

Journey Into God's Word



Ruth 1-4

Song of Songs 1-8

Romans 9-16

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

How do you handle it? Real love that is a love that involves genuine concern, compassion, and a desire to see the best for the other person is often hard to find. When it does come your way, it's sometimes hard to believe it's the real thing, particularly if you have been hurt in the past. As a result, many go through life never really receiving love or giving it. They settle for passionate affairs that leave them feeling empty and ultimately alone. The real love described in our Bible reading this week comes from three different places in Scripture. Each one takes a different approach to sharing and receiving love, but all three ultimately come from the source of love—God. After all, love is not just one of the characteristics or attributes of God. For *1John 4:16* says, “God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.”

Ruth shows her love for her mother-in-law, Naomi, by declaring, “Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.”(*Ruth 1:16, 17*)

True love is described in *1 Cor.13* and other places in the Bible including *Song of Songs 8:6,7* where it says, “Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned.” Love in community, love in marriage, is so priceless that even the richest king cannot buy it. Real love is accepted as a gift from God and shared under the direction of His word.

Paul described his love for his Jewish brothers and sisters by stating, “For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel.”(**Romans 9:2**) “My heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.”(**Romans 10:1**) But Paul doesn’t stop there in **Romans 12:9,10** he says, “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.” Sincere love means helping other become better human beings. What practical step does **Romans 12:11-21** give for communicating love in word and deed? How could it be said *that* **Romans 12:17-21** summarizes the care for Christian living?

“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ ‘Do not murder.’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”(**Romans 13:8-10**) Why do you think love for others is called a debt? Could it be that we are permanently in debt to Christ for the love He has poured out on us? The only way we can repay this debt is to love others. The fact is Christ’s love for us is so great we will never be able to repay it. Therefore the debt we will always owe is the debt to love. Paul says it’s time to wake up, “because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.”(**Romans 13:11,12**) In light of this, what does **Romans 13:13—Romans 15:7** say we should do?

The story of Ruth is the story of love between a Moabite woman by the name of Ruth and her Jewish mother-in-law, Naomi. As widows, Ruth and Naomi only had difficult times to look forward too. Then when Naomi got the following news, her hope for the future changed. “Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. ‘The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz, she said. ‘The Lord bless him!’ Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. ‘He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.’ She added, ‘that man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers.’”(**Ruth 2:19,20**) A kinsman-redeemer was a relative who took responsibility for the extended family when a woman’s husband died and she could not marry the brother of the dead husband. If no one came forward, she would probably live the rest of her life in poverty. Jesus is our Kinsman-redeemer who, although He was God, came to earth to save us. As a result of Jesus’ death and resurrection, He has redeemed us from sin, death and the devil and purchased us to be His own

possession. Talk about love, “for you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish or defect.”(*1Peter 1:18,19*) Please go on, read verses 20,21 in this chapter, and then describe what it means to you personally to have a Kinsman-redeemer like Jesus.

Naomi had lost her husband and two sons, yet she trusted God and received the love her daughter-in-law Ruth had for her. The kinsman-redeemer “Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. Then he went to her, the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. The woman said to Naomi: ‘Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.’”(*Ruth 4:13-15*) Now take another look at *Romans 8:31-39* and describe how the nine verses came true in Naomi’s life and how they will work in yours.

Song of Songs takes a different approach to expressing love from that of Ruth or Romans. Today much of what is called love is in actually lust. People using people for their own gratification. Song of Songs shows that sex within the context of marriage is a beautiful gift from God. Some think that Solomon wrote this book in his youth before being taken over by the obsessions for wealth and women. Song of Songs is a story about a Jewish maiden (the Shulamite woman) and her lover (King Solomon). In the book we see their longing for each other and their desires to be together. In addition to being a drama or poem about two human lovers, the story is also about God’s love for His people. Remember when God would walk with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden prior to sin entering the world? Keep that thought in mind as you reflect on *Song of Songs 6:2,3*. Now reading once again *John 3:16*, please search your insights on God’s love and desire for His people.

