

Our Loving God



SABBATH—JANUARY 18

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Psalm 103:13; Hosea 1:2; Matthew 9:36; 1 Corinthians 13:4; 1 Corinthians 13:4–8.

MEMORY VERSE: “But the Lord says, ‘Can a woman forget her baby? Can she forget the child who came from her body? Even [anyway] if she can forget her children, I cannot forget you.’ ” (Isaiah 49:15, ERV).

SOME PEOPLE believe that strong feelings are bad. So, they try to avoid having strong feelings whenever they can. Because some people believe that strong feelings are bad, they think that good people do not have strong feelings. Some Greek thinkers believed that the best person was someone who didn't feel any strong feelings or was someone who controlled his feelings.

Yes, some strong feelings that get out of control can be a problem. But God made us with hearts to feel. The Bible shows God as Someone who has strong feelings. If God has strong feelings, then strong feelings can't be bad. That's because God is good, perfect, and wise.

God loves us deeply. When we understand this idea about God's love, we can learn some beautiful Bible truths. But we always must remember that God's love is not the same as our love. Our love is human. But God's love is perfect.



The Bible shows God as Someone who has strong feelings.

MORE THAN A MOTHER'S LOVE (Psalm 103:13)

Maybe the most important love in our human experience is a parent's love for a child. The Bible often uses the parent-child relationship as a word picture to show God's amazing mercy and love for people. This word picture shows that God's mercy is much more powerful than the deepest and most beautiful human love we can feel.

Psalm 103:13; Isaiah 49:15; and Jeremiah 31:20 show us some pictures of God. What do these pictures teach us about how much God loves us?

These verses show us that God loves the same as a parent loves a child. We are God's beloved children. God loves us the same as a good father and mother love their children. But as Isaiah 49:15 explains, a mother may "forget her baby" or "forget the child who came from her body" (ERV). But God always remembers His children. "The Lord's love never ends" (Lamentations 3:22, ICB).

The word for "love" in Lamentations 3:22 comes from the word "**raham**" in the Hebrew language. Bible writers use the word "**raham**" in many other verses to talk about God's love and mercy. Bible thinkers believe that the word "**raham**" comes from the Hebrew word "**reham**," which means the part of a woman's body where her baby grows inside her. So, Bible thinkers use this idea to show that God's love is the same as a mother's love that she feels for her child when it is born. This love is very strong and powerful. But God's love for us is far more powerful.

Jeremiah 31:20 tells us what God thinks and feels about His chosen people, Israel. Israel is the same as God's dear son and beloved child. Often Israel rejected God and refused to obey Him. Their sins hurt God very deeply. But God continued to love Israel anyway and to show them His mercy. The word for "mercy" (Jeremiah 31:20, KJV) or "loving-pity" (NLV) in this verse comes from the same word that is used for God's love ("**raham**"). The words "my heart longs [feels a strong feeling of love] for them" (Jeremiah 31:20, NIV) also can be written as "my guts and all the lower parts inside me roar" for them. This verse uses strong language to show us that God loves us so very much, more than we can imagine in our minds. God's love for His people didn't stop when they refused to obey Him or broke His law. God continues to love His people anyway.



The Bible often uses the parent-child relationship as a word picture to show God's amazing mercy and love for people.

GOD'S DEEP LOVE FOR US (Hosea 1:2)

The book of Hosea shows us God's love for humans. Hosea was God's special messenger. God commanded Hosea, " 'Go. Marry a woman who has sex with anyone she wants. Have [make] children with her. Do this [marry this woman] because the people of the land are like [the same as] that kind [type] of wife. They have not been faithful [loyal] to me' " (Hosea 1:2, NIV). Later, Hosea 11 uses a different word picture to show God's relationship with His people. Hosea uses the word picture of a loving father.

Read Hosea 11:1–9. How does the word picture in these verses help us better understand how much God cares for His people?



The Bible shows God as a parent teaching a young child to walk.

The book of Hosea uses the word picture of a parent's love for a child to show us God's love. The Bible also uses other word pictures to help us understand God's love. The Bible shows God as a parent teaching a young child to walk. God also is compared to a parent holding his child in his arms. The Bible shows God as someone who heals His people, feeds them, and takes care of their needs. The Bible says that God "carried" His people the same as "a man carries his son" (Deuteronomy 1:31, NLV). The Bible says that God "loved them [His people] and felt sorry for them, so he saved them. . . . He picked them up and carried them, just as he did long ago" (Isaiah 63:9, ERV).

