

# **Campus Church of Christ Jail Ministry**

## **Lesson #5, "God's Faithfulness and Love"**

### **teacher's guide**

(all **green** text is for the teacher)

#### **Preparation:**

1. Review the scripture references in the lesson and related passages in your Bible; read through the teacher's version of the lesson; make notes / changes as desired.
2. Pick up the following from the Jail Ministry Table:
  - attendance/prayer request sheets
  - enough copies of lesson handout for the inmates in your pod (Remember, **don't** staple the pages.)
  - correspondence courses to give out to inmates who desire one
3. Other optional materials to bring:
  - White board marker and eraser
  - Sharpened pencils for inmates to use (be sure to collect all of them before they leave the room)

#### **Before and as students arrive:**

1. Welcome students and distribute student handouts
2. Make sure that any inmates who don't have a Bible know that they can fill out an inmate request form to get one that is provided to the jail by the church.
3. Pass the attendance roster / prayer request sheets around.
4. Always extend a greeting of encouragement and hope as inmates are arriving.
5. Open the class / lesson with a prayer.

#### **Goals of this Lesson:**

(main points to emphasize through the lesson and to reiterate at the end)

- **God's faithfulness never fails no matter what!**
- **God's love for us is higher and wider and deeper than anything we can possibly imagine.**
- **God gives every bit of His great love to us, for free, no strings attached! All we have to do is accept the gift – Jesus Christ.**

# “God’s Faithfulness and Love”

## Introduction

The first step to faith is the confident belief and trust that God is who He says He is and is, and that He does what He says He will do. The Bible is filled with stories of relationships between God and a person or people where He demonstrated towards them His incredible faithfulness and love, even at times when those very people were neither faithful nor loving to Him.

## God’s Faithfulness

### Introduction

**Can you think of a time when you put your faith and trust in someone or something that that turned out to be neither faithful nor trustworthy? What did that do to your faith and trust?** (allow for sharing and discussion)

Spiritually, in order for our faith to develop and grow, we must have the confidence that we are putting our trust in a God who is Faithful himself. While people will fail us, God has assured us that He always remains faithful. It is who He is. If He is faithful, then we are able to confidently put our trust in Him which then allows our faith in Him to grow.

**How can we know that God is faithful?** (allow for responses and discussion)

We do not have to wonder whether God is faithful. He has shown His faithfulness .

1. Through His creation, in the very laws of nature- they are consistent and predictable.

**Psalm 119: 90 (NLT)**

<sup>90</sup>Your faithfulness extends to every generation, as enduring as the earth you created.

2. Through His covenants, prophecies, and promises – the Bible is filled with them as well as His fulfillment of them. (Give examples such as Noah and the flood, the promise to Abraham, the Messiah, etc.)

**Deuteronomy 7:9 (NLT)**

<sup>9</sup>Understand, therefore, that the LORD your God is indeed God. He is the faithful God who keeps his covenant for a thousand generations and constantly loves those who love him and obey his commands.

**Hebrews 10:23 (NLT)**

<sup>23</sup>Without wavering, let us hold tightly to the hope we say we have, for God can be trusted to keep his promise.

3. Through the gift of His Spirit, another promise that He made to those who follow Him.

**John 14:15-18 (NLT)**

<sup>15</sup>"If you love me, obey my commandments. <sup>16</sup>And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, who will never leave you. <sup>17</sup>He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world at large cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you do, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. <sup>18</sup>No, I will not abandon you as orphans-- I will come to you.

**Acts 3:38 (NLT)**

<sup>38</sup>Peter replied, "Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

4. Through the reliability and truth of His Word through all the generations.

**John 17:17 (CEV)** Jesus praying to God says,

<sup>17</sup>Your word is the truth. So let this truth make them completely yours.

**Deuteronomy 7:9** (see #2 above)

5. Through Jesus Christ

**Revelation 19:11 (NIV)**

<sup>11</sup>I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True.

6. Through His shaping of our lives

- a. When we are weak God is faithful to give us the strength we need.

**2 Corinthians 12: 9-10 (NIV)**

<sup>9</sup>But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. <sup>10</sup>That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- b. When we are tempted God is faithful to give us the strength to overcome.

**1 Corinthians 10:13 (NLT)**

<sup>13</sup>But remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.

