



Relen less

*And I am convinced that nothing
can ever separate us from God's
love. Neither death nor life,
neither angels nor demons, neither
our fears for today nor our worries
about tomorrow—not even the
powers of hell can separate us from
God's love. No power in the sky
above or in the earth below—
indeed, nothing in all creation will
ever be able to separate us from the
love of God that is revealed in
Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Romans 8:38-39

Monday

(Jesus Loves You!)

Reading: Luke 15:11-32

God loves all of his children. There are so many Christians that make him proud each day because of the way that they love. But there are even more people in the world who don't follow Jesus. It breaks God's heart to see his children hurt and mess up. He wants so badly for them to turn to him so that he can satisfy their needs in a way no one else can. That is why the father rejoices when his lost son returns home, even though he has another son at home already. Every person is important. Even you. I mess up a lot. Sometimes I feel like I don't deserve the love that is given to me. Jesus knows our hearts and loves us despite the mistakes. He knows when we are genuinely sorry for the mistakes that we make. Just like the father in the story, Jesus always runs to us to welcome us home. We were lost, but have now been found.

Discussion:

- Have you ever lost something that's really important to you, and found it later? How did you feel?
- Why do you think the father was so happy when his son returned even though the son abandoned his family in the beginning?
- When you hear the word, "Love," what do you think of? Is there a specific event or situation that pops into your head?

Further Study:

- Luke 15:1-7
- 1 Peter 5:6-7
- John 15:9
- John 15:12

Tuesday

(God is just.)

Reading: Psalm 5

Yes, Jesus loves you, but he is also just. He hates the oppression of his creation- including people and nature. He hates when others are treated poorly. God is just in that he will judge everyone based on his standards of right and wrong. The Bible gives us very clear guidelines to follow about what is right and wrong. The fact that God is just in his judgment of us holds significance in our lives because it keeps us accountable for our actions. You may be thinking that it is impossible for a human to do only good for their whole entire lives. You are correct. Everyone sins and is guilty of doing something wrong in their lifetime. Tomorrow's bible dig will look at how God is able to not only be a just God, but also a God of mercy.

Discussion:

- Think about a time when you were treated unfairly. What happened? How did you respond?
- Have you ever seen someone show confidence in God's goodness while they are struggling greatly? How did this affect the way you looked at God being just?

Further Study:

- Romans 3:23
- Micah 6:8
- Luke 6:27-28

Wednesday

(He Loves You So Much That...)

Reading: Mark 15:1-39

God loves you so much that he sent his only son to die for you. Jesus walked the earth so that he could feel every emotion that you ever felt and face some of the same challenges that you do. Have you ever thought about that? Jesus knows exactly (I said EXACTLY) how you feel. He's been there. He's been tempted. He's been hurt. Whenever I am going through a really hard time, I imagine Jesus sitting right beside me with his arms wrapped around me, catching every tear that falls from my cheek. He's experienced all of the same things we have, and he decided to take your place when it comes time to speak on behalf of your right and wrong actions. He decided that you were worth dying for, even before you existed. Even though he knew you were going to mess up again and again, he loved you so much that he said you were worth it. He died for you just so that He would have an opportunity to know you and form a relationship with you, and eventually spend eternity with you. He loved you that much. None of us deserve that love, but by accepting Christ as your savior and believing that he is God, you will get to spend forever with him one day.

Discussion:

- Write down on a piece of paper the answers to these questions:
 - What is getting in the way of your relationship with Jesus?
 - Do you believe that you are loved? Why?

Further Study:

- John 3:16
- Romans 5:8
- Romans 3:26
- John 15:13
- Ephesians 2:4-5

Thursday

(Love God, Love Others.)

Reading: Matthew 22:36-40

These are the greatest commandments in the whole Bible. When the Bible says to love your neighbor as yourself, you have to actually love yourself before you love others. Pretend that the love we have for ourselves is represented by cups full of water. So everyone has a cup in front of them, and the amount of water in the cup is how much love that person has for themselves. Say a friend's cup is empty, and they need me to help them. If my cup is empty, I cannot fill up my neighbor's cup because there is nothing in my cup for me to give them. In other words, if I don't know how to love myself well, how will I be able to really love my neighbor? This is the sequence the Bible gives us:

Love God > Love Yourself > Love Others

The Bible tells us who we are as children of God. This is where we should be finding our identity. Not from your parents, or your friends, or your boyfriend/girlfriend. Our identity comes from God. He says we are **worthy**. He says we are **never alone**. He says we are so **desperately loved** and **sought after**. So ask yourself: Do you love yourself and the identity you have in Christ?

Discussion:

- What gets in the way of you loving yourself?
- What is getting in the way of you loving others?

Further Study:

- 1 John 4:19
- 1 Corinthians 13: 1-7
- 1 Corinthians 16: 14

Friday

Now It's Your Turn.

Reading: John 8:1-11

Love isn't always easy. It can be hard to love someone who is unkind, or making bad choices, or hurting you. But Jesus never told us to love only good people. Or only other Christians. In this story, Jesus is showing love to a woman who doesn't deserve it. He doesn't let the bad decisions she made slide. In fact, he tells her to sin no more. But never once does he condemn her for what she has done. I challenge you all to leave this week loving others the same way that Jesus does– without hesitation.

Discussion:

- Look at the paper you took notes on for Wednesday's devotional. Have your answers changed?
- How are you going to love others that don't deserve it this week?

Further Study:

- Romans 12:9-11
- Romans 13:8-10
- Romans 8:35-37
- 1 Peter 4:8