

HSU
DEVOTIONAL

Two overlapping circles with a fine line pattern. The top circle is teal and the bottom circle is orange. The text 'GOD IS: LOVING' is centered over the intersection of the two circles.

GOD IS: LOVING

NAME:

God Carries Us Through

Passage: Genesis 1:27-28, 31

Parallel Passage: Isaiah 54:10

It's easy to read these passages as if they aren't a big deal, and that creating the world is just what God did. But I encourage you to reread it carefully and realize that in Verse 31 after creating humans he says we are "very good". The creator of the universe who created beautiful mountains, the oceans, flowers, wildlife, and everything in between looks at us and thinks that we are the best thing, that we are very good? I think this is a perfect example of how much God truly loves us.

God is good, all the time, even in the darkest seasons of life. I've had my share of hard seasons, and have even gotten angry at Him for allowing me to hurt so badly. But at the end of the day I thank him for being steadfast in the midst of all that goes on in my life. A poem called "Footprints" describes a man walking on the beach in a dream. He saw two sets of footprints (his & God's) but as he looked back on certain seasons in life there was only one set. This bothered him, and he questioned God about it, asking why he wasn't walking with him through those hard seasons. God replied saying, "My precious, precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you." Our God is loving, and he will stop at nothing to walk with us, carry us, and encourage us in our lives. He is always present, walking with us, and showing us his unconditional love. It is important to reflect on all that God does for us, to thank him for loving us regardless of our circumstances, shortcomings and actions, He chooses us and will chase after us no matter what because He loves us THAT much.

Read and meditate on Isaiah 54:10. Sit in silence or turn on some worship music, it might be something you're not used to, but sit and thank him for the undeserved love that he gives us. His love is unconditional and always there, in every season - just sit and thank him for his simple, simple love.

Caley Whitner

Prayer:

“God of Goodness, I come into your presence so aware of my human frailty and yet overwhelmed by your love for me. I thank you that there is no human experience that I might walk through where your love cannot reach me. If I climb the highest mountain you are there and yet if I find myself in the darkest valley of my life, you are there. Teach me today to love you more. Help me to rest in that love that asks nothing more than the simple trusting heart of a child.” - *Author Unknown*

Questions:

What is your favorite part of nature? Take a moment to describe all of the things you appreciate about this part of nature.

Reflect - how does it change the way you think about God's love to realize that He said you were even better than that?

Spend some time thanking God for His love in prayer.

God's Love Doesn't Make Sense

Passage: Acts 9:4-6

Parallel Passage: 2 Thessalonians 3:5

The most common thing that distracts me from God's love for me is my own spoiled attitude, maybe you can relate. I often find myself wishing situations would turn out a certain way, but then a curveball is thrown at me and it isn't what I wanted at all, or it's even the complete opposite of what I was hoping for. One of the important things about God is that He loves us so much that He won't always give us what we want. In fact, He loves us so much that we can't even comprehend what He is doing sometimes.

In Acts 9:4-6 and the surrounding verses, we see Jesus come to Saul, the one who has been persecuting and killing Christians, knock him off of his horse, blind him, and then tell him to go into the city blind in order to find what Jesus wants for him. But Jesus loves Saul so incredibly that He would turn him away from this hateful life, and give him a new identity in Christ filled with love, light, hope, joy, and peace. The love of God surpasses all understanding, so much that He would forgive Jesus' greatest enemy, and then use that man to write the majority of the New Testament.

If I was around when Saul was, I would probably be hoping that God would give him what he deserved, but God coming in and saving Saul's life is so much greater than anything I would have wished. The thing about being loved by God, is that it doesn't make sense. But I assure you, His love is deep, His love is wild, His love is perfect, and no matter what, even when the world tells us otherwise, His love is better than anything we could ever ask for or imagine.

Logan Nelson

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you for all that you have done for me, all that you are doing for me, and all that you will do in my life and in those around me. Holy Spirit, lead me to rely less on my own understanding and to hold ever tighter on your love for me. Father, thank you for adopting me as your child, for loving me passionately, giving generously, and always staying by my side even when I do not feel close to you. Jesus I thank you, Jesus I love you. Amen!

Questions:

What is something in your life that distracts you from or takes you away from God's love?

In what ways do you experience God's love for you? Or what are the good things He has given you?

Has there ever been a bad situation that made you question God? What good did He work from it?

