayed, “OK, Lord. I'll do my best to get this guy over there. Please help me.” Joanne put her arms under the man's. She prayed for strength and pulled. Somehow, she dragged the man to the building. She put him in the warm doorway. Then she stepped back and looked at him. New feelings filled Joanne's heart. She felt love and pity.

This experience helped change Joanne. She no longer felt anger and hate for the men who hurt her in the past. Now, mercy and pity filled her heart. Finally, she loved the Mongolian people the same as Jesus loved them.

Later, Joanne helped start the first Seventh-day Adventist church in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Joanne worked as a Bible worker there from 1992 to 1998. She was one of the first Bible workers to serve in modern-day Mongolia. In 2017, Joanne went back to Mongolia. She now serves as the education manager for the Adventist Church in Mongolia.

Even now, drunken strangers try to hurt Joanne from time to time. But Joanne's love for God and His people is strong. Joanne says, “Satan doesn't give up. He knew he could make me afraid enough so that I would want to quit. But God gave me the knowledge of how to speak the Mongolian language. God also gave me a new heart. God loves even the drunk men who hurt me all the time. So, I need to love these men, too, and help the Mongolian people as best as I can.”

You can help, too. When you give your 13th Sabbath Offering this quarter, your money will be used to help open a center for children in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Somehow, Joanne dragged the man to the building.



Joanne Park Kim