



▶ DAILY DEVOTIONAL.

Saturday/Sunday, 4/7-8/18

“A New Covenant”

John 13:31-35 (NIV)

When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. “My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Family Activity: A covenant is a promise. In the Bible, we see many covenants that God makes with God’s people. Covenants are always two-sided, but even when we don’t keep up our end of the deal, God always does. Talk about some of the covenants that you know about (either in the Bible or in your life). God has promised us eternal life and we hear from John that God asks us to love one another. As a family, come up with some ideas for how you can live out this covenant and show love to others.

Monday, 4/9/18

“The Greatest Commandment”

Mark 12:28-33 (NIV)

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” “Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

- In the Jewish tradition, there were 613 commandments. These rules and practices influenced each aspect of life from what to wear, what to eat, or when not to work. A devout Jew would have taken seriously keeping all 613 commandments. What rules do you follow? Are these rules things you have decided for yourself or things others have decided on your behalf?
- Out of all of the 613 commandments, Jesus is asked which is the most important. He chooses two: first, love God and second, love your neighbor. If you measured your day by this guide, what would you change? What would you continue or spend more time doing?

Prayer: O Lord, our God, we hear the words of Jesus and yet we feel the weight of competing rules. Guide us to let go of the things that are keeping us from what is most important in our lives. Help us to love you whole-heartedly and to love everyone around us as ourselves. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Tuesday, 4/10/18

“The Thing About Love”

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (NIV)

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

- We often hear this scripture read at weddings. In fact, we picked that scripture for our wedding. While weddings are a great celebration of a relationship, this scripture is meant for more than a special occasion: it is meant for when the going gets tough. If we take a deeper look, we find a different kind of love that often goes against what our world would define. Taking this definition of love, how do you feel Christians are successful? How have we missed the mark?
- What relationship do you currently have that can be transformed by this definition of love?

Prayer: Dear God, we praise you for the ways your love has transformed our lives. Open our eyes to see your presence this day. Fill us with your patience, kindness, hope and love. Help us to be agents of transformation in the world arounds us, and especially in our relationships. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Wednesday, 4/11/18

“As I Have Loved You”

1 John 4:7-21 (NIV)

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

- Our new covenant to love God and love neighbor begins out of God's love for us. It is a promise and commitment that God has already fulfilled through Jesus Christ. Using this scripture, how would you describe God's love for you personally? How has God's love transformed you or changed your life?
- Our new covenant is to love others as God has loved us. How does this scripture influence how you would love others?

Prayer: Holy God, we thank you for the sacrifice that you made so that we may share in your eternal life. We celebrate all of the ways you have and will continue to show your unconditional love to us. Out of your abundant love, help us to love you and to love others. Reveal to us your heart so that we may join in your mission to make disciples. Amen.

Thursday, 4/12/18

“Love God”

Psalm 18:1-3, 30-32 (NIV)

I love you, Lord, my strength.

*The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
I called to the Lord, who is worthy of praise,
and I have been saved from my enemies.*

As for God, his way is perfect:

*The Lord's word is flawless;
he shields all who take refuge in him.*

For who is God besides the Lord?

And who is the Rock except our God?

*It is God who arms me with strength
and keeps my way secure.*

- The description of Psalm 18 is that this was a song that David sang after being delivered from his enemies. This was an extremely difficult season in his life, and yet we see the love and praise that David has for God. What keeps you sane in the face of difficult seasons of life?
- What scripture would you choose to describe your love of God?

Prayer: Dear God, you are our strength and shield. We praise your holy name and shout your praises! Thank you for being ever present in our lives, even and especially in the midst of our burdens. Deliver us from our struggles and stresses and make our way secure. Keep our eyes focused on you and the blessings you have bestowed upon us. Amen.

Friday, 4/13/18

“Love One Another”

Luke 6:27-36 (NIV)

“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. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

- In the new covenant of “Loving God and Loving Others,” we find that the people we are asked to love are not always that loveable. Sometimes those we are called to love are also our enemies. Of course, it would be much easier if we could just love those who love us back, but Jesus’ words are quite convicting, “And if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?” ... Yikes, that stings a little! Who in your life is easy for you to love? Who in your life right now would you call your enemy?
- How could you do good for those who hate you this week?

Prayer: Merciful God, we thank you for the way that you show us kindness and compassion. We confess that we have not always loved our neighbors. We pray for our enemies today, and we ask you to pour your blessings on them. Strengthen us to be able to be vehicles of your grace and grant us the wisdom to love the way you love. Amen.

**This week’s devotional was written by Pastor Jessica Richard
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