



Shining a light on the weekly Bible Lessons published in the *Christian Science Quarterly*®

Love

January 25–31, 2021

from the **Golden Text**

[I John 4:16](#)

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

—New Living Translation

Readers of this letter faced both hostility from outsiders and conflict within the Christian community over differing views on doctrinal issues. Love for God and each other, the writer counsels, is the Christly response to animosity and contention. Repeating the phrase “of God” multiple times, he clearly shows God to be the exclusive source of love.

Depicting [First John 4:7–12](#) as “the most profound analysis of Christian love” in the New Testament, a scholar notes, “. . . our love is not self-generated, but manifests our parentage and kinship with God.”

from the **Responsive Reading**

[Psalms 36:8](#)

They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

Images of divine abundance appear throughout the Hebrew Bible. Here *fatness* would have signified to the Israelites the promise not only of fullness but fertility—and rivers, of thirst-quenching supplies of water. Spiritually regarded, these metaphors illustrate God’s goodness—not merely as sufficient but as overflowing and inexhaustible.

Ephesians 2:4, 5, 8

God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, . . . By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.

God’s grace was a central focus of early Christian teaching. While Hebrew doctrine was commonly interpreted to mean that salvation must be earned, early Christians understood that salvation results from God’s love—and that faith, good works, salvation, and grace go hand in hand.

Nearly every New Testament letter opens and closes with wishes about grace—strong evidence that the authors deeply valued this holy gift (see example in [Galatians 1:3; 6:18](#)).

quickened: made alive; revived; restored life to

from **Section 1**

Translation

2 | [Psalms 145:9](#)

The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

• • •

The Lord is good to everyone.

He showers compassion on all his creation.

—New Living Translation

3 | [Deuteronomy 7:7, 8](#)

The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Moses is reminding the Israelites—at this point living in the midst of pagan worship in Canaan—to remain faithful to Yahweh. This faithfulness was a covenant obligation, and the Hebrew leader emphasizes that it is God’s love, bestowed freely and without reference to merit, that truly inspires and impels fidelity.

from **Section 2**

Translation

5 | [Psalms 34:18](#)

The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

• • •

*The Lord is near to the heartbroken
And He saves those who are crushed in spirit (contrite in
heart, truly sorry for their sin).*

—Amplified® Bible

6 | [Ruth 1:8, 14, 16](#)

Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother’s house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. . . . And Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. . . . And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.

Ruth holds a special place in Judeo-Christian history. Not only is she the only woman in the Bible other than Esther having a book of the Bible named after her, but she is also the great-grandmother of David—and thus recognized as an ancestor of Jesus.

Ruth’s insistence on staying with Naomi meant committing to a new nation, a new God, and a new faith. Not unlike Samaritans in the time of Jesus, Moabites were generally seen as enemies of Israel (see [Numbers, chaps. 22–24](#)) and banned from “the congregation of the Lord” ([Deuteronomy 23:3](#)).

Yet Naomi's family had been received into Moab during a famine, and now hostilities seem to have ceased, at least temporarily, between the two countries.

In this narrative, Orpah is not condemned for following the norm of her country. But Ruth's loyalty to Naomi is commended, depicted by the Hebrew word rendered *clave* (*dābaq*)—the same term used in describing a man being joined to his wife and a person holding fast to faith in God (see examples in [Genesis 2:24](#); [34:3](#); [Deuteronomy 10:20](#)).

clave unto: remained closely united with

entreat: ask urgently

lodgest, lodge: live; dwell

7 | [Ruth 2:2, 3](#)

Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

Mosaic law directed farmers to leave some harvested grain in their fields for the poor, including orphans, widows, and strangers (see [Leviticus 19:9, 10](#); [Deuteronomy 24:19](#)). Knowing of Ruth's kindness to her mother-in-law, Boaz also ensures safety, water, and food for Ruth—and he orders his workers to purposely drop extra grain to glean (see [vv. 8–16](#)).

