



BIBLE LENS

JANUARY 20, 2025 ISSUE

Shining a light on the weekly Bible Lessons published in the [Christian Science Quarterly®](#)

Love

January 27–February 2, 2025

from the **Responsive Reading**

I John 4:6–8, 12, 13, 17–21

We are of God: . . . Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. . . . If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. . . . Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: . . . We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

Long-standing Hebrew law urged love of God and one's neighbor (see [Deuteronomy 6:5](#); [Leviticus 19:18](#)). First John melds these into an interdependent whole: Love for God is expressed in love of others; love of others springs from God's love for us.

A commentary explains: "[The author] is not saying that we should practice human love in order to grow into divine love. . . . He is not interested in teaching us about stages of loving God, but about giving us tests by which we can see if we really love God in the first place."

Romans 13:8–10

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Paul has just charged believers to honor payments due for Roman tributes and taxes (see [vv. 6, 7](#)). But unlike these and most other debts, Paul notes, love calls for continuing disbursement and is never paid off.

Plerōma, the Greek word translated *fulfilling*, is usually rendered *fulness* in Scripture—for example, in this encouragement to the Ephesians: “to know the love of Christ, . . . that ye might be filled with all the fulness [*plerōma*] of God” (Ephesians 3:19). By its very nature, love satisfies every requirement of the Mosaic law, including the Ten Commandments.

According to some sources, the apostle’s change in wording from the Jewish “Love thy neighbour” (Leviticus 19:18) to “love one another” expands the meaning beyond friends and acquaintances.

from **Section 1**

2 | Deuteronomy 10:12, 13

What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

Translation

. . . what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear [and worship] the LORD your God [with awe-filled reverence and profound respect], to walk [that is, to live each and every day] in all His ways and to love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul [your choices, your thoughts, your whole being], and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?

—Amplified® Bible (AMP)

5 | Romans 5:5

The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Translation

. . . we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

—New Living Translation

Ekkheō, the Greek term rendered *shed abroad*, means to pour out as from an overflowing fountain. One scholar says: “God is not a big brother dispensing miserly increments of goodwill to his minions. God is a compassionate Father who literally *pours out* his love within us.” (*Ekkheō* appears again to indicate the liberal descent of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:18, 33; 10:45.)

6 | Hebrews 10:24

Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.

Translation

... let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. . . .

—NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®

from Section 2

8 | Psalms 121:8

The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

Translation

*The LORD will watch over your life no matter where you go,
both now and forever.*

—New International Reader's Version™

9 | II Kings 6:8–17

The king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel? And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber. And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

In the mid-ninth century BC, an Aramean kingdom known as Syria (distinct from the contemporary nation of that name) was in continual conflict with Israel. Here its king, Benhadad, outlines a strategy to ambush the Israelites. When Elisha predicts Syrian military movements, Benhadad plans an attack on Dothan, where the prophet is living.

The site of Joseph's betrayal by his brothers hundreds of years earlier, Dothan was about 11 miles (18 km) north of the Israelite royal residence in Samaria. The Syrian horses and chariots that "compassed the city about" are no match for the "horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha"—a phenomenon that had also occurred at Elijah's passing from earth (see 2:11).

9 | II Kings 6:18–23

When [the Syrian army] came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the Lord, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria. And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see. And the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, they were in the midst of Samaria. And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them? And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master. And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

Themes of sight and blindness characterize this story. First, Elisha "sees" the location of the enemy campsite. Next, his servant's eyes are opened to divine might by the prophet's prayer. Last, through Elisha's spiritual sight, the Syrian army is overcome by blindness, led to the stronghold of King Jehoram of Israel, and again given sight.

With the enemy army delivered to him, Jehoram considers killing them. Yet he defers to Elisha's authority, respectfully calling him "my father." Elisha's response is seen in two ways—as either a reminder that prisoners of war were to be treated humanely or an assertion that soldiers not taken captive in battle should be shown kindness. Whatever the viewpoint, Elisha makes clear that it was God's supremacy, not military force, that saved Dothan—and that divine power could be honored only by an act of mercy.

from Section 3

12 | Luke 9:38–43

A man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child. And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him. And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not. And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither. And as he was yet a-coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father. And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God.

Jesus often laments over or censures "this generation"—not individuals born at a particular time but all those who reject

God's Son (see examples in [Luke 11:29–32](#); [17:24, 25](#); [21:32](#)). In this narrative, the Master's sharp rebuke echoes Moses' condemnation of the people for their infidelity to God: "They are a perverse and crooked generation" ([Deuteronomy 32:5](#)). The Savior underscores his reproof by decisively denouncing the evil spirit and curing the boy.

from **Section 4**

13 | [Zephaniah 3:17](#)

The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

Translation

*"The LORD your God
wins victory after victory
and is always with you.
He celebrates and sings
because of you,
and he will refresh your life
with his love."*

—Contemporary English Version

14 | [Matthew 9:10–13](#)

It came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Scribes who had seen the Savior's recent healing of a palsied man had been told, "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins" (v. 6). But the Pharisees regarded scriptural counsel such as [Psalms 1:1](#) as banning contact with sinners. Now they object to Jesus' dining with these transgressors—an action that implies strong fellowship with them. Jesus responds with a well-known proverb (that those who are well have no need of doctors) and reaffirms his mission of salvation from sin. "To Jesus," observes a scholar, "fear of pollution weighed not at all in the scale of mercy. . . ."

