

POD Teaching Session 7

God's Love and Finding Your Purpose

(Mapping Your Future)

Learning Modules:

- A. God's Love must be viewed in the context of His other attributes.
- B. Why would a good God allow suffering?
- C. Review of all Teaching Sessions and Living a Purpose Filled Life.

Teaching Session 7 Module A

God's Love must be viewed in the context of His other attributes.

Learning Objectives:

- To gain a much greater appreciation of the unity of God's attributes.
- God's Love is reflected in His wrath toward sin and sinners.
- Is God's love unconditional?
- How can God be jealous? Isn't that sin?

No one is stunned, perplexed, or amazed to be told that 'God loves you'. But why not? Why aren't people stunned? Why aren't they amazed? How can anyone presume upon God's love and mercy, while neglecting his holiness and justice? Love and mercy are taken for granted, while holiness and justice are brushed aside and downplayed. We celebrate the idea of God's love, but are reluctant to admit that, because of God's holiness, our sins justly demand the most severe retribution and have separated us from Him. How is this possible? _____

The vast majority of people in the world today are virtually ignorant as to what the God of the Bible is like. They have heard of God, but much of what they have heard is distorted, one-sided, or altogether inaccurate. Most people today have created a "god" to their own liking who exists in their own imaginations. It seems very strange and hazardous that so few will take time to try to know God better. This prepares them not only for life here but also for the world to come for the Bible tells us that He is the judge of all the earth and has ultimate power over every man's eternal destiny.

God's Love is to be understood in the context of His other attributes



The foundation of all true knowledge of God and His love must be a clear mental comprehension of all His perfections as revealed in Holy Scripture. An unknown God cannot be _____, served, worshipped nor loved. Something more than a theoretical knowledge of God is needed by us. God becomes known in our soul as we purposefully seek intimacy with Him, yield ourselves to Him, and regulate all the details of our lives by His holy precepts and commandments.

For those who believe there is a God, we agree on one thing: God is love (1John 4:8). But why do we so often promote and embrace this attribute at the expense or exclusion or lack of focus on the other facets of God's attributes? **Discuss:** _____

God is a Person whose love must be understood in the richness and fullness of His whole personality. **He is love. But He is not only love.** There is a beautiful unity of love, law, mercy, justice, grace, righteousness, and holiness. And as Creator He is sovereign over all creation as an all powerful, all knowing, ever present, majestic, God who is full of wrath or anger against all unrighteousness. These words are like the facets of a diamond of flawless perfection.

Refer to the Chart in the resource guide "God's Attributes and Eternal Plan"
(Also refer to the "Manifestations of God's Glory" graphic)

_____ : The God of the Bible claims to be the one and only true God. Truth expresses reality. He must be trusted in everything about which He has spoken or else He has no more authority than fallible man. **Absolute truth is the foundation and most important of all His attributes and thus, the most logical prior attribute of God.** (Remember "Hope In" From Session 6).

_____ : **God's holiness (righteousness) is His next logically prior attribute because all His other attributes are not as fully demonstrable without a comprehensive understanding of this one.** Righteousness may be described as being perfectly Holy, without sin or any tendency to sin. God is His own standard of Holiness.

_____ : **The law is the written expression of His Holiness.** God's law (His will for obedience) is the standard to which man is called "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven". **We were created to be God's _____, created to be holy (righteous) as He is Holy (1 Peter 1:15-17).** Romans 3:31 Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.

Check out in the Resource Guide: The Law of Moses and The Christian: A compromise
God's law is written throughout the entire Bible, Old and New Testaments. Synonyms for God's Law include: precepts, commands, commandments, statutes, principles, codes, acts, enactments, ordinances, decrees, directives, edicts, rulings, regulations, rules, prohibitions,

→ restrictions, canons, testimonies, His ways, righteous judgments, Your Words, wonderful works, moral Laws, and truth.

Read and meditate on Psalm 119!



_____ : Because of the Fall of Man there were cataclysmic consequences both to mankind and the planet. Casting Adam and Eve out of the garden and the Great Flood, demonstrates the ultimate value that God attaches to the observance of His _____, as reflected in His Law.

