



**The Week of February 27, 2022**  
**God Is... Abounding in Love**  
**Conversation Guide**

**This Week's Take-Aways**

- About God: (1 Corinthians 8:6) I believe there is one God who exists in 3 persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is perfect in all things. He is the creator of all things. He has made humanity in his image and he desires a personal relationship with each one of us.
- Faithfulness: (Proverbs 20:6) I will be the person those around me can depend upon.
- Love: (1 John 4:7-21) I choose to sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others because I have personally experienced God's love for me.

**Last Week's Next Steps**

- Were you able to serve the person you were at odds with?

**Intro Questions**

- Define "love."
- Is love conditional?
- What is the difference between love and lust?
- What is love at first sight?
- Is love more than an emotion?
- *Optional:* Play the RightNow video on God's characteristic "Compassion." In RightNow browse for "Character of God." Then choose the video Compassion (5 minutes).

Have someone read out loud Exodus 34:6

*The Lord passed in front of him and proclaimed: The Lord—the Lord is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth,*

- How does this verse characterize God's love?

Have someone read out loud these passages:

Lamentations 3:22

*Because of the Lord's faithful love we do not perish, for his mercies never end.*

2 Peter 3:9

*The Lord does not delay his promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.*

John 3:16

*For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.*

- How does God's faithful love change our destiny?

Have someone read out loud these passages:

Deuteronomy 7:9

*Know that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps his gracious covenant loyalty for a thousand generations with those who love him and keep his commands.*

Romans 8:28

*We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.*

- How do these passages parallel each other? How does God respond to those who love him and keep His commands?

Psalms 25:6–7

*Remember, Lord, your compassion and your faithful love, for they have existed from antiquity. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my acts of rebellion; in keeping with your faithful love, remember me because of your goodness, Lord.*

- Does God's love supersede our past and rebellious attitudes?
- On what basis do we ask God to remember us?

Psalms 136 was used by Israel as a responsive reading with half of the Israelites responding to the other half. Divide the group into two groups (women-men, right side – left side of group, etc.) Have one read the regular print and then the other respond with the bold print.

### Psalm 136 (CSB)

*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*Give thanks to the God of gods. **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*Give thanks to the Lord of lords. **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*He alone does great wonders. **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*He made the heavens skillfully. **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*He spread the land on the waters. **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*He made the great lights: **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*the sun to rule by day, **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*the moon and stars to rule by night. **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*He struck the firstborn of the Egyptians **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*and brought Israel out from among them **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*with a strong hand and outstretched arm. **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*He divided the Red Sea **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*and led Israel through, **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*but hurled Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea. **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*He led his people in the wilderness. **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*He struck down great kings **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*and slaughtered famous kings— **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*Sihon king of the Amorites **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*and Og king of Bashan— **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*and gave their land as an inheritance, **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*an inheritance to Israel his servant. **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*He remembered us in our humiliation **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*and rescued us from our foes. **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*He gives food to every creature. **His faithful love endures forever.***  
*Give thanks to the God of heaven! **His faithful love endures forever.***

- Did you catch the recurring theme?
- Why was it important for the Israelites to sing or recite this Psalms?

# Agape Love

Have someone read out loud 1 John 4:7-11

*Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him. Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another.*

- What are the attributes of God's love?
- How are we able to express God's love to others?
- What does selfless love look like?

Have someone read out loud 1 Corinthians 13

*If I speak human or angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give away all my possessions, and if I give over my body in order to boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

*Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant, is not rude, is not self-seeking, is not irritable, and does not keep a record of wrongs. Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

*Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put aside childish things. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, as I am fully known. Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love—but the greatest of these is love.*

- What is Paul dealing with in Chapter 12?
- What is the motivation behind the use of spiritual gifts in the body found in Chapter 13:1-3?
- Even though this is often used in weddings, this passage actually is about relationships in the church body. Make a list of characteristics of a God type of love (agape):

## Next Steps

- Read and meditate on Psalms 136 and 1 Corinthians 13 to focus on God's love.
- Ask for God to place in your path someone who needs His love through you.
- If you haven't already, read the Silence and Solitude information below and work on incorporating this into your Quiet Time.

## Silence and Solitude

### Knowing God

John 17:3

*This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God,*

Psalms 46:10 (Amplified Bible Classic)

*Let be and be still, and know (recognize and understand) that I am God.*

God created us to be in relationship with Him and know Him for Who He is. Adam and Eve had fellowship with God in the Garden of Eden in ways that is hard for us to comprehend. The first Adam through an act of disobedience severed that relationship with a holy God. The second Adam, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:12-20), restored that relationship between us and God as only He could (John 14:6). Although salvation begins in the moment that we truly believe in Jesus and commit our lives to Him, working out that salvation is a journey of a lifetime of learning to walk with God and knowing Him more and more (Philippians 2:12).

To accomplish this, Christians have engaged in activities that were modeled by Jesus and the early church to help us grow spiritually. Being children of the first Adam through our first birth, we are trapped in patterns of this world that steer us away from God and His ways. Through our second birth, we work in cooperation with the Holy Spirit to develop new patterns of responding that draws us into a deeper relationship with God and the ability to live out the commands of Christ (Philippians 2:13, Romans 12:2).