Compare God's love for His people with His people's love for Him. God's love is loyal. But His people "cheat" on Him the same as a cheating wife. How do they cheat? They don't obey God. Their sins hurt God very deeply and cause God to punish them. God is loving. But His love is always fair. He will punish sin and evil when necessary. (As we will see in a future lesson, God's love is both fair and filled with mercy. Being fair and showing mercy are behaviors that work well with each other.)

Did you get so upset about something that your tummy started to hurt? The Bible uses this word picture to show us that God's feelings for His people are strong. The Bible also uses this word picture for strong human feelings, too.

JESUS' MERCY (Matthew 9:36)

The New Testament uses the same word picture that the Old Testament uses to show us God's mercy. Paul says that God "is our Father Who shows us loving-kindness [mercy and love] and our God Who gives us comfort [makes us feel better]" (2 Corinthians 1:3, NLV). Also, Paul explains in Ephesians 2:4 that "God loves us deeply. He is full of [filled with] mercy" (NIV).

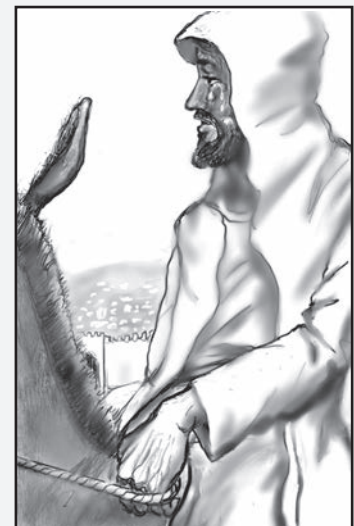
In many picture stories, Jesus uses words that show us that God's love and mercy for us are very strong (Matthew 18:27; Luke 10:33; Luke 15:20). The New Testament writers use the same word pictures from the Old Testament to show Jesus' mercy to suffering people.

Read Matthew 9:36; Matthew 14:14; Mark 1:41; Mark 6:34; and Luke 7:13. Also read Matthew 23:37. How do these verses help us understand Jesus' mercy for suffering people?

Again and again, the Bible tells us that Jesus was filled with love and mercy for people who suffered or were in need. Jesus' mercy caused Him to help suffering people and take care of their needs, too.

Yes, the people made Jesus cry and feel sad. Imagine in your mind the tears in Jesus' eyes when He looks at Jerusalem and says, " 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem! . . . 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). In this verse, the sorrow that Jesus feels matches the sorrow in God's heart in the Old Testament. Bible thinkers tell us that only writers from the lands where Jesus grew up used this mother-hen word picture to talk about God. This word picture helps us remember Deuteronomy 32:11. Deuteronomy 32:11 compares God to a bird protecting and taking care of its young chicks.

Jesus is the best example of God's mercy for us. That's because Jesus gave Himself for us. He died for our sins. Jesus is also a perfect example of what each of us can become. How can we live the way that Jesus lived? What can we do to put other people first and take care of their needs? What else can we do to show God's love to people in ways that they can see and understand?



Imagine in your mind the tears in Jesus' eyes when He looks at Jerusalem and says, " 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem!' "

A JEALOUS GOD (1 Corinthians 13:4)

The Bible says that God is a God of mercy. In the Hebrew language, God is named “**el rahum**” (Deuteronomy 4:31). The word “**el**” means “God.” “**Rahum**” comes from the word for “mercy” in the Hebrew language. The Bible also tells us that God is “**el qana**’ ” or the jealous God. Deuteronomy 4:24 says, “The Lord your God is a jealous [wants you to worship Him and no one else] God. He is like [the same as] a fire that burns things up” (Read Deuteronomy 4:24, ICB; Deuteronomy 6:15; Joshua 24:19; and Nahum 1:2.)

1 Corinthians 13:4 says that “love is not jealous” (ERV). God is love, right? So, how can He be a “jealous God”? Read 2 Corinthians 11:2 and think about how often God’s people didn’t obey Him (read an example in Psalm 78:58). How do these verses help us understand what the Bible means when it says that God is jealous?



God’s jealous feelings are the same as a loving husband who wants to be the only man who has a love relationship with his wife.

People don’t understand how God can be a jealous God. If you say that someone is a jealous husband or wife, you aren’t praising him or her. The word “jealous” often is not a very nice word in many languages. But in the Bible, when God is jealous, His being jealous is not bad. God’s jealous feelings are the same as a loving husband who wants to be the only man who has a love relationship with his wife.