_____ : **God's perfect righteousness requires that His justice be perfectly executed.**

Thus, the slightest "transgression or lack of conformity to God's law" demands a judgment with a verdict of guilty. Biblical theology affirms that justice is an unchangeable divine quality not reducible to a mere facet of divine compassion (love) on the erroneous theory that love is the exclusive center and core of God's being. The attempt to dissolve justice into love cancels any separate function for justice in the moral order of the world. **As a result, the modern concept of social justice is severely skewed towards mercy without responsibility.**

_____ : **The consequences of breaking God's moral laws are as sure and certain as the law of gravity** when one jumps off a building and is smashed on the ground below. When one violates God's laws, sooner or later he will suffer the consequences of the wrath of God with a broken heart, or a broken life. "You reap what you sow". While Biblical justice requires the application of mercy, God is most vengeful against the hardened heart. **Herein enters God's love, mercy, and grace.**

_____/JESUS CHRIST/THE CROSS: "The message of the cross" (1 Cor. 1:18) was a revelation of God's wrath and love. **If you want to know how much God hates sin....and how perfectly He abides by His own holiness, just look at the cross and study what happened there.** It took the suffering and death of the sinless One in order to bear the judgment and wrath of God for sinners like us. We deserved that sentence....but Jesus came and hung in our place, and suffered and died for our sins and for our eternal salvation.



Do you wish to see God's love? Look at the Cross. Do you wish to see God's wrath? Look at the Cross.

_____ : **It is a grace of God that leads to repentance.** Saving faith is beyond mere head knowledge or an assent that affirms the gospel is true. It is a personal conviction or commitment to and reliance upon Jesus Christ who is the image of faithfulness. He alone is trustworthy. It is in Him we place our trust.



Saving Faith: Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not by works so no one should boast....NASB95

No Faith: that comes from a hardened unrepentant heart: 1 Corinthians 1:18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. NASB95

Repentance and _____ can be understood as “two sides of the same coin.” It is impossible to place your faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior without first changing your mind about who He is and what He has done for you. Whether it is repentance from willful rejection/rebellion or repentance from ignorance or disinterest, it is a change of mind. Biblical repentance, in relation to salvation, is changing your mind from rejection of Christ to faith in Christ. It is impossible to truly and fully change your mind without that causing a change in action. In the Bible, _____ repentance results in a change in behavior.

Then our eternal destiny is sealed:

Faith → Pardon → Freedom → Bema Seat (rewards) → Blessings → Heaven

OR

No Faith → Punishment → Hell → Great White Throne Jdgmnt → Curse → LOF → 2nd Death
Lake of Fire

For a more detail discussion of this topic and other supportive Bible verses please refer to the resource guide article “What is God Like”.

➤ **God’s wrath is His loving response toward sin:**

Pitting God’s love against God’s wrath is as common these days as biblical illiteracy. Yet the Bible portrays God as both merciful and just (Ex. 34:6-7), kind and severe (Rom. 11:22), loving and wrathful (Rom. 5:8-10). John 3:16 demonstrates the love of God, by the sacrifice of His Son for all those who believe. **God is love, but He is also wrath, just, and vengeful.** But His wrath is a holy wrath (see John 3:36) and His justice and vengeance are holy as well. God’s love is holy.

The wrath of God serves to show us the seriousness of our sin. So, why does God hate sin? Sin causes a breakdown or the destruction of relationships, it separates us from Him and others, and it robs God of the glory He is due from His image bearers. Our sin violates His holiness. For these reasons He must punish sin thus His wrath is kindled. Otherwise God is not the _____ God He claims to be. The price of diluting God’s wrath is diminishing God’s Holiness and love.

The mistake that most people make in evaluating or attempting to understand God's love relates to how God responds to and deals with sin or unrighteousness in man. Deuteronomy 7:9-10 helps strike a proper balance between God's love, holiness and wrath.

Deuteronomy 7:9-10 “Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; 10 but repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them; He will not delay with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face.” NASB95

What does verse 9 say about God? _____

What does verse 10 say about those who do not love? _____

How have those in verse 9 demonstrated that they love God? _____

See also Matthew 10:28 for a New Testament example.