Sharing the love of God is one of the greatest privileges given to humanity. That’s why Isaiah declared, “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.”(*Isaiah 61:1*) That proclamation was directly fulfilled when Jesus came into this world. (*Matt. 11:5*) Now you and I have been sent forth to share the love and hope Jesus provides through His death and resurrection. (*Matt.28:19,20*) We have an opportunity to do this as we feed the

hungry, shelter the homeless, provide clothing and visit the sick and imprisoned. (**Matt.25:31-46**) We have been sent forth to be instruments of hope and help now but also to share the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. In order to do this we must help people to see their need for a Savior and how Scripture makes it absolutely clear that Jesus Christ is that Savior. Sharing God's love involves reaching out to people in their time of need like Jesus did to the woman at the well in John 4. Such reaching out includes sharing the fact that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (**Roman 3:23**) Unless one recognizes that they have sinned and repent of those sins and turn to Jesus who paid the price for sin through His death and resurrection, they will die in their sins and go to hell. That's why **Romans 6:23** says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Being a witness or an evangelist is being one who the Holy Spirit is working through to share the love of God. There is no greater love than that which God has given. "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (**Romans 5:6-8**) Now it is important that as we share this message of the love of God with others, we help them under the direction of the Holy Spirit to believe and confess that Jesus is Lord. "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." (**Romans 10:9,10**)

Since we have begun our journey through the Scriptures, we have studied 17 different books of the Bible. Each of these books in their own unique way communicates this awesome love of God. Let's quickly review each one of these books. I will give you a key verse in that book to look up and then I would like you to write a paragraph about how that book demonstrates the love of God.

For example ***Genesis 1:27***, "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." As we read the book of Genesis we see God creating a perfect world of absolute harmony. Then sin entered the world and Adam and Eve are driven from the Garden of Eden. Even in the midst of this tragedy, a promise is given of a redeemer. (***Gen. 3:15***) As history unfolds, those who sought God and lived by faith, like Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph experienced a fulfilled life, while those who chose sin experienced destruction.

Now it is your turn. Please do the same with the following ***Exodus 3:7,10***

Leviticus 19:2 "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am Holy." This is possible because of Jesus Christ. The laws of Leviticus have been fulfilled through the death and resurrection of the perfect Lamb of God who has come to take away the sins of the world, Jesus Christ (see ***Hebrews 7:26***)_____

Deut. 18:15,18 Read these verses and share how Jesus fulfills them particularly in light of ***John 1:21, 25*** and ***John 1:45, 49*** and ***Acts 3:22-26; 7:37***_____

Please look up ***Joshua 1:9*** and then in one paragraph describe how God showed His love and faithfulness _____

Judges 17:6 “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.” Judges records God’s faithfulness and love for His people by providing a judge for them each time they cried out to Him for help and turned from their sins. As we read these accounts and think of Jesus’ faithfulness and mercy, we can’t help but notice the striking contrast between human sin and divine, unrelenting love.

Ruth 1:16 Please write your paragraph about God’s love and faithfulness revealed in this book _____

Psalms 150:6 “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.” Through the Psalms we are reminded over and over of God’s faithfulness, love and mercy Psalms are songs of praise to God our creation, redeemer and sustainer. _____

Proverbs 1:7 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.” Reflect on this and other Proverbs, thinking how your decisions in the past have hindered God’s love from flowing in you and through you. _____

Ecclesiastics 12:13 write your paragraph on the meaning of life as expressed in *Ecclesiastics*, and how God’s love through Christ gives life meaning.

Song of Song’s 6:3 _____

Matthew 5:17 Explain how Matthew shows that the law of love Jesus came to give fulfilled the law of the prophets (see *Romans 13:10*) _____

John 3:16 _____

Acts 1:8

Romans 5:1

Hebrews 1:3

It is a fact God loves you and this love is personified in Jesus Christ our Lord. Think about that love. Jesus means “the Lord saves”(Matt. 1:20-21). Christ means “the Anointed One,” God’s promised Messiah (John 7:25-43). Our shows that the relationship is personal (Romans 1:16-17) Lord signifies one’s master or ruler (Luke 6:46-49).

Let God’s love rule your life. “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are with out excuse.”(Romans 1:20)

This week please share the love of God with everyone you come in contact with. Continue to read God’s word daily. “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”(Romans 15:4) Please never forget how much God loves us, and what a great price Christ has paid to redeem you from sin, death and the devil.

This week let us study *1Samuel 1-15, Isaiah 1-22, Mark 1-8*. “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”(*Romans 15:13*) That is my prayer for you. That you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit and the knowledge of God’s love for you.

Yours in Christ,

Larry Rice