- c. Even when we sin, if we ask His forgiveness, God is still faithful to us and will forgive.

**1 John 1:9 (NLT)**

<sup>9</sup>But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.

- d. Even when we completely fail, even if we turn away from Him, God is still faithful to us.

**2 Timothy 2: 11-13 (NLT)**

<sup>11</sup>This is a true saying:

If we die with him,  
we will also live with him.

<sup>12</sup>If we endure hardship,  
we will reign with him.

If we deny him,  
he will deny us.

<sup>13</sup>If we are unfaithful,  
he remains faithful,  
for he cannot deny himself.

Some people believe that Christ died to forgive sins in general, but they cannot accept that He could or would forgive their particular sin/s. In believing this way, they are essentially saying that Christ's sacrifice on the cross wasn't complete enough to cover ALL sin – in particular their sin/s. Furthermore, they are implying that they don't believe that God is faithful and trustworthy to forgive their sins. In essence, they are saying that God is a liar and is not trustworthy! Because He cannot lie and because He is faithful, then He does forgive ALL sin.

Some people, while accepting that God has forgiven their sins, still cannot forgive themselves of certain sins. Sometimes they associate earthly consequences for sin as condemnation. However, if God says that He has forgiven us, then what right or authority do we have to withhold forgiveness from ourselves?

**How can we let go of sins that God has been faithful to forgive? (allow for responses and discussion)**

1. Put your past behind you and move on. When was the last time you worried about the dirt that had been on your hands after you had washed them and the dirt went down the drain? It was gone. How pointless it would have been for you to sit and feel guilty or still dirty because of the dirt that had once been on your hands but was now washed away. When our sins have been washed away by Christ's cleansing blood, they are gone, too. Completely! Forever! Period! We are free! Thank you, Lord Jesus, for loving us that much!
2. Let your changed life be a testimony to those who would bring up your past that you are no longer the same person. Let the evidence speak for itself by the way that you are now living your life in Christ.
3. Live for today (no looking back) and place your hope for the future in the One who is faithful and will never let you down.
4. Tell others about what God has done for you. Once you believe and accept that God has truly been faithful to forgive your sins, the weight of sin that is lifted from your heart and soul is so wonderful that you can't help but share the joy!

## Psalm 96:1-3 (NLT)

- <sup>1</sup> Sing a new song to the LORD!  
Let the whole earth sing to the LORD!
- <sup>2</sup> Sing to the LORD; bless his name.  
Each day proclaim the good news that he saves.
- <sup>3</sup> Publish his glorious deeds among the nations.  
Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.

You can turn your back on God and walk away, and He will still be there waiting for you on the day you change your mind – not only because He is **faithful**, but also because His **love** for you is beyond anything you can imagine!

## God's Love

### Introduction

"What the world needs now is love, sweet love. It's the only thing that there's just too little of." Some years ago, this song became an instant hit around the world because it expresses the sentiment of people universally, which is that we all realize how important love is, and we all want and need it. Sadly, most of us seek it in all the wrong ways and all the wrong places. We try to satisfy this God-given need through other human beings rather than in the One who created us, loves us, and wants our love in return.

### How is God's love different from human love? (allow for responses and discussion)

In human terms, it is simply impossible to completely comprehend, much less define, the meaning of God's love. As we have discussed in a previous lesson, God is not like us. In the same way, His love is nothing like our love. God's love is completely different from ours in both quality and quantity.

A condensed definition of God's love would be something along the lines of "His Holy disposition toward all that He has created that compels Him to express unconditional affection and selective correction to provide the highest quality of existence, both now and forever, for the object of His love." (p. 181) **(Break this statement down and discuss)**

### The nature of God's love and how He reveals Himself to us

By the way that God has been and continues to be involved in the lives of the humans that He created, He reveals Himself and His love to us. Here are some evidences:

1. God made us for Him and in "His image". He made everything else because of and for us. (Genesis 1)

2. God is unbiased in His providence for all people. (We so often just take for granted all of His provisions for us. )

**Matthew 5:44-45 (NLT)**

<sup>44</sup>But I say, love your enemies!<sup>[a]</sup> Pray for those who persecute you!

<sup>45</sup>In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and on the unjust, too.