God's wrath is His love in action; His emphatic "No!" to anything that leads to our destruction, and the breaking of our relationship with Him and others. In reality His wrath is an expression of His fiercest and purest love. His love demands restoration, which in turn demands holiness.

"Hate the sin but love the sinner". What about this cliché in view of our discussion?

Source of cliché is Mehta Gandhi in his 1929 autobiography

The phrase is understood to mean God has nothing but hate for the sin, but this cannot be said with respect to how God sees the sinner, right? There is a small element of truth in those words. However, fourteen times in the first fifty psalms alone; the psalmist states that God hates the sinner; that His wrath is on the liar, and so forth. **In the Bible the wrath of God rests on both the _____ (Rom. 1:18-23) and the _____ (Rom 1:24-32; 2:5; John 3:36). Thus the cliché should be abandoned. Misuse and misunderstanding of the cliché can lead to "enablement" and "tolerance of sin" which in of itself is sin and unloving** (Proverbs 27:5-6. "Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.")

See Article "Does God Hate Anyone?"

Here are some examples of a more compelling and truth based phrase:

"Hate sin, reconcile the sinner to God", "Hate sin, now 'Go and make disciples' ", "Hate sin, Love them with The Gospel", "Hate sin, share the gospel", "Hate sin, show'em The Way", "Hate sin, share the gospel then disciple the saint", "Hate sin, share God's character then show them The Way", "Hate sin, tell them the bad news then share the good news".

Craft your own phrase: _____

➤ **The love of God is widely accepted, but wrongly understood:**


God's love is always an expression of God's holiness. It is also directed toward producing holiness in us. God's love seeks to make those who sin, holy. "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him." (Eph. 1:4)

"Love" is undoubtedly the most used and abused word when it comes to discussing the ethics of the Bible. It is sometimes difficult for a modern person, who associates love with uncontrollable feelings, to understand how the Bible can command love of God, neighbor, even enemies. But **in the Bible the many terms translated as "love" do not refer primarily to feelings. Biblical love is a determined act of the will, a joyful resolve to put the welfare of others above our own.** In the Bible, when God's people are called upon

to “love,” they are being asked to do something in loving response to the love of God, whether they feel like it or not. Consider Matthew 5:44: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.”

In the Hebrew OT Scriptures, *hesed* refers to a sort of love that has been promised and is owed—covenant love, that is—as in Hosea 1:1: “When Israel was a child, I loved him and out of Egypt I called my son.” Covenant love is the love God promised to give to his covenant people, and which they in turn were to respond with in-kind, loving the God of the Bible with all their hearts, minds and strength.

In Greek, as in Hebrew, there are several terms for love. Preachers and teachers usually explain that eros refers to physical love, *philos* to brotherly or sisterly love, and *agape* refers to some sort of transcendent spiritual or even divine love. Agape however is probably the least well understood. **Agape differs from *hesed* in that it does not refer to a love already promised to a specific group of people. Agape often refers to a more self-sacrificial love. It is love which is and from God, whose very nature is love itself.** The apostle John affirms this in 1 John 4:8 “God is Love”. God does not merely love; He is love itself. It is an expression of His grace and being. But it is important to remember, however, that God’s love is not a sappy, sentimental love such as we often hear portrayed. It is surely no exaggeration to say that **it is a love humans are not capable of apart from divine example, assistance and enablement.**



John Piper says true love aims at satisfying people in the glory of God. Any love that terminates on man is eventually destructive. Love must be God centered, or it is not true love. Good Friday love is God-glorifying love. **God exalts _____ at the cross.** Both Old and New Testaments tell us that **God’s loving us is a means to our glorifying Him.** If the aim of the cross was to rescue us, then we were the ultimate goal of the cross. Instead, the cross rescued us from sin in order that we might see and savor the glory of God. The center of reality is God Himself not ourselves. His glory should be our goal. That is true love!

See article in the resource guide “The Goal of God’s Love May Not Be What You Think It Is.”