The message of the book of Ruth has been portrayed as “the law of kindness which transcends national boundaries and makes all men kin.”

glean: gather grain

reapers: workers who cut and collect crops

hap: chance

7 | [Ruth 2:5–8](#)

Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: and she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers

among the sheaves: . . . Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens.

damsel: young woman

sheaves: bundles of stalks from harvested grain

abide . . . fast: stay; remain

Translation

7 | [Ruth 2:12](#)

The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

• • •

“May the Lord reward you for what you have done! May you receive a rich reward from the Lord God of Israel, under whose protection you have come for shelter.”

—GOD’S WORD Translation

from **Section 3**

Translation

8 | [Psalms 86:14, 15](#)

O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul; and have not set thee before them. But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

• • •

The arrogant rise up against me, God.

A gang of violent people want me dead.

They don’t give a thought for you.

*But you, my Lord,
are a God of compassion and mercy;
you are very patient and full of faithful love.*

—Common English Bible

10 | [Matthew 5:7](#)

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

In the Hebrew Bible, mercy is almost solely an attribute of Yahweh rather than a quality of humanity. In one notable exception, Hosea 6:6 records God as saying, “I desired mercy, and not sacrifice”—a statement referenced twice in Matthew (see [9:13](#); [12:7](#)). Even after Christ Jesus’ advent, those seeking healing often asked him (as God’s emissary) to show mercy to them (see examples in [Matthew 17:15](#); [20:30, 31](#)).

Here Jesus declares that God’s children are expected to be merciful—and in [Luke 6:36](#) he ties this to their likeness to God. From these beginnings, mercy becomes a core requirement of Christ’s followers. Colossians charges, for instance: “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” ([3:12, 13](#)).

10 | [Matthew 5:44](#)

Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.

despitefully use: mistreat or treat unfairly

persecute: go after someone in order to treat them cruelly or unjustly

from **Section 4**

11 | [Matthew 14:14](#)

Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

After hearing of Herod’s murder of John the Baptist, Jesus and his disciples retreat to a wilderness area beyond Galilee. This small region, only about 50 miles from north to south and 25 miles from east to west, was home to several hundred thousand people. Finding places for quiet prayer would have been difficult.

When crowds follow Jesus, however, he doesn’t demand to be left alone but compassionately responds with healing. (In a parallel verse in [Mark 6:34](#), the Master expresses his love by teaching these “sheep not having a shepherd.”)

13 | [John 4:46, 47](#)

There was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.

Jesus has recently left Judea, where he found that “a prophet hath no honour in his own country” (v. 44). In Galilee, he is welcomed—and this healing is noted as his “second miracle” there (v. 54), after his earlier turning of water into wine (see [2:1–11](#)).

from **Section 5**

Translation

14 | [John 4:7](#)

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

• • •

Dear friends, we should love each other, because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has become God’s child and knows God.

—New Century Version

15 | [Matthew 18:21, 22](#)

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Forgiving someone seven times may be seen as reversing the revenge mandate in [Genesis 4:15](#): “Whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” In any case, it must have seemed remarkably generous. Yet Jesus’ multiplication of this by seventy amounts to unlimited forgiveness.

16 | [Luke 6:37](#)

Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.

Translation

Judge not [neither pronouncing judgment nor subjecting to censure], and you will not be judged; do not condemn and pronounce guilty, and you will not be condemned and pronounced guilty; acquit and forgive and release (give up resentment, let it drop), and you will be acquitted and forgiven and released.

—Amplified® Bible Classic

Believers are not being asked to refrain from discriminating between right and wrong, but rather to leave the judgment of others to God. A commentary paraphrases, “Give and forgive because you have been given and forgiven so much!”

This verse corresponds to [Matthew 7:1](#) (“Judge not, that ye be not judged”) and recalls [Matthew 5:7](#) (“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy,” citation 10).

17 | [Romans 12:14](#)

Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

Early Christian instruction about blessing one’s enemies represented a dramatic departure from common practice. Until Christ Jesus’ ministry, most people considered it natural to utter curses on persecutors and to return evil for evil.

