

Solution for Life



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 Dear Friends,

Have you ever underlined the number of times a word or two is found in a passage of scripture? Recently I was reading Psalm 103 in my NASB Bible and the title on the chapter was, "Praise for the Lord's Mercies." The chapter is full of His mercies but what stood out to me was how many times the words "lovingkindness" and "compassion" were repeated. In twenty-two verses both words are mentioned 4 separate times. I would challenge you to read the chapter and see how marvelously the Lord's mercies are described, with the stress on His lovingkindness and compassion. We trust you are blessed as you read about God's love and compassion.

Blessings, Dan and Jessie

Love That Will Not Let Me Go | by Daniel Westlund

My formative years were in the '60s, a turbulent time and a good time. As the decade was coming to an end, the Vietnam war was raging, protesters filled the streets and college campuses, we landed a man on the moon, and the economy was booming. There were two themes that permeated the culture: "Peace" and "What the world needs now is love." Man's continual quest is to find peace and love. As it states in Ecclesiastes 1:9, "there is nothing new under the sun." The need in our human existence for peace and love has been sought out by every generation since the creation of man.

How we find peace and love has been the source of philosophical discussion and debate for millennia, yet so many still come up empty and longing for true peace and true love. Have you ever watched a romance movie? The story line always seems to be the same. A young woman or man is seeking true love, a soul mate, someone they can grow old together with and in the background is an elderly, gray haired couple holding hands with big smiles on their faces. Is that possible? Yes, but it requires a deep relationship with the source of peace and love.

Books have been written, conferences attended by millions have been held, billions of dollars have been spent on counselors, drugs and therapists, yet the emptiness remains. The true source for peace and love remains the same since creation, yet dismissed or ignored by most of the human race. If you have ever attended or viewed a major college or professional football game, you will often see a sign with John 3:16 displayed by some fans. For those who have grown up in a Bible-based church, the sign reveals to us one of the greatest verses in the Bible that tells us of the depth of God's love for His creation. "For God so loved the world (all mankind) that He gave His only begotten Son (Jesus Christ), that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

The source of love and peace is God, and His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. How great is God's love for us? "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) The key to experiencing that love is responding to God's demonstration of His love through Christ, His death upon the cross and His resur-

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Solution for growth

Don't talk...You Scare Me! | by Jessie Westlund

Sitting in the living room of Grandma's house were three adults and one young teenager. The adults were discussing the events of the last week: weather changes around the world, unrest in America with killings across the country, controversy over political chaos and the stock market. The adults were engaged in their conversation when the teenager looked up from his tablet and quietly said, "Dad would you stop talking about this now. It scares me." Do you feel the same way as this young man? How do we answer our children when they are listening and watching the current events and the discussions that are taking place around the world's unrest? How are we personally dealing with the unprecedented events contrary to God's plan for mankind? In the Psalms we see the transparency of David when he was faced with circumstances that seemed impossible to him. He became discouraged and downcast with the circumstances of life. He says, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me...?" (Psalm 42:5a) This is an emotional condition when the mind focuses on the darkness in the situation being faced and does not see a way out. It is spiraling down without hope. Have you ever been so down you just wanted to stop? Like the young man in our story, you want to say, "Stop talking about it...it scares me." How do you handle these times in your life? What would you say to this woman's grandson when he says, "Stop, you are scaring me."

Thankfully David's thoughts did not end with his questions. He took time and reflected on who God is and the times God had revealed Himself. If you are familiar with David's life you know he had many ups and downs. He experienced the grace and power of God in his life. Friends and the government came against him. In his youth he stood in front of a giant and God gave him the victory. God forgave him when he committed adultery. After reflecting over the times God had been there for him, He confidently stated, "Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence." Psalm 42:5b

In our story, the grandma said to her grandson, "the times we live in can be scary but who has helped you when you have been in some difficult situations?" They discussed a time he was in the hospital and had surgery, and God helped him. And another time when kids were being mean to him and God protected and helped him. They were both encouraged as they agreed God loves us and is with us and helping us through the times we feel frightened.

Grandma was encouraged and praised God for His presence in the lives of her family. She wants to be there for her grandchildren and children, and she can be, with her hope in the presence of Christ in their lives. Daily she prays for her loved ones and reflects on Psalms 147:11, "the Lord delights

in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love." It is a joy to have the hope of knowing Jesus loves her family more than she does and is taking care of them. He loves her and no matter what she faces He will be present and carry her through.