**Acts 17:24-27 (NIV)**

<sup>24</sup>"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. <sup>25</sup>And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. <sup>26</sup>From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. <sup>27</sup>God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

3. God desires only the best for us.

**Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)**

<sup>11</sup> For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

**James 1:17 (NIV)**

<sup>17</sup>Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

4. God is there for us; He wants a personal relationship with us.

**John 13:12-15 (NIV)**

<sup>12</sup>When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. <sup>13</sup>"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup>Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup>I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

5. God emotionally identifies with us.

**John 11:33-36 (NIV)**

<sup>33</sup>When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

<sup>34</sup>"Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied.

<sup>35</sup>Jesus wept.

<sup>36</sup>Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

6. We give God pleasure because of who we are, not because of anything that we do. His love is unconditional. We cannot earn it; we do not deserve it; He gives it freely to all.

**Romans 5:8 (NIV)**

<sup>8</sup>But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

7. God disciplines us when we are disobedient just as all loving parents, out of love and concern for what is best for their child, correct the misbehaviors. Through discipline, God demonstrates that He cares about what we are doing and that He wants the best for us and wants us to be the best that He created us to be.

**Hebrews 12: (NLT)**

<sup>5</sup>And have you entirely forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you, his children? He said,

"My child, don't ignore it when the Lord disciplines you,  
and don't be discouraged when he corrects you.

<sup>6</sup>For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes those he accepts as his children."<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>7</sup>As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Whoever heard of a child who was never disciplined? <sup>8</sup>If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children after all. <sup>9</sup>Since we respect our earthly fathers who disciplined us, should we not all the more cheerfully submit to the discipline of our heavenly Father and live forever<sup>[c]</sup>?

<sup>10</sup>For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always right and good for us because it means we will share in his holiness. <sup>11</sup>No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening--it is painful! But afterward there will be a quiet harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

**Have you experienced God's presence in your life in any of these ways?**

(allow for responses and discussion)

In an even more significant way, God has revealed Himself and shown His unfathomable love for us . . .

1. through the gift of the Holy Spirit. To those who are His children, He has given the gift of the Holy Spirit whose job, in part, is to reveal God to us, including His love, as well as to give us guidance while we live in this world.

**Romans 5:5 (NIV)**

<sup>5</sup>And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

### **Romans 8:14-17 (NLT)**

<sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children<sup>[a]</sup> of God.

<sup>15</sup>So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God's very own children, adopted into his family<sup>[b]</sup>-calling him "Father, dear Father."<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>16</sup>For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup>And since we are his children, we will share his treasures--for everything God gives to his Son, Christ, is ours, too. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

### **John 14:26 (CEV)**

<sup>26</sup>But the Holy Spirit will come and help you, because the Father will send the Spirit to take my place. The Spirit will teach you everything and will remind you of what I said while I was with you.

2. through His Son, Jesus Christ. Holy God put on flesh and came to live with sinful people in a sin-filled world for the specific purpose of "seeking and saving the lost."

### **Luke 19:10 (CEV)**

<sup>10</sup>The Son of Man came to look for and to save people who are lost."

God's ultimate expression of love came in the person of Jesus Christ who is the exact representation and fullness of God.

### **Hebrews 1:3 (NIV)**

<sup>3</sup>The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

### **Colossians 1:19 (NLT)**

<sup>19</sup>For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ,

- Because of His human form, we are able to see all of God's attributes, including His love. Jesus modeled it for us in every aspect of His life.

### **John 14: (NIV)**

<sup>9</sup> . . . Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? <sup>10</sup>Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. <sup>11</sup>Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. <sup>12</sup>I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing.

- Jesus' teachings reveal God's love and how God is desperately

seeking what is precious to Him, which is us! (See the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son in **Luke 15**)

- On the cross, Jesus demonstrated the depth of God's great love for us.

**John 3:16 (NIV)** (make it personal: ask everyone to replace "the world" with "me" or with their own name and say the verse together)

<sup>16</sup>"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,<sup>[a]</sup> that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

**Romans 5:8 (NASB)**

<sup>8</sup>But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

**What more could God possibly do to show you how much He loves you?**

**Once you begin to understand the height and depth and breadth of God's love for you, how should you respond?**

Contrary to what many of us think, we cannot earn God's love by being good enough or by doing enough good things. God's love does not depend upon anything about us. It is all about Him! God's love is a beautiful gift tied with ribbons of grace and mercy that He offers to each of us, personally, with no other requirements than just accepting it. Each one of us has the choice - either we accept God or reject Him. It is that simple yet that profound!

