



**LESSON 1**

# **God's Love**

# Introduction

Christian faith is built upon the love of God. God's love is the central message of Christianity and the source of our faith. We need to understand God's love if we are to make sense of anything else the Catholic Church professes.

The expression "God loves you" is familiar to many—so familiar, in fact, that we risk forgetting what it means. If we were to ask at a Christian gathering who thinks God loves them, the majority of people would likely raise their hands. One has to wonder, though, do we *really* know God loves us?

Many people think of God's love in general, vague or detached terms; their experience of it is thus rather thin, shallow and impersonal. Surely, if God is God, his love should give us much more than a vague sense of comfort. It *must* be more than this.

## **1** What happens in our hearts when we are loved? How are we affected?

# God's Personal Love

God's love for us is personal, proven, merciful and offered. We will look at these aspects of God's love throughout this faith study. It is important to understand all of them in order to appreciate the true character of God's love for us. It can be difficult to believe that God loves us as individuals and knows and cares about our personal lives. The truth is that he knows each of us by name. He knows all the details of our lives, even to the number of hairs on our heads! He loves us and delights in us individually. We need to hear these truths.

## **2** Write down what strikes you about God's personal love in these passages:

### **JEREMIAH 29:11**

*For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.*

### **ISAIAH 49:15-16**

*Can a woman forget her nursing-child,  
or show no compassion for the child of her womb?  
Even these may forget,  
yet I will not forget you.  
See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands;  
your walls are continually before me.*

*For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.*

### **PSALM 139:1-3**

*O Lord, you have searched me and known me.  
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
you discern my thoughts from far away.  
You search out my path and my lying down,  
and are acquainted with all my ways.*

# God's Secure Love

## **3** Write down the qualities of God's love expressed in the following passages:

### **JOHN 10:10-15**

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*

*'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.*

### **ROMANS 8:35, 37-39**

*Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

## **4** How would you describe God's love in light of these reflections, Scripture verses, and any personal experiences?

# Our Personal Love for God

We may find it hard to believe that God loves us personally. This is perhaps because we relate to him in an impersonal way, thinking of him as a faraway cosmic entity. Because we don't believe he is personal or accessible, we treat him in a detached and distant kind of way.

## **5** How would we relate to God if we considered him as a Person (as a close friend)?

## **6** Read Matthew 18:2-3. How might we relate to God if we approached him with a childlike heart?

*He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.'*

# Summary

God's love for us is very real. *Discovery* will look at how God's love is personal, proven, merciful and offered. In this first lesson, we have focused on God's personal love; his care and concern for each human being is central to our Christian faith. We are invited to be secure in his intimate, unchanging, eternal and unconditional love.

## Living It Out

### **CHALLENGE**

Choose one way to relate to God as someone who is personally present in your life.

### **MEMORIZE JEREMIAH 29:11**

*For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.*