➤ **Is God’s love unconditional?**

As we have shown, scripture clearly teaches that God’s love (*phileo*, *agape*) is unfailing, underserved and unilateral (completely one-sided in initiation). But is God’s love without condition, i.e. UN-conditional? Yes in one sense, God loves all of humanity and offers salvation to all without conditions of merit or worth. But God’s love has conditions. **Authentic love requires conditions. When God created humanity, conditions were there from the start. “you are free But you must not ...”** (Gen. 2:16-17). God’s love requires conditions, and in this sense it is misleading to call it “unconditional”. God will not, cannot, forgive and accept us except on the basis of Jesus’ sacrifice. To do otherwise would betray the integrity of God’s own holy character. True love is impossible without the potential for a freely given response. The reason for this is that love is about relationship, about reciprocity. Genuine love is a relationship of mutuality between “sovereign/free-will” persons, meaning that if love is forced, it ceases to be love.

Why does God not simply accept people (sinners)?

1. **The words “unconditional love” are not used in Scripture**, nor do any of the church fathers use the phrase. The phrase unconditional love entered mainstream, English pop-culture in the 1960’s LSD drug culture. What the flower-children originally meant by unconditional love had to do with “love the one you are with” in the sexual revolution sense. But the phrase did not last long even among the hippies because it is inherently contradictory: to love is to care deeply about the condition of the one loved. But “under the influence” a lot of things made sense that didn’t later. After the drugs wore off, psychology flirted with the pop-phrase in the 1970’s in the “transactional analysis” pop psychotherapy fad, but this was short-lived and quickly dropped from view. Just about then a few susceptible Christian teachers stepped in and took the baton, and the rest is history.
2. If we take the phrase in its plain-sense meaning, it is certainly not consistent with scripture! If unconditional can cohabit the same phrase as love without canceling it (when not on LSD, that is), then why did Jesus bother declaring the conditions? “You must be born again.”, “whoever believes” etc.,

In a typical teaching of Jesus, much of what He said was the life-giving conditions of moving out-of a position of _____ and into a loving relationship with the Father. The catch-phrase unconditional love strips these words right out of our Saviors’ mouth.

In John 8:31-32 Jesus said, “___ you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. _____ you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” The IF/THEN is a condition. So is UNLESS (Jn. 3:5). And this is the kind of saying that Jesus often spoke.

3. **Could unconditional love be Satan’s latest repackaging of the “love dove peace” message** that has always been the essence of false prophecy? If “God loves everyone eternally no matter what they believe” then “it makes no difference which ‘god’ you worship since God’s unconditional love would never allow Him to send anyone to hell.”

So often when Christians say unconditional love we know they do not mean it in the exact, literal sense. We do not want to go overboard and say that anyone who uses the phrase is a Universalist (all paths lead to God) or a heretic. We must look to the context and meaning for those who have not thought it through, giving them the benefit of the doubt. **We should be more cautious, however, about adopting extra-biblical made-up terminology within the Church.** God’s love is truly amazing.... God’s love is unilateral: He loves the unlovable and gives His glory to them. God’s love is completely undeserved. God’s love is unfailing for those in who He delights, who respond to Him and receive His Son. But, God’s love is clearly not “unconditional” for wrath, damnation and eternal destruction (2nd death) will come to those who reject His Messiah and His Gospel. **Let us shout the message of these conditions from the roof tops so that others might be saved**, rather than retreat into thinly veiled licensed, universalism, tolerance or anything else that “sets itself up against the knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 10:5)



Unconditional love sounds good and feels safe, but the problem is that there is no power to it. When we ascribe unconditional love to God we substitute a teddy bear for the king of the universe.

Jer. 5:12-13, Jer. 8:6-9, Jer. 23:16-18, Jer. 23:21-22, Lam 2:14, Luke 3:7b, John 3:36, Rom. 2:5,8, Eph. 2:3, Eph 5:6, 1 Cor. 2:13, 2 Tim. 4:2-4 (TACN), Heb 13:9 (NIV), Luke 13:3 (DVP). All other references point to NIV. (Taken from Act 17:11 Ministry article “Unconditional Love”)

Please refer to the article in the resource guide “Is God’s Love Unconditional?”

➤ **How can God be jealous isn’t that sin?**



Zech. 8:2 “Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘I am jealous for Zion, yes with great _____ I am jealous for her.’ (see also Ex. 20:5, 34:14, Deut.5:9, 6:15, Jos. 24:19, Ezk.36:25, Neh. 1:2).