Paul’s words demonstrate his own shift in perspective. Early Christian theologian Augustine surmises that the apostle likely remembered a preeminent act of forgiveness he had witnessed—Stephen’s plea that God pardon those stoning him (see [Acts 7:60](#))—and remarks, “Many a persecutor has become a follower of the faith he once sought to destroy, because he has seen how a Christian can forgive.”

Translation

17 | [Romans 12:14, 18](#)

Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. . . . If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

• • •

Wish good for those who harm you; wish them well and do not curse them. . . . Do your best to live in peace with everyone.

—New Century Version

from **Section 6**

Translation

18 | [1 John 3:1, 11, 18](#)

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: . . . This is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. . . . My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

• • •

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children. . . . This is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another. . . . Dear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.

—New Living Translation

Translation

19 || [John 4:12](#)

If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

• • •

... if we love each other, God lives in us. If we love each other, God's love has reached its goal. It is made perfect in us.

—International Children's Bible

20 || [Peter 3:8, 9](#)

Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

Translation

Finally, all of you should live together in peace. Try to understand each other. Love each other as brothers. Be kind and humble. Do not do wrong to a person to pay him back for doing wrong to you. Or do not insult someone to pay him back for insulting you. But ask God to bless that person. Do this, because you yourselves were called to receive a blessing.

—International Children's Bible

“Having compassion one of another” is translated from a single word—the Greek adjective *sympathēs*, source of the English word *sympathetic*. But though unity of mind and spirit was basic to Greco-Roman tradition, First Peter wasn't referring to simple commonality of belief or opinion. Tender love, generosity, and forgiveness were to be the rule in every Christian community. Jesus taught, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” ([John 13:35](#)).

Other New Testament writings echo this guidance: “Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another”; “In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves”; “Let brotherly love continue” ([Ephesians 4:32](#); [Philippians 2:3](#); [Hebrews 13:1](#)).

railing: harsh criticism

contrariwise: in the opposite way; on the other hand

thereunto: to that place or thing

Related healing ideas

Read a related article at: jsh.christianscience.com/help-for-refugees

© 2020 The Christian Science Publishing Society. The design of the Cross and Crown is a trademark owned by the Christian Science Board of Directors and is used by permission. *Bible Lens* and *Christian Science Quarterly* are trademarks owned by The Christian Science Publishing Society. Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptural quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.



The Bible Lessons serve as weekly study guides as well as the sermon in every Christian Science Sunday church service. Learn more at BibleLesson.com

Resources quoted in this issue

GT: New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved; Keck, Leander E., et al., eds. *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. 12, *Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, Jude, Revelation*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996–2001.

Cit. 7: Buttrick, George Arthur, et al., eds. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. Vol. 4, R–Z. Nashville: Abingdon, 1962.

Cit. 16: Keck, Leander E., et al., eds. *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. 9, *Luke, John*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996–2001.

Cit. 17: Barclay, William. *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*. Edinburgh: Saint Andrew, 1955. Revised and updated by Saint Andrew, 2001. Reprinted as *The New Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001–04.

Copyright

Scriptural quotations marked New Living Translation are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scriptural quotations marked Amplified® Bible are taken from the Amplified® Bible, copyright © 2015 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. www.Lockman.org.

Scriptural quotations marked GOD'S WORD Translation are taken from GOD'S WORD®, copyright © 1995 God's Word to the Nations. Used by permission of God's Word Mission Society.

Scriptural quotations marked Common English Bible are taken from the Common English Bible, copyright © 2011 by the Common English Bible. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Scriptural quotations marked New Century Version are taken from the New Century Version®, copyright © 2005 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scriptural quotations marked Amplified® Bible Classic are taken from the Amplified® Bible Classic, copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. www.Lockman.org.

Scriptural quotations marked International Children's Bible are taken from the International Children's Bible®, copyright © 1986, 1988, 1999 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

© 2021 The Christian Science Publishing Society. The design of the Cross and Crown is a trademark owned by the Christian Science Board of Directors and is used by permission. *Bible Lens* and *Christian Science Quarterly* are trademarks owned by The Christian Science Publishing Society. Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptural quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

FULL VERSION

SHORT VERSION

© 2020 The Christian Science Publishing Society.