These new patterns of life are called spiritual disciplines. A definition of discipline is "any activity within our power that we engage in to enable us to do what we cannot do by direct effort." For example, an old pattern you may still respond with is inappropriate anger. If you try to change it merely by your own willpower or good intentions, it will last about 72 hours and then you will be back to your old ways! If you instead use appropriate spiritual disciplines, you can have the reaction of grace, prayer and kindness that Jesus says will be reflective of a kingdom person (Matthew 5:43-48).

There are two types of spiritual disciplines that are practiced: Engagement and Abstinence. Some common types of abstinence: solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, chastity, and secrecy. Some common types of engagement: Bible study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, and confession. Solitude and silence are foundational disciplines for all the other disciplines and are desperately needed in our hectic, frenetic lives.



## What is Solitude?

We purposefully abstain from interaction with other human beings, denying ourselves companionship and all that comes from our conscious interaction with others. Though often unaware of it, we have a need for solitude and silence. Jesus calls us from loneliness to solitude. Loneliness is inner emptiness and often the fear of it drives to noise and crowds. However, solitude is inner fulfillment, a state of mind and heart, and not a place necessarily but a portable sanctuary of the heart.

*Let him who cannot be alone beware of community....  
Let him who is not in community beware of being alone....  
Each by itself has profound pitfalls and perils."*  
-Dietrich Bonhoeffer

## What is Silence?

We close off our souls from "sounds," whether those sounds be noise, music, or words. Silence is hard for us to do because it makes us feel helpless. Who is going to speak up for us if we do not? How are we going to make others do what we want them to do unless we tell them until they do it? How are others going to know how to interpret my actions unless I tell them what I meant by what I did? Silence is intimately related to trust! Can you really trust God is in control and give up your control? As James warns us to cease the flow of words: "If anyone thinks he is religious without controlling his tongue, then his religion is useless and he deceives himself." (1:26)

*"Real Silence, real stillness, really holding one's tongue  
comes only as the sober consequence of spiritual stillness."*  
-Dietrich Bonhoeffer

## Steps to Take

1. Little moments of solitude to begin and during our day. Start small and build incrementally. See the following journal for a suggested plan if you are just starting out.
2. Find or develop a "quiet place" to separate yourself from distractions. You need to eliminate what may visually or audibly may keep you from focusing on God and His word. Practically speaking, that means you need to be alone, put your phone on "airplane mode," turn off sources of sounds or alerts and, when able, shut the door.
3. Monthly, quarterly, or annually, it is powerful in the life of the follower of Christ to have a personal retreat. Start with 3-4 hours at a place where you can get away in nature or a retreat like setting to spend time uninterrupted. Combining with prayer and meditating on truths from the Bible, bask in His loving presence attune to whatever He is telling you in His "quiet whisper." (1 Kings 19)

*"It is in deep solitude that I find the gentleness with which I can truly love my brothers.  
The more solitary I am the more affection I have for them....  
Solitude and silence teach me to love my brothers for what they are, not for what they say."*  
-Thomas Merton

- On RightNow Media search for the “Being Challenge” for teaching on engaging in the spiritual disciplines that Jesus modeled. Session 5 is on Solitude. Also, search for “Be Still” for a complete study on the topic. If you don’t have an account, go to the church website ([icelebration.org](http://icelebration.org)) Choose “Watch” from the top menu and then scroll down to the RightNow sign-up section.
- Dr. Donald S. Whitney – “Should I practice silence and solitude”: [youtu.be/cx9Oe3W4A6M](https://youtu.be/cx9Oe3W4A6M)
- Doable Discipleship: Silence and Solitude YouTube video/podcast: [youtu.be/pUpmMQW5Xpw](https://youtu.be/pUpmMQW5Xpw)
- Article from Curate ministries: [curateministries.org/curateblog/2020/1/9/silence-and-solitude](https://curateministries.org/curateblog/2020/1/9/silence-and-solitude)
- Article from Outreach magazine: [outreachmagazine.com/features/discipleship/32086-8-benefits-silence-solitude-leaders-life.html](https://outreachmagazine.com/features/discipleship/32086-8-benefits-silence-solitude-leaders-life.html)

## How To Begin A Daily Quiet Time To Practice Silence And Solitude

### 1. Select A Specific Time

The best time to have a quiet time is when I am at my best to spend time alone with God. Many believers find that an early morning quiet time works best. Examples from the Bible include Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Hannah, Job, Hezekiah, David, Daniel, Jesus, etc. It seems logical to begin the day with it. “The best time to tune your instruments is before you play the concert, not after!” It demonstrates that meeting with God is your first priority. You give Him the first part of your day. Whatever time you set, make it a priority, and persevere because eventually you will face opposition and obstacles. Be ready to restart and continue. Remember, it takes 21 days to make it a habit.

How long should it be? If this is new to you, start with 3 minutes and let it double weekly. But do not watch the clock. Emphasize quality, not quantity.

### 2. Choose A Special Place

Jesus’ practice is clear in what he modeled and practiced. “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went to a solitary place, where he prayed.” (Mark 1:35 NIV) “But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” (Matthew 6:6 NIV). Whether it be a room you can be alone in at your house, your back porch, or an office before other employees arrive, seek that special place.

### 3. Have A Plan

For the practice of silence and solitude, you will want to quietly meditate on Biblical passages, pray quietly to God and just sit in silence in His presence. Prepare for your time in advance by having appropriate Bible passages in print or electronically to meditate on. The current messages on God’s character will be a great source to think about God in deeper ways (see the weekly Conversation Guide on the App or website). A notebook or pad to write down what the Lord speaks to you about, add to your prayer list or jot down things that come to mind that you need to deal with later.