The Hebrew word for jealousy can mean “insistence on exclusive devotion; toleration of no rivalry; zeal; and or; jealousy (righteous or sinful); envying.”

Unlike envy where two parties are involved, jealousy pre-supposes a third party or entity. Jealousy sees a threat to what is otherwise an exclusive relationship with the intrusion of other person or thing. Getting jealous of something is not bad but natural because you care and want to protect a loved one from harm. **Jealousy is a sin ONLY when it leads to sinful thoughts and actions.**

Exodus 34:12-14 “Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst. “But *rather*, you are to tear down their altars and smash their *sacred* pillars and cut down their Asherim —for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” — NASB95

What is God “jealous” of in this passage? _____

James 4:5 “He *jealously* desires the Spirit which He has made to well in us.”



Hosea 13:4-8 Yet I *have been* the LORD your God Since the land of Egypt; And you were not to know any god except Me, for there is no savior besides Me. I cared for you in the wilderness, In the land of drought. As *they had* their pasture, they became satisfied, And being satisfied, their heart became proud; Therefore they forgot Me. So I will be like a lion to them; Like a leopard I will lie in wait by the wayside. I will encounter them like a bear robbed of her cubs, And I will tear open their chests; There I will also devour them like a lioness, As a wild beast would tear them. NASB95

In this passage of what is God “jealous”? _____



**Our God is a jealous God. He loves you and wants to care for you but will not tolerate disobedience that leads to any attempt of getting your needs met apart from Him.
Beware of the Bear!!!**

In summary: Truth is that which accords to reality. Since it is impossible for God to lie we know that everything He says about what will happen will actually take place. He will fulfill all his promises. **Truth can be summed up in the person and work of Jesus Christ** (The Alpha and Omega, The Beginning and The End, The Way, The Truth, and The Life). It follows that God defines the standard for perfection (holiness) as there is no standard above Him by which He can be judged. **God's law defines holiness or the righteousness of God** in whose image we were created.

So, Christians start at the wrong place in starting with God's love. God's love enters because God is truth, and He has a standard for Holiness, His law. So, God's law is prior to God's love in salvation. For that reason, **law is the most important understanding of God's character after His being Truth.** The Psalmist cried. "Oh, how I love thy law", **the law is foundational to love, mercy, justice, and all other biblical concepts. It follows that with a violation of the law there must be perfect justice.** As His image bearers we have fallen far short of that standard. **His wrath is kindled and judgment must be exacted. His justice demands a verdict of death (Rom. 3:23).** You see, if you do not understand the exact and detailed standard of God's law, you cannot fully appreciate the greatness of the sacrifice of God's Son for sinners.

The Cross of Christ, the proof of His love for us, should grow in prominence with every passing day! Our destiny has been set with the precious gift of faith He has bestowed upon us. We have received His pardon and are set free to worship and serve Him in Spirit and Truth as we look forward to the blessings He is storing up for us in heaven based on our faithfulness to opportunity.



**Ponder this: "Love without truth is too soft; Truth without love is too hard." 1John 3:18
"Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth."**



Therefore, we should hate sin just like God hates it because it separates Him from us. We hate it because it lessens our love and dulls our conscience, because it binds us and blinds us. We hate it because it grieves the Spirit of God (Eph. 4:30). Our prayer to the Holy one is "May the God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thes. 5:23)



**There is "One Truth"
The Cross of Christ expresses God's Love and reveals His wrath.**

REMEMBER: 1 Cor. 8:1 “Knowledge puffs up but love builds up”. Studying the Bible is important, but the goal is never knowledge for the sake of knowledge. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ means that we learn from Him, fellowship with Him, and obey everything He commands us. Love is the goal thru obedient holy living.

APPLICATION NEXT STEPS: As you review this session in your own personal quiet time, with your POD mates and others, ask yourself; What is God saying to me? and How am I going to respond? Begin now to look for opportunities to start sharing what you have learned with others. That is disciple making. Take advantage of the transformative power of prayer, journaling, writing out personal application/next steps, and memorizing key scriptures. Also, be sure to read the articles and one or more of the books mentioned in the resource guide at the end of each of the seven sessions.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS AND MY PERSONAL APPLICATION/NEXT STEPS:

Scripture I will commit to memorize from this session:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.