Using the extra pages in the back, write out the ways in which God's love for you has shown up in your life. This can be through people, experiences, or any other gift He has worked in your life or around you. Spend time and thank Him for these things in a time of prayer.

Surrendering to the Love of God

Passage: John 13:5

Parallel Passage: John 15:13

Many times in my life I have struggled to serve people or let people see me in the midst of my hardships. I have often questioned whether God is good and loving because of my past experiences with people, not my experiences with God. Personally, it has been a continual struggle to accept people into my life and be vulnerable and that mindset has often been present in my relationship with Jesus. His ultimate sacrifice for me has often been a struggle to understand and how that communicates his love to us.

For the past couple of years, I have dived deeper into understanding myself and the ways that God has created me to receive love. In the midst of that, I stumbled upon "The 5 Love Languages" and have seen the ways each one of us is uniquely created. It has challenged and forced me to compromise my selfishness in different relationships to make sure that person that I care about in any situation feels seen and loved. Throughout the Bible, I began to see all the ways that God manifests Himself in love towards the people He created uniquely and loves deeply.

As Jesus gathered with his disciples right before the Passover (John 13), we see Him communicate an act of service - an act of love. He washes the disciples feet, placing Himself in the lowest of places to lift others up. Throughout the New Testament, I often relate with Peter in his consistent doubt - even while being in such close proximity to Jesus. At first, Peter pushes back against Jesus washing his feet because HE is God. At the end of the passage, Peter ultimately surrenders himself to the act of love that we see God do.

I think it sometimes takes our realization - our daily surrender to let God's love wash over us every day. To be so connected to the ways that God is loving us and the people around us everyday, and being able to see that through our past and in the midst of struggles.


Tim Litovchenko

Prayer:

Father God, I come into your presence so aware of my doubt for you and yet overwhelmed by your love for me. I thank you that there is no human experience that I might walk through where your love cannot reach me. If I climb the highest mountain you are there and yet if I find myself in the darkest valley of my life, you are there. Teach me today to love you more. Help me to rest in that love that asks nothing more than the simple trusting heart of a child. In Jesus name, Amen.

Questions:

How do you as an individual receive love? (Acts of Service, Words of Affirmation, Gifts, Quality Time, Touch).



How have your past experiences with people/circumstances blinded or hindered your ability to see the ways God loves you?

What are the ways that you are seeing God show His love to you daily?

God Grieves With Us

Passage: Colossians 1:19-20

I've talked with lots of people over the years who follow God and others who once followed God but don't any more and the most common response I've heard from people who struggle with knowing God is that He is not loving. I sat across from someone that I knew pretty well once who said to me - "God either isn't real, or he's a jerk", but she didn't use the word "jerk." The question that people seem to ask over and over is - how can God be good if the world is so messed up?

But here's the kicker - it's possible for God to be good AND agree that the world is messed up. In the beginning God created everything and said that it was "very good" - He created a world that was in perfect harmony with people who literally walked with God. But God also gave these people free choice, the ability to choose to love God, choose to love others, choose to care for the earth. But it didn't take long for these people to decide that they knew better than God, choose their own way and destroy God's perfect harmony - the Bible says that sin entered the world and from that comes every form of evil, hatred, disease and natural disasters. And so God has been on a mission from the beginning to restore people and earth back to himself. But we are still living in the consequences of sin and experiencing our messed up world as we know it. But God is loving - He sees the earth, he sees your pain, he sees the painful consequences of sin, and he grieves with us.

Colossians 1:19-20 says, "Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe—people and things, animals and atoms—get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death." My favorite thing about this verse is that it shows that God DESIRES that every broken, dislocated piece of the universe - hatred, disease, natural disasters and more be fixed. So - next time you're tempted to think that God isn't good because the world is messed up, ask God to show you his heart for the situation and world and show you how you can be a part of sharing God's heart in that space.

Ashley Nikonchuk

Prayer:

"Father, give me courage to keep on loving when others keep on hurting; help me to live an achy love, a gritty, persistent and emptying love; a love that's not afraid to flow toward the other who has little left to offer in return. And may I tread faithfully with heaven through the unfinished work that is surrounding me." *Written by Strahan Coleman.*

Questions:

Are there any situations in your life that you've experienced or seen that make you question God's goodness? Explain.

How does knowing that God desires our broken world to be healed change the way you see these situations?

How does it change the way you view God?

Using the extra pages in the back, write out a prayer asking God to show you and give you his heart for the broken world around us.

