

Diary Devotions

Year 11

Term 1

Studies on the character and nature of God

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LOVE

The Good
Shepherd



PROVIDER

Food from
Creation

God is Love Week 1

Jesus is a Friend

Loyalty

Proverbs 20:6 “Many will say they are loyal friends, but who can find one who is truly reliable?”

God is that “truly reliable” friend who will never let us down.

Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times.

Proverbs 18:24 One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. (Jesus is that friend.)

Jesus is “a real friend” to us and invites us into the place of intimate friendship with him.

John 15:12-16 “Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. You didn’t choose me. I chose you.”.

You can’t choose who your brother is; but you can choose who your friend is. It is ever so extraordinary that the God over all creation has chosen us to be his friends!

An enemy seeks to find fault with you to tear you down; a friend always stands with you, to champion and support you. But God is for us!

Romans 8:31 If God is for us, who can be against us?

His attitude toward us is never negative, cynical, critical, nor contrary towards us. He’s on our side, always seeking the best for us. He’s a true friend.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Isaiah 41:10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Matthew 28:20 And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Questions and Activities

1. What character qualities do you value in a friend?
2. Which of these character qualities does God show in his friendship towards us?

God is Love Week 2

Jesus is a Friend

Friendship with Jesus requires obedience

Because Jesus is such a reliable friend, we should pay attention to his words and listen to his counsel when we go astray.

Proverbs 27:9 The heartfelt counsel of a friend is as sweet as perfume and incense.

Even when God's counsel is corrective it is done with our highest well-being in mind.

Proverbs 27:6 Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy.

If this is true with human friends, how much more so with God! He never "wounds" us casually, but only brings correction with an intent to bless us and guide us into that which will give us "a rich and satisfying life" ().

John 10:10 I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 15:14 You are my friends if you do what I command.

John 15:13-15 There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me.

John 15:15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

Matthew 12:50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

Questions and Activities

1. If we are to be friends with God, what is required of us?
2. When we are friends with God, he sometimes corrects us. Give an example of this.

God is Love Week 3

Jesus is a Friend

Friendship = Relationship

We listen carefully to a friend; we converse easily with a friend. A friend is the one with whom we share our deep thoughts. We feel at ease. We are comfortable when talking with our friend. That's what our relationship with God should be like. Talk to God about anything and everything – the good, the bad and the ugly.

1 Peter 5:7 Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

John 10:14 I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep, and my sheep know me.

We can talk to Jesus as a friend.

Read the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:5-15.

Our relationship with Jesus is like the relationship of a bridegroom and a bride. The bridegroom and bride relationship should be the closest of friendships. Throughout the New Testament we have images of the church as the bride, Jesus the bridegroom speaking of the relationship depth and commitment God intends for us all. In Revelation we are told about the bride prepared and beautifully dressed for her husband in the book of Revelation, as God calls us to enter the new Jerusalem, (the new heaven and earth).

Revelation 19:7 Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

We are friends with God because Jesus has made the way to the Father.

Romans 5:10 For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

This is what Jesus did for us!

Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Questions and Activities

1. Write a verse that shows the relationship of the bridegroom (Jesus) and the bride.
2. What is the greatest act of friendship that anyone can ever offer?

God is Love Week 4

Friendship with others

Friendship is a two-way commitment that takes time and effort. Jesus makes plain that friendship with him means obeying his command to love each other the way he loved us,

Hating a brother is not an option if we are to have friendship with God.

John 15:12-14 This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.

1 John 4:20 If someone says, "I love God," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see.

Jesus' best close friends were his twelve disciples, and the family of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. In John 11, Jesus helped his friends by raising Lazarus from the dead!

Choosing the best close friends

Warnings about bad company:

Proverbs 13:20 Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

Proverbs 22:24-25 Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.

Proverbs 1: 10-11 My son, if sinful men entice you, do not give in to them. 11 If they say, "Come along with us; let's lie in wait for innocent blood, let's ambush some harmless soul;

And 15-16 my son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths; for their feet rush into evil, they are swift to shed blood.

Instead choose friends that you can share your thoughts and ideas with, and be encouraged by one another:

Proverbs 27:17 As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Questions and Activities

1. Reflect on how Jesus showed friendship to his disciples. What can we learn from his example, about friendship with others?
2. Why do you think the Bible warns us against making close friends with people of bad moral character?
3. What is the meaning of the proverb, "iron sharpens iron".

God is Love Week 5

Jesus is a friend

Jesus – friend to all

- Jesus is a friend of children: “Let the little children come to Me.” Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:13-16
- Jesus showed friendship to the outcasts, (Luke 17:11-19; Matthew 8:1-4)
- Jesus was a friend of publicans and sinners, (Matt. 9:9-13)
- Jesus was a friend to those who were broken-hearted. (Matt. 5:3-4)

Psalm 34:18 “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

And Jesus is a friend to us! He calls us by name to follow him:

John 1:43 43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.”

John 10:14 “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.”

Jesus told us to love our enemies.

This does not mean that he wants us to be friends with our enemies. There is a difference.

This love is not based on feelings or personal affection but is an act of the will, a deliberate choice to seek the good of another, even when they are hostile

Loving enemies reflects the character of God, who shows kindness to both the good and the wicked, providing blessings indiscriminately. It is a way to overcome evil with good, breaking cycles of revenge and promoting reconciliation and peace.

