

God knows you and loves you **April 19, 2020**

Overarching theme: In 2020, FUMC will be a **Go** church!

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

The past is the past. There is nothing that can be done about it. The past can only be used to gain wisdom for the future. What can change is the future. When we, as God's people, are willing to follow God in our daily lives, God will make a good way in the future. The way may be bumpy at times and have curves, but the process will be filled with God's love and grace.

Epistle of 1 John:

The Epistle of 1 John was written sometime at the end of the first century. The author is believed to be John, the son of Zebedee, who also wrote the Gospel of John. So, at the time of its writing, John would have been closer to the end of life. Both the Epistle and the Gospel have similarities in style. If you recall, John was a fisherman and was said to be a close disciple of Christ. 1 John was written and circulated to Christian believers in churches within the province of Asia.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Jeremiah 31:2-3 (NRSV)

² Thus says the LORD: The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness; when Israel sought for rest, ³ the LORD appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, I have continued my faithfulness to you.

John 3:16-17 (NRSV)

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷ "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

1 John 4:16-21 (NIV)

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ *We love because he first loved us.*

²⁰ 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. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

John 15:12-14 (NRSV)

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you.

Questions to ponder about the passages:

What jumps out at you from this passage?

So, bottom line, what do you get out of these passages?

In general, from what you have studied previously, what do you think is the difference in how God is seen in the Old Testament as compared to the New Testament in relation to love?

What is the type of love being described in the passages?

In your experience, what have you seen as the ultimate expression of love?

Commentary:

Notice in the four scripture passages how God is described both in essence and action. God is described as Love. You may have heard that God's ministry to us is ever unfolding, while God's essence never changes. This essence, or intrinsic nature of God is Love. In the Greek, the meaning of love has four different meanings depending on which Greek word is used for love. Let us review these four traditional Greek words in the Bible as found in Wikipedia:

1. Agape: This love is considered the highest form of Love, originating out of God's love for humankind. This love is demonstrated by Jesus' death on the cross for the sin of humankind and as one who will lay down one's life for someone else.
2. Phileo: This love is characterized as a brotherly love or love between friends as they live life and encourage one another in the closeness of relationship.
3. Storge: This love is highlighted by the sense of empathy. It is liking someone through the fondness of familiarity, family members or people who relate in familiar ways that have otherwise found themselves bonded by chance. An example is the natural love and affection of a parent for their child.

4. Eros: This love is seen as erotic. Described as a passionate and romantic love between two people.

The word for love in the New Testament passages is Agape. When these passages refer to love, they are referring to the highest form of love in which one would lay down one's life for the other. Obviously, Jesus was the example of this love for us. We as Christians are to follow in line with Jesus in our love for God and one another. When we show this type of love, we reveal that we know God and that God is revealed in us to the world.

From Kathy's message today, you heard that God made you and formed you according to God's plan. God made you to be the recipient of God's love. First of all, to be in an active relationship with God through Christ, and secondly to be in uplifting relationships with others. The result of this connecting in loving relationships is so we can help each other out. Think on this scripture, Ephesians 2:10 (NRSV), "For we are what he has made us, *created in Christ Jesus for good works*, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life. In our current time of community and world need, we are to be loving people ready to serve one another in that love. When we share that love by doing good, as God planned for us, then we all benefit.

Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:

In this passage, what is the main lesson you get from it?

How can we describe God in scripture and through experience?

What are the different words and meanings of love in the Greek? How do you see them expressed?

Finish this statement, "God is Love, I know this because ... and I have seen this because ...? Do you see the essence of God as Love?

What is the Good News message in 1 John 4? How does it relate to you?

What is your purpose in this life as a creation of God?

Do you have agape love? Describe how?

Activity of for the life of a disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week:
John 15:12 (NRSV)
This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.
3. To what people do you need to show love by doing a good work? Then do it!