We do live in troubled times and our children face forces of evil every day, but trusting in Christ with all our hearts gives us hope. ■

For encouragement in your times of need, read Psalm 91 and have hope in the Lord.

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rection from the dead. "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming; that if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved...for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord (Jesus) will be saved." (Romans 10:7-10, 12)

That is the starting point to know true peace and true love. The love God has for us comes when we respond with our love for God. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor (Holy Spirit) to be with you forever, the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him for He lives with you and will be in you...On that day you will realize that I (Jesus) am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you." (John 14:15;16;20)

In Romans 5:5 we are told what happens when we respond to God's love by believing on The Lord Jesus Christ: God pours out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He has given us. How does anyone ever know true peace or true love? Only thorough Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (John 14:27) "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Now remain in my love." (John 15:9)

What is amazing about God's love for His children is found in Romans 8:38-39 "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons (heavenly rulers), neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

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THE POWER OF GOD'S LOVE... | by Debbie Bellevue

I recently heard a talk that deeply impacted me. It caught me off guard somehow and has caused me to contemplate what causes Jesus to react most powerfully to our situations: our needs. It came from the very familiar story of Jesus responding to his dear friend Lazarus getting sick and dying.

Sometimes we have trouble understanding how God works, because we tend to focus more on what we think is best and how we think that God should work. John gives us such an example of how Jesus surprised everyone when his close friend Lazarus got sick and his family sent word to Jesus wanting him to come and do what Jesus did, heal the sick. This was not just anyone, it was Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha. They were friends of Jesus, a family that He not only knew, but where He often visited. John, in his Gospel (chapter 11 NIV), tells us that Jesus seemingly ignored his friends' pleas for help and delayed two days before He responded to them and by then Lazarus had already died. You can imagine their confusion, their disappointment and perhaps even their anger with their friends. Martha came right out and had a conversation with Jesus, but Mary, the one who sat at Jesus' feet and had even washed His feet with expensive perfume, did not come out to meet Jesus. Have you ever felt like Mary? But when Martha came back and told her that the master, her friend, was looking for her and was anxious to see her she ran to him and fell weeping at His feet, holding back nothing of her grief and confusion.

Now, here's the thing, it was Jesus' reaction. Some translations put it this way, When Jesus saw Mary's profound grief and the moaning and weeping of her companions, He was deeply moved by their pain in His spirit and was intensely troubled. Jesus asked to see the body and Scripture says, "As they walked, Jesus wept; everyone noticed how much Jesus must have loved Lazarus..." We know the rest of the story as Jesus speaks and Lazarus comes forth from the dead.

What so profoundly struck me is how deeply Jesus was moved by Mary's pain. He knew what He was about to do, but still He saw Mary's pain and those of her friends and was deeply moved, troubled in His spirit, and as He walked, He wept. That is so powerful. He was moved and reacted out of compassion. In the Gospels we often see Jesus moved by compassion.

Compassion as defined by Dr. Frank Rogers is, "Being moved at one's gut level depths by the pain or bliss of another and responding in ways that intend to ease their suffering or promote their flourishing." Compassion is something that we experience deep inside ourselves, placing ourselves in the very place of what others are feeling, empathy, and then taking action from what we are experiencing. Wow!!! That is the power of God's love in action for you and for me, for our families, and for the world around us. God's compassion has the power to transform us into the image of Jesus. But, because of disappointment and periods of waiting where we feel that God is silent, we can become deadened to and even forget how passionately and compassionately God loves us. Scripture tells us that we love God because He first loved us. We love in response to how much God loves us.

In hearing that familiar story again this week, I was deeply moved by the reminder that Jesus is moved, has compassion, and takes action on our behalf when we go to Him with our pain, confusion, and even our frustration. We are living in crazy times with what I believe is a demonic haze of deception over our nation and the world, but God is not surprised by any of it. We must guard our hearts and trust God for where and how He is working in us and in the world around us even if it may seem confusing to us at times. We must always remember that God's compassion for us and our families and the world around us is what most powerfully moves Him to action and in turn should likewise move us to the action of loving others. After all, Jesus tells us that the world will know us by our love.

"When we accept His passion for us, we can love Him with all our heart!" - Graham Cook ■

If you would like to be part of being still and reflecting on Christ, Debbie does a guided meditation every week. It is a time to be still and listen to God. It is "Saturday Morning Guided Scripture Meditation" offered via Zoom on Saturday mornings from 9 to 9:30 by Debbie Bellevue. To join the meditation simply email Debbie at debbellevue91@gmail.com and she will send you a Zoom link that will enable you to join in the meditation.