**Once you have decided that you want to accept God's love and receive the gift of His saving grace and mercy, what must you do?** (allow for responses and discussion)

1. You must first come to know God enough to **believe** and trust in Him, to understand that He loves you, and that Jesus is His Son who came to Earth to save you. You can do this by

- immersing yourself in God's Word, the Bible.

**John 20: (NIV)**

<sup>30</sup>Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup>But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

- praying to God for understanding. Pray the prayer in **Ephesians 3:14-19** (modified prayer at end of lesson)
- refusing the cheap substitutes that Satan tempts you with in the world.

**1 John 2:15-16 (NIV)**

<sup>15</sup>Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves

the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup>For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.

2. Surrender your will to God and **turn** away from your sinful life. Begin living the way God wants you to live.

**Acts 3:19 (NIV)**

<sup>19</sup>Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

3. Openly **confess** Christ as your Savior and demonstrate your changed life and obedience to His will through **baptism** for salvation.

**Acts 2:38 (NIV)**

<sup>38</sup>Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

4. Give away the love that you have received.

**1 John 3:16-18 (NIV)**

<sup>16</sup>This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. <sup>17</sup>If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? <sup>18</sup>Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

**God is faithfully loving you. What will you choose to do with God's love?**

**Closing the lesson / class:**

If time permits, play (bring boom box and CD) or teach and sing the song or read the lyrics (below) as a close to the lesson.

**Prayer.** (Suggestion below is a modified, personalized form of Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-19)

Dear Father, creator of heaven and earth, I bow before you in the name of Jesus Christ and because of what He has done for me. Through Him, and with the power of the Holy Spirit, please strengthen my spirit and help my faith grow so that I will allow Christ to be more and more at home in my heart. Help me to stand firmly and to be deeply rooted in your love. As much as possible, please help me to understand with all Christians just how high, how wide, and how deep your love truly is. Fill my life with all that you are, Lord. Amen

Offer **correspondence course packets** to those who desire them.

Offer **Am I Saved?** booklet.

Let inmates know that **if they desire to be baptized**, they should fill out an inmate request form on which they should indicate that they wish to be baptized by someone from Snellville Church of Christ. Invite them if there is time to stay and talk with you about this after the others leave.

Collect the attendance / prayer request sheets. Collect pencils if any were handed out.

After dismissing, talk/pray with individual inmates as needed and as time permits.

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**References:**

Ingram, Chip. ***God as He Longs for You to See Him***, Chapters 9 & 10.

Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004.

All scripture references are from <http://www.biblegateway.com/>

**Song Lyrics:**

**“How Great Is Your Love”**

by Mark Altrogge

Verse 1

No eye has seen and no ear has heard,  
and no mind has ever conceived  
the glorious things that you have prepared  
for everyone who has believed.  
You brought us near and You called us Your own  
and made us joint heirs with your Son.

Verse 2

Objects of mercy, who should have known wrath,  
we're filled with unspeakable joy,  
Riches of wisdom, unsearchable wealth,  
and the wonder of knowing Your voice.  
You are our treasure and our great reward  
Our hope and our glorious King.

Chorus (repeat twice after verse 2)

How high and how wide,  
how deep and how long,  
how sweet and how strong is Your love;  
how lavish Your grace,  
how faithful Your ways,  
how great is your love, O Lord.

**Alternate Song: "How Deep the Father's Love for Us "**  
by Stuart Townsend

How deep the Father's love for Us!  
How vast beyond all measure.  
That He should give His only Son  
to make a wretch His treasure!

How great the pain of searing loss!  
The Father turns His face away  
as wounds which mar the Chosen One  
bring many sons to glory.

Behold the Man upon a cross,  
my sin upon His shoulders.  
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice  
call out among the scoffers.

It was my sin that held Him there  
until it was accomplished.  
His dying breath has brought me life;  
I know that it is finished.

I will not boast in anything -  
no gifts, no power, no wisdom!  
But I will boast in Jesus Christ,  
His death and resurrection.

Why should I gain from His reward?  
I cannot give an answer.  
But this I know with all my heart,  
His wounds have paid my ransom.