



## **Theme: Good, Good News!** **“Good News and Great Love”**

**Weekly Memory Verse:** <sup>16b</sup>*God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.*

–1 John 4:16b

**Family Activity for the Week:** *Happy Valentine's Day!* Kind words go a long way to express love for another. Be intentional this week with how you speak to others. Are you able to give compliments easily or does it take some practice? With your family this week, get out the arts and crafts! Make your own door hanger with your name on it. Write one nice thing about yourself and then pass it to the next person and have them write some kind words on it. Continue until everyone has written on yours and you have written on everyone else's. Now, go hang up your door hangers and remember how LOVED you are!

**Monday, February 15** – Read 2 Corinthians 4:3-7. “Our gospel” (or good news) is the good news that Paul, with his co-workers, proclaimed to the Gentiles in Corinth. This gospel is rooted in God's good news that God is loving and steadfast and that now all people may become his children through Jesus Christ, his Son; they may live a new life in Christ Jesus, who manifested God's righteousness and justice to the world.

- ▲ Jesus' bold proclamation of God's good news in the world, full of worldly wisdom and strength, ended with his crucifixion. This gospel is costly, but it is the power of God, shown through his love for humanity in the ultimate sacrifice. When has someone sacrificed something for you out of love? How did that make you feel? Have you ever felt called to sacrifice for someone else? What is the greatest act of love you have personally witnessed? Did you see God at work in that act of love?
- ▲ Paul uses this image of jars of clay in several places in his letters, to drive the point home that we are vessels, and we get to choose what fills us. What are you allowing to fill you up these days? Are you filled with the light of Christ or do you find other “stuff” filling you up? How can you allow God to shine a light in the dark places inside so you might be filled with the light of Christ? Prayer? Reading Scripture? A spiritual friend or small group? In what ways might choosing to do the loving things for others fill you up, allowing God's power and love to shine through you?

**Prayer:** *Gracious God, shine your light in my dark places so I might be filled with your glory. Change my perspective so I might see your love and beauty around me. May I receive the sacrificial love of Jesus so I can be his presence in the world this week. Amen.*

(Message Notes and Meditation Moments for February 13-14, 2021 – For more, go to [www.summitdurango.org](http://www.summitdurango.org))

**Tuesday, February 16** – Read Matthew 9:35-38 and Luke 19:1-10. Here at Summit Church our mission is to, “Be Jesus Christ to the World.” Jesus was “a man on a mission.” He did many admirable, valuable things during his ministry on earth. He healed the sick, broke down barriers of prejudice and exclusion, taught people how to live better lives, and challenged religious hypocrisy. Yet all that grew from his one central mission. First and foremost, Jesus said, he came to seek and to save the lost.

▲ Jesus yearned for God to, “send out workers into his harvest field.” To what extent do you think “troubled and helpless...sheep without a shepherd” expresses the spiritual state of your neighbors, co-workers, even some people you know in church? Are you willing to become one of the workers Jesus wished for? What abilities and resources has God given you that you can use to help reach troubled, helpless people with the good news of Jesus that they can be recipients of great love?

▲ Jesus said he “came to seek and save the lost.” In the New Testament “lost” does not mean damned or doomed. It just means in the wrong place. We are lost when we wander away from God. We are found when we take our rightful place as a child in the family of his heavenly Father. In what ways has God “found” you, and given you your rightful place in God’s family, as a child that is loved greatly? When have you been able to help God find someone else and help them experience that great love?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you for coming “to seek and save the lost,” including me. Guide me to the ways I can join you in doing that great, world-changing work, sharing your Good News of great love. Amen.

**Wednesday, February 17** – Today is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the season Lent, the 40 days and 7 Sundays before we get to Easter. You can register to be with us in person for the service at Noon, you can livestream then, or watch it anytime later in the day on any of our platforms. You also can receive ashes in our parking lot from 1 to 1:30PM AND 5 to 6PM in drive through stations.

Read Matthew 22:36-40. Jewish rabbis debated: were all commandments equal or was there a greater one? Asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus chose not one but two. The first was Deuteronomy 6:4: “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind.” But he added Leviticus 19:18: “You must love your neighbor as you love yourself.” Jesus said the point of all other truths is to lead us to love God and neighbor more fully. God wants us to show great, contagious love to all we know.

▲ Jesus said every key Bible principle, all the truths we know about what God wants, “depend” on the two commands he quoted. What do you believe made these two commands so foundational in Jesus’ thinking, teaching, and living? Can you recall any time when some belief you held led you to love God or some of your neighbors less, maybe even without realizing it?