Matthew 5:43-47 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?

Luke 6:27-28 But to you who are listening I say: “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”

The Good Samaritan moved out of his comfort zone in extending friendship, (Luke 10:25-37). Samaritans and Jews were enemies, but the Samaritan helped the Jew anyway.

Questions and Activities

1. Read the bible passages that show Jesus as a friend to all, (the first 4 dot points)
2. Read the story of the Good Samaritan.

God is Provider Week 1

God is a Personal God who loves and provides for us

God is a personal God, capable of giving and receiving love. Compared to false gods of false religions, only the true God of the bible has this ability.

Because God is a person, he WANTS relationship with every human being. When we have a personal relationship with the Creator we can pray for him to provide and care for us.

Lamentations 3:22 The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease.

John 15:9 I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love.

1 Peter 3:9 He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.

God's desire is for us to KNOW him, not just know about him. Right from the beginning God's intention has been for us to have face to face relationship with him. We see this in the Garden of Eden before sin entered the world.

Jesus—Immanuel, means 'God with us'. The Holy Spirit has been given to *be* with us.

God's desire for relationship provides a powerful model for how we are to be in our relationships with one another.

John 15:12 Love each other in the same way I have loved you.

2 Corinthians 6:16 I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

John 15:9 I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love.

1 John 4:16 We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

Questions and Activities

1. How is the God of the bible different from gods of other faiths?
2. How do we have a personal relationship with God, our creator?
3. Give an example of how God cares and provides for our personal needs.

God is Provider Week 2

God is a Personal God who loves and provides for us

Forgiveness is foundational in relationship. God forgives us:

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Colossians 1:13-14 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

We must forgive others:

Matthew 6:14-15 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Colossians 3:13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Because God is a person, he enables us to have a personal relationship with him.

There is a difference between religion and relationship with God. Religion focuses on good works as the way to reach God. However, through faith in Jesus Christ, we can have a personal relationship with Him, and know him in a personal way. This makes the Christian faith different to any other faith in the world. Our actions then come out of our love for him, and not out of a sense of duty to do certain things.

Ephesians 4:2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.

Colossians 3:12-14 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

Questions and Activities

1. God wants us to KNOW him, not just about him. What does this mean?
2. How would you describe the kind of love that God wants us to show towards others? (Col.3:12-14)
3. God's personal relationship with us is an example of how we should relate to others. Give an example.

God is Provider Week 3

God is a Father who loves and provides for us

John writes:

John 3:1 See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him.

The Father loves, protects, cares for, and guides those who put their trust in Him. And he has eternally existed in a perfect relationship of love with the other two unique Persons of the Trinity, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 64:8 And yet, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are the potter. We all are formed by your hand.

John 3:16 For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ()

2 Corinthians 6:18 And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.

1 John 3:1 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

Galatians 4:4-7 When the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father." Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

Questions and Activities

1. When did Jesus refer to God as 'father'?
2. What qualities of an ideal earthly father does God have?
3. Who are the three persons of the Trinity?
4. Explain Galatians 4:4-7 in your own words.

God is Provider Week 4

God is a Father who loves and provides for us

God is a compassionate, loving father to those in need.

In Hebrew 'Compassion' means to love, love deeply, have mercy, be compassionate, have tender affection.

Psalms 103:13 The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him.

Psalms 68:5-6 God is a father to the fatherless, defender of widows—this is God, whose dwelling is holy. God places the lonely in families.

Deuteronomy 10:18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing.

The Book of Hosea expresses the deep, compassionate love of the Father for his wayward child: Israel. (Hosea 11:1-8)

Jesus told stories to show how the Father is filled with joy when His children return to Him: The Lost Sheep and the Prodigal Son. (Luke 15:4-7 and Luke 15:32)

As children we are to reflect His character – to be loving and compassionate

Ephesians 5:1-2 Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ.

Colossians 3:12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Questions and Activities

1. Find a verse from Hosea that shows God's compassion towards Israel.
2. What had they done wrong?
3. Choose either the story of the lost sheep or the lost son, and explain why the story is an example of God's compassion.
4. Explain how a Christian can show compassion.

God is Provider Week 5

God is a Father who loves and provides for us

Why does God call himself 'Father' and not 'Mother'?

it is important to understand the role of a father in biblical times. A father was the protector and provider, but also was the one who gave identity to the family. That's why it was so difficult to be a widow or orphan in those days because you would have lost your protection and provision. You were a prime target to be taken advantage of.

God places earthly fathers as the head of the family. Similarly, God the Father, as part of the Trinity, (with Jesus and the Holy Spirit), is the divine head of the body of Christ.

Ephesians 5:23: For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour.

1 Cor 11:3 But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

A relationship with the Father is equally available to men and women, Jews and gentiles, slave and free. It transcends all gender distinctions, racial divisions and social stratus. The good news is that Jesus came to make it possible for his Father to become our Father. This relationship is offered to all who desire it.

Romans 8:15-16 And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Ephesians 5:1-2 Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ.

Isaiah 64:8 And yet, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are the potter. We all are formed by your hand.

Psalms 103:13-14 The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.

Questions and activities

1. Explain how a Christian can show compassion.
2. What would you say to a person who says that the Bible is using sexist terminology by using the word 'father' and not 'mother' for God.
3. Write a response to "God is our Father". How does this affect your personal life? How does this knowledge strengthen your relationship with God?