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On January 18, 1997, I was the officiant of the funeral service for Joe R. I only had an opportunity to speak to Joe one time before his passing and at that time he was troubled. I told Joe about the Good News that God loved him, and how God demonstrated that love through His Son Jesus Christ. I shared about the death and resurrection of Christ. Joe responded and asked Christ into his life shortly before his death. Great peace came over him. During the funeral I told the story of his decision to receive Christ and added, "Joe is with Jesus today in paradise, experiencing forever the peace and love of God."

The world does need peace and the world does need love, but only those in Christ will ever experience true peace and true love both now and forever. ■

Solution for the future

Watch & Pray | by Daniel Westlund

In Revelation chapter one we see the resurrected Christ walk in the middle of the seven golden lamp stands, representing the Church. Christ gives John a review of each church in chapters two and three and any shortfalls that have taken place and any corrections that need to be made.

First, we need to understand that it is out of Christ's great love for His body, the Church, that we are given this revelation. And second, we need to realize Christ still walks in the midst of His Church and knows the hearts of those who profess His name as Savior and Lord. In each church we are told "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Holy Spirit says. In Matthew 24:10 we are told in the last days "many will turn away from faith and will betray and hate each other and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people." And in I Timothy 4:1, "The Spirit (Holy Spirit) clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons."

We are given a warning and instruction in I John 4:1, "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world."

As I watch and pray, I know Christ is still amid His people, the Body of Christ. What is the Spirit saying? Are we listening? Take time to read Revelation 1-3. What is Christ saying to us today? Christ has not changed nor has His love for the blood-bought children. ■

God Loves Me | by Kristen Alewine

Have you ever wondered why it seems like God interacts with people so differently? On one of my favorite podcasts the host asks many of her guests, "How do you hear from God?" The answers given have ranged from "an audible voice" to "a feeling in my gut" all the way to "I don't, except for what I read in the Bible."

I've spent much of my life hoping and praying that I would hear God audibly. I've felt like I was doing something wrong because that doesn't happen to me. I'm not sure what your Christian experience has been like, but in mine, being able to say, "God told me..." has been seen as a badge of honor and authority; it made you a super Christian. Apparently, I wasn't meant to wear a cape.

The other day I came across a book called *God Speaks Your Love Language* by Gary Chapman (author of all the iterations of the Love Languages books). I haven't read the book, but the title got me thinking. I'm just speculating, but as I look at Jesus in the gospels and the way He relates to different people - being clever and nuanced with some, more direct with others, speaking in poetic words with some and more simply with others - I can't help but wonder if that diversity of communication is reflected in how the Holy Spirit interacts with us today. Maybe the God who designed every one of us communicates His love to us uniquely and intentionally in different ways.

I haven't given up on the idea that maybe one day I'll hear God's voice as some seem to. But instead of worrying about it, I've turned my attention to the places I'm wired to feel love and inspiration - in music, in nature, in other people - and I find Him in all of it, gently teaching, directing, and loving me.

"So, we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." 1 John 4:16 ■

Message from Dan and Jessie

It has been a busy summer. We had an opportunity to take some time off and visit family and get some rest. During that time the Lord laid on our hearts we need to support people in knowing how to have victory in the overwhelming challenges in the present world environment. One of the areas we are concerned about is how youth and children are not being taught Christian values. Recently we read in a local newspaper of a principal who has made a rule about situations where students ask to change what they want to be called. Whether a girl wanting to be called a boy or vice versa, the teachers are not to communicate this to the parents. As I visited this week with a young mother in our neighborhood, she told me she is concerned about the schools. Last year her young elementary age son attended a school where he came home and told her that he can decide if he is a boy or a girl. As Christians, what do we do? One

thing is not to sit and wring our hands and think there is no hope. We know parents can get involved. We must vote for representatives who support strong Biblical values. Every one of us can pray. Christ is the victory and partnering with Him and His word will bring victory over the forces of evil. On the Solution for Life web site (www.solutionforlife.org) there is an article, "Our Throne Rights" by Sarah Foulkes Moore, found in the Growth section. This describes the power of prayer over evil. We encourage you to read it and grow in your prayer life for our churches, families, schools, and leaders. In 1 John 5:3-5, Jesus promises "In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." ■