With the words "Go ye and learn" (a phrase Pharisees employed), Jesus addresses them as students ignorant of their own texts instead of as the learned academics they pride themselves on being. Jesus' admonition refers them to the book of Hosea: "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (6:6; see also [Matthew](#)

12:7). Mercy and compassion, not religious rites, are the real essence of the law—and the heart of Jesus’ teachings.

15 | Luke 19:1–10

Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchæus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Unique to Luke’s Gospel, this story unfolds as Jesus makes his final journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. Earlier on this trip, the Master cured ten lepers (see 17:11–19). His meeting with Zacchaeus redeems another kind of outcast—a Jew who is hated because of his occupation as a tax collector for Rome. “To seek and to save that which was lost” recalls Ezekiel 34:16: “I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away.”

Jesus has previously admonished the wealthy—in his warning “Woe unto you that are rich!”; in the parable of the rich man; in the account of another affluent man and the beggar Lazarus; and in his interchange with a prosperous ruler (see 6:24; 12:16–21; 16:19–31; 18:18–25). Here he witnesses a wealthy man’s reformation.

from Section 5

16 | Romans 8:38, 39

I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Translation

I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love which Christ Jesus our Lord shows us. We can’t be separated by death or life, by angels or rulers, by anything in the present or anything in the future, by forces or powers in the world above or in the world below, or by anything else in creation.

—GOD’S WORD[®] Translation

17 | Ephesians 2:4–6

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 ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Translation

God loves us deeply. He is full of mercy. So he gave us new life because of what Christ has done. He gave us life even when we were dead in sin. God's grace has saved you. God raised us up with Christ. He has seated us with him in his heavenly kingdom. That's because we belong to Christ Jesus.

—New International Reader's Version™

God's bountiful mercy is celebrated throughout the Hebrew Bible as well (see, for instance, [Exodus 34:6](#); [Psalms 103:8](#); [Jonah 4:2](#)). A commentator reflects, "There is an inexhaustible treasury of . . . mercy in the loving heart of God."

The triple usage of *together* highlights this author's emphasis on believers' unity in Christ. And "raised us up," another source remarks, points to resurrection "from the spiritual 'death' brought about by sin into a new quality of life shared with Christ. It describes a spiritual transformation available to the Christian *now* in this life."

18 | II Corinthians 13:11

Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Translation

. . . Be made complete [be what you should be], be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace [enjoy the spiritual well-being experienced by believers who walk closely with God]; and the God of love and peace [the source of lovingkindness] will be with you.

—Amplified® Bible (AMP)

from Section 6

19 | Philippians 1:2, 9–11

Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto

the glory and praise of God.

Translation

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what really matters, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

—New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

Dokimazō, the Greek verb rendered *approve* here, means to confirm the fitness of something or someone by examination. Christians are to grow in spiritual understanding in order to discern what is “excellent”—godly thinking and living in contrast to false doctrine and worldly influences.

Sincere is translated from the adjective *eilikrinēs*, meaning pure. Some scholars compare this purity to the spotlessness of a clean garment examined in the sunlight.

“The day of Christ” refers to the return of the Savior to earth—an event thought to be imminent by many early Christians.

Read a related editorial, “[The allness of Love](https://cssentinel.com/allness-Love)” by Helen Wood Bauman, at cssentinel.com/allness-Love

Resources cited in this issue

RR: Burge, G.M. *The NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Text . . . to Contemporary Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996.

Cit. 5: Edwards, James R. *New International Biblical Commentary—Romans*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992.

Cit. 14: Shotwell, Berenice Myers. *Getting Better Acquainted with Your Bible*. Kennebunkport, ME: Shadwold Press, 1972.

Cit. 17: Barker, Kenneth L., John R. Kohlenberger, Verlyn Verbrugge, and Richard Polcyn. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004; Mitton, C.L. *New Century Bible Commentary, Ephesians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1973.

COPYRIGHT

Scriptural quotations marked Amplified® Bible (AMP) are taken from the Amplified® Bible (AMP), Copyright © 2015 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. lockman.org

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 NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION® are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scriptural quotations marked New International Reader's Version™ are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Reader's Version™, Nlrv™. Copyright © 1995, 1996, 1998, 2014 by Biblica, Inc. Used with permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scriptural quotations marked Contemporary English Version are taken from the Contemporary English Version, copyright © 1991, 1992, 1995 by American Bible Society. Used by permission.

Scriptural quotations marked GOD'S WORD® Translation are taken from GOD'S WORD®. © 1995, 2003, 2013, 2014, 2019, 2020 by God's Word to the Nations Mission Society. Used by permission.

Scriptural quotations marked New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition are taken from the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

© 2025 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.