The Bible tells us that love isn’t jealous (1 Corinthians 13:4). At the same time, the Bible says that love can also be holy. Paul says that this jealous feeling “comes from God” (2 Corinthians 11:2, ERV). God’s jealous feelings are the only holy jealous feelings. These feelings really talk about God’s deep love for His people.

God’s jealous feelings (“**qana**’ ”) for His people come from His deep love for them. God wants His people to worship Him and nothing else. God wants to be their only God. The Bible often shows us a picture of God as a lover who was rejected and as someone who loves people who don’t love Him back (read Hosea 1–3; Jeremiah 2:2; Jeremiah 3:1–12). So, God’s jealous feelings for His people don’t happen without a cause. His people do evil and cause God to feel hurt and jealous. Jealous humans want things that don’t belong to them. But God’s jealous love is never evil. He wants to be the only God His people worship.

MERCY AND LOVE (1 Corinthians 13:4–8)

The God of the Bible is filled with mercy. His love is strong and deep. Jesus shows us these strong feelings. Jesus shows us that God loves us very much. God feels pity for people when they are in trouble (compare with Isaiah 63:9; Hebrews 4:15). God is sad when His people suffer (Judges 10:16; Luke 19:41). God is always willing to hear, answer, and comfort His people (Isaiah 49:10, 15; Matthew 9:36; Matthew 14:14).

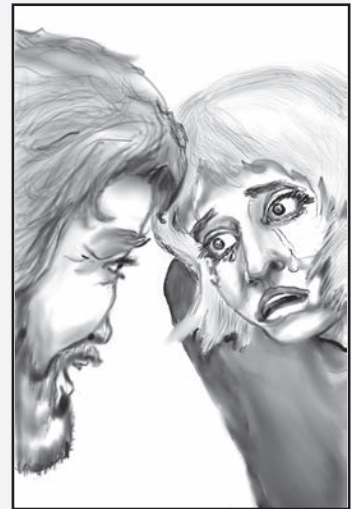
Read 1 Corinthians 13:4–8. How do these verses ask us to show God’s amazing mercy and love in our relationships with other people?

We want relationships with people who show the love that we read about in 1 Corinthians 13:4–8. But how often do we show this same love to other people? We can’t make ourselves patient and nice. We can’t stop being jealous, filled with pride, nasty, or selfish. God’s love “never gives up on people. It never stops trusting, never loses hope, and never quits. Love will never end” (1 Corinthians 13:7, 8, ERV). We can’t show this love without God’s help. Praise God that His Holy Spirit pours His love into our hearts when we live with faith in Jesus (Romans 5:5).

God’s mercy and His Holy Spirit help us to show God’s deep and holy love to other people. In what ways can we show this love? First, we must worship the God who is love. Second, we show God’s love when we show mercy and love to other people. We should share our Christian faith with people and help them feel better because Jesus makes us feel better. Third, we should understand that we can’t change hearts, but God can.

So, let us ask God to give us a new heart for loving Him and for other people. God can give us a love that makes us holy and removes the sin from our hearts.

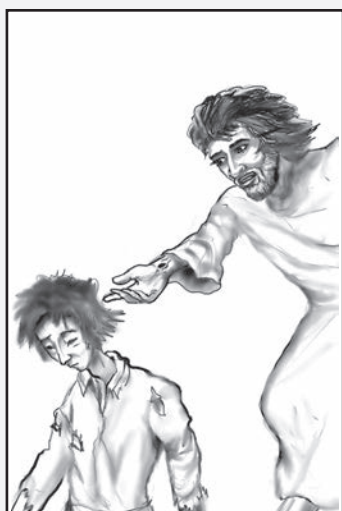
Let Paul’s words to the church members in Thessalonica be our prayer: “May the Lord make your love grow. . . . May your love for one another increase [grow]. May it also increase for everyone else. May it be just like [the same as] our love for you. May the Lord give you strength in your hearts. Then you will be holy and without blame in the sight of our God and Father. May that be true [real] when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones” (1 Thessalonians 3:12, 13, NIV).



God is always willing to hear, answer, and comfort His people.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Beatitudes,” pages 6–44, in *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*.