▲ That second command can be challenging. Loving others the way we love ourselves is based on how God loves us—never giving up, no matter what. Our humanity makes it hard for us to love ourselves or others with God’s unwarranted love with no hesitation. But God calls us to move toward that, for our own sake and the sake of others. What has stopped you or made it hard for you to love yourself or someone else persistently? How might you love more fully?

**Prayer:** Gracious God, thank you for loving me unconditionally. Help me to recognize the moments in my life when I can relentlessly love those around me. Amen.

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**Thursday, February 18** – Read 1 John 4:16-21. Some people think “righteous” people are not kind, that following Jesus makes you critical and unloving. That was not the apostle John’s view! John Wesley, Methodism’s founder, preached a sermon on April 21, 1777 that quoted John and invited all Christ-followers, “Let us provoke all men, not to enmity and contention, but to love and good works; always remembering those deep words... ‘God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him!’”

▲ Why would John say, “Perfect love drives out fear”? 1 John 4:20 said, “Those who say, ‘I love God’ and hate their brothers or sisters are liars.” Do you agree that it is often fear that leads us to hate other people? Why would hating others block any genuine love for God? Can you think of practical ways to let God’s perfect love move you in the direction of acting in love toward “others,” even if you think they deserve fear and distrust rather than love?

▲ The phrase, “God is love,” touches on everything, from our individual lives to our communal nature as human being. John makes it clear that love and God go together; hate and God do not (4:20); fear and God do not (4:18). Have you ever experienced a situation in which, as you learned to love another person, your fear of that person decreased and even disappeared? In what ways has following Christ made you and your relationships more loving?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, you embodied God's love for me. Now you call me to embody your love as I deal with other people, even people I may not like, may even fear. Grow your love in my heart. Amen.*

**Friday, February 19** – Read Romans 13:8-10. Paul sent this letter to Roman house churches as there were no big cathedrals in his day. Some were mainly Jewish, others mostly Gentile (Roman and non-Jewish). Their standards of “righteousness” varied (see Romans 14:1-15:13). It was easy for them to criticize the other. Paul said the purpose of God’s law or rules is to help us love. “Love doesn’t do anything wrong to a neighbor” was a big challenge to people who disagreed. It was (and is) vital, because “Whoever loves another person has fulfilled the Law.”

▲ Paul spoke to differences over minor issues, issues that seemed major to those who felt strongly about them. How do you think some of them might have initially reacted to the idea that, “Whoever loves another person has fulfilled the Law”? Do you know anyone who is genuinely loving, but in some parts of life acts in ways that YOU think miss the mark? Do you believe Paul was right, or was he too soft on “law breakers”?

▲ How might ugly religious conflicts, like the Crusades, the Salem Witch trials, the Inquisition, slavery, etc., have been different if Christians had always aimed to fulfill the law by loving? How can you stand for truths that matter to you without acting in unloving ways toward those who disagree? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you grow in the inner qualities (that may not come naturally) which then help you live out the law of love.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, “love is what fulfills the Law” sometimes feels too easy to me. Until, that is, I try to do it—then I realize how high and hard a standard that is. Teach me how to love the way that you love. Amen.*

**Saturday, February 20** – Read Colossians 3:12-14 and 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Paul was emphatically practical in his letters to the Christians in Colossae and Corinth. He would have grown up reciting the Shema, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your being, (Message Notes and Meditation Moments for February 13-14, 2021 – For more, go to [www.summitdurango.org](http://www.summitdurango.org))

and all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:5). Jesus, Paul's Lord, said that was the greatest commandment, and added, "You must love your neighbor as you love yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). The next logical question for Paul, like Christ's followers ever since, was, "What does it look like to love my neighbor?" These were his answers. It looks like being humble—not thinking of yourself more highly than others. It looks like being gentle—take a deep breath if you feel angry, speak carefully. It looks like being patient—while waiting, focus on God instead of yourself. Love requires compassion (suffering with others), kindness (honor and consideration) and forgiveness to all God's children.

▲ As you read this list of loving actions, how do you feel? Great? Guilty? Condemned? If you're not perfectly living this list, remember that none of us are! Start with inviting God to give you the strength to show great love. Then we can ask, "How can I be more loving this week?" Instead of trying to grow in all areas at once, choose one characteristic Paul lists and focus on living into a new way of loving. Also remember that loving attitudes and actions are both individual and public, local and general. Think more broadly than just yourself. What can your family, your community, your church, your city, your state, your nation, do to be more loving to people you've never met? How can you join in God's work to extend divine love to all people?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, I want to love all my neighbors, everywhere. Help me start close to home and guide me as I expand my vision to be more and more like your vast, world-changing vision. Amen.*