

CHAPTER 1



GOD IS LOVE

“GOD IS LOVE, AND ALL WHO LIVE IN LOVE LIVE IN GOD,
AND GOD LIVES IN THEM.”

1 John 4:16 NLT

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ave you ever tasted a Krispy Kreme™ doughnut?

I'd never even heard of them before moving to

the South. Where I grew up, we called such things “raised glazed” doughnuts—just one more deep-fried pastry with a hole in the middle. But wherever Krispy Kreme™ doughnuts are sold, they have been elevated to the status of a cultural icon. For one thing, they are everywhere. Every gas station and grocery store has a Krispy Kreme™ doughnut case, its clear acrylic shelves lined with row upon row of

glistening doughnuts. What's more, these little gems have become an experiential must for out-of-town guests. Tourists are escorted to the nearest Krispy Kreme™ repository as a matter of course. But while all Krispy Kreme™ doughnuts are

CLEARING ✦ THE ✦ COBWEBS

Is your hometown famous for anything—some landmark, special dish, or other claim to fame?



*Let's enter into the love
adventure of our lives and
seek creative ways of
telling our awesome God,
"We love You! We thank
You! We will live
for You!"*

Sheila Walsh

considered delicacies, nothing compares to the ones you get fresh from the source. You see, you can go to a Krispy Kreme™ doughnut shop, where they put a red neon light on to let passers-by know when they're frying. That way you can pop in and get a boxful of hot, fresh doughnuts. The glaze is still gooey and those doughnuts literally melt in your mouth. When that neon sign is lit, the line-up is amazing!

We're here together to study love. Now we can't really say that love is like doughnuts, but we can say that love is good. We see it everywhere. Love binds together parents and children, husbands and wives, sisters and brothers, grandparents and grandchildren, and the hearts of friends. But nothing compares to love that comes right from the Source. God's love is unparalleled—an experiential must!

1. God has many names in Scripture. What does Paul call Him in 2 Corinthians 13:11?



2. Yet calling our Heavenly Father the “God of Love” doesn’t quite go far enough. What startling revelation does John make in 1 John 4:8?

3. When someone is especially known for some trait, we’ll often say that if you looked that trait up in the dictionary, that person’s picture would be there. Needless to say, if we looked up “love” in the dictionary, God’s picture would be there. What do each of these verses tell us about God’s love?

- Psalm 57:10

*But anyone who does not
love does not know God—
for God is love.*

- Psalm 63:3

1 John 4:8 NKJV



Love is right. It is the strongest of all human emotions. Love is the ultimate invitation to life.

Nicole Johnson

• Psalm 108:4

4. The wording in some of these psalms is wonderful, especially as you look at them in the various translations. See if you can match the words in praise of God's love with the passage in which it can be found.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| ___ Psalm 31:21 (NCV) | a. My God loves me, and He goes in front of me. |
| ___ Psalm 36:5 (MSG) | b. Oh, God, my LORD, Your love is so great. |
| ___ Psalm 59:10 (MSG) | c. God's love is the wonder of the world. |
| ___ Psalm 69:16 (MSG) | d. Your love is eternal. |
| ___ Psalm 109:21 (NLT) | e. I am the LORD, whose love is unfailing. |
| ___ Psalm 138:8 (MSG) | f. God's love is meteoric. |
| ___ Jeremiah 9:24 (NLT) | g. O Lord, Your unfailing love is wonderful. |

Love is difficult to define. It is one of those intangibles—something we cannot touch, taste, see, hear, or smell. Still, we do try. The dictionary defines love as an intense emotional attachment. For many of us, love is just that—a feeling we have—and feelings can be very hard to put into words. It doesn't simplify matters to define love by saying that God is love, because we can't really define Him either. But think about it for a minute. God says, "I am God. I am love. These are My people and I love them. How have I behaved towards those I love? See, this is what love expects, how love reacts, what love is willing to do. This is love." It may not help us to slap a nice, tidy definition on love, but it does help us to understand what love is supposed to look like.

5. So if you had to describe God's love, which of these words would you find a way to work into your definition?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Great | <input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Short-lived | <input type="checkbox"/> Perpetual |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unconditional | <input type="checkbox"/> Unwavering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fair-weather | <input type="checkbox"/> Complete |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amazing | <input type="checkbox"/> Deep |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Temperamental | <input type="checkbox"/> Thriving |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unchanging | <input type="checkbox"/> Easy-come, Easy-go |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stingy | <input type="checkbox"/> Faithful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lavish | <input type="checkbox"/> Tyrannical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Steady | <input type="checkbox"/> Abundant |



*The LORD has appeared
of old to me, saying: "Yes,
I have loved you with an
everlasting love; Therefore
with lovingkindness
I have drawn you.*

Jeremiah 31:3 NKJV

6. What is Paul's prayer for believers, according to Ephesians 3:18?

7. God is all about love. His love for us is vast, immeasurable, *huge*. Do any of you find that a little intimidating? Does the very big-ness of God's love seem overwhelming at times? Consider what Jeremiah 31:3 says about the love of the Lord.

8. The bigness of God's love is indeed coupled with the gentleness of it. What does Hosea 11:4 say God has done?



DIGGING DEEPER

This entire study focuses in on the love of God. We are highlighting this facet of His character and drawing encouragement from it. But we shouldn't rejoice over those passages of Scripture we love and ignore the ones we don't care to think on. As in every area of life, we must keep balance. In this case, we must always remember that while God is love, He is also just. Take a look at this verse. How are these people deceiving themselves?

You make God tired with all your talk. "How do we tire him out?" you ask. By saying, "God loves sinners and sin alike. God loves all." And also by saying, "Judgment? God's too nice to judge." —Malachi 2:17 MSG

PONDER & PRAY

This week, stretch your mind and heart a bit as you try to comprehend the bigness of God's love for you. Do you have a view of the ocean where you live? God's love is much more vast and deep! Do you have mountains to admire? God's love is higher than they are! Do you live in wide open places—"big sky country"? God's love stretches beyond those horizons! Are you blessed with a view of the night sky, with all its stars? The love of God for you is higher even than these! Take comfort and confidence in the unchanging faithfulness of God's love. Give thanks for the gentleness of God's love. Pray that you will be able to receive God's love, for that is just the thing your heart needs today.

TRINKETS TO TREASURE

At the close of every Women of Faith conference, women are asked to play a little game of pretend. Each conference guest is asked to imagine that a gift has been placed in her hands—one from each of the speakers—to serve as reminders of the different lessons shared. This study guide will carry on this tradition! At the close of each lesson, you will be presented with a small gift. Though imaginary, it will serve to remind you of the things you have learned. Think of it as a souvenir. Souvenirs are little trinkets we pick up on our journeys to remind us of where we have been. They keep us from forgetting the path we have traveled. Hide these little treasures in your heart, for as you ponder them, they will draw you closer to God.



TRINKET TO TREASURE

This week's trinket simply must be a doughnut—if you can manage a warm Krispy Kreme™ doughnut, all the better! The world is filled with love because God is love. God is the Source of love. We look to Him in order to understand what love is all about and what love should look like. Deep as it is, our love has its limits, but God's love is perfect, limitless, unparalleled. There's nothing else like it, and it is ours to receive.