“Everyone who knows they can’t be holy on their own may find the strength they need when they come to Jesus for help. Jesus says, ‘Come to me, all you who are tired and are carrying heavy loads. I will give you rest.’ Matthew 11:28 [NirV]. You are poor. Jesus invites you to accept the gifts of His mercy and forgiveness. These gifts will make you rich. We aren’t worthy of God’s love, but Jesus is worthy. Jesus can save everyone who comes to Him to be saved. Your past experience doesn’t matter. Maybe you feel you have no hope in life right now. Come to Jesus as you are: weak, helpless, and sad. Our loving Savior will come to meet you when you are far away from Him. He will throw His loving arms around you. He will put His holy life and love on you the same as clothes and bring us to His Father. Jesus goes to God for us and says, ‘I died for this sinner. Don’t look at this child, but look at Me.’ Satan complains about us to God and accuses us of sinning. But with more power, Jesus asks God to forgive us because of His blood.”—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pages 8, 9, adapted.



Our loving Savior will come to meet you when you are far away from Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Thanks to Jesus, the Father accepts us. Ellen G. White wrote in the quote above: “He will put His holy life and love on you the same as clothes and bring us to His Father.” Yes, we may feel hopeless when we make mistakes or don’t show other people the love that God shows to us. So, why must we always remember the wonderful news about what Jesus will do for us?
- ② Again and again, the Bible tells us that the needs of the people touched Jesus’ heart. What did Jesus do about their needs? How did He act? Jesus took care of their needs. What are some ways that you or your class can meet the needs of people who are suffering and without hope?

DRUNKEN MEN ATTACK A BIBLE WORKER

A drunken man approached a 21-year-old Bible worker on a public bus. Then the man tried to hug and kiss her. The young Bible worker tried to stop him. The other passengers on the bus looked the other way until an old woman yelled something to the bus driver. The bus stopped. Then the old woman told some of the passengers to help the young woman. The passengers threw the man off the bus. The old woman came over to the Bible worker, who was crying, and patted her arm.

The young woman was Joanne Park Kim. Joanne had this same experience nearly every week in Mongolia. The time was the 1990s. Joanne was a single American woman. She served as one of the first Seventh-day Adventist Bible workers in Mongolia. Mongolia was a very poor country.

Another time, a drunk neighbor thought Joanne's apartment was his own. The man kicked down her wooden door with his steel-tip boots. Then the man started to beat Joanne. Joanne grabbed a broom and screamed. She fought back. Joanne was losing the fight until she used the broom to bang on the ceiling. A married American couple lived in the apartment above Joanne. They heard the banging and came down to help her.

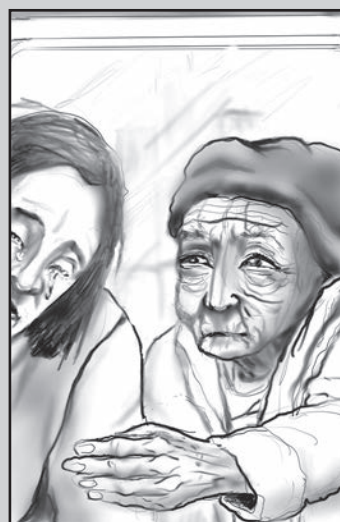
The worst experience for Joanne happened when she and another Bible worker waited for a friend at a bus stop in Ulaanbaatar. Ulaanbaatar is Mongolia's capital. Earlier, a mother invited Joanne and her friend to her child's first haircut, which was a time for celebration in Mongolia. The mother told Joanne and her friend to wait for her at the bus stop.

Then four drunken men sat next to Joanne and her friend and tried to hug and kiss them. Joanne and the other girl tried to move away, but the men followed. Everyone at the crowded bus stop looked away. They pretended not to notice the men. The men dragged the women to an empty street behind some buildings. Joanne screamed, kicked, and fought back. But she was no match for the four men. The men threw the women on the ground. Joanne thought that the men were going to force them to have sex.

Then the men's faces filled with fear. The men turned and ran away. Joanne looked around to see who saved them. No one was there. Joanne knew the men saw an angel.

This story offers a look inside the life of American Bible worker Joanne Park Kim. Joanne helped start the Seventh-day Adventist work in modern Mongolia. Today, Joanne continues to serve as a missionary there. You can also help Bible workers in Mongolia when you give your 13th Sabbath Offering. Part of this offering will help open a center for children in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Read more about Joanne next week.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



The old woman came over to the Bible worker, who was crying, and patted her arm.



Joanne Park Kim