



Our reading for today continues our look at the fourth chapter in I John. We return to John's understanding of love and the power love has to drive out fears.

Summing up the earlier words in the fourth chapter which we read yesterday, John says, "And so we know and rely on the love God has for us." Can you pinpoint specific ways in which you are "relying on the love that God has for you"? What might those be?

In our GPS reading on December 2, we read these words of invitation from Jesus, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." In today's scripture, John argues that "perfect love drives out fear." What fears might you need to present to God today so that they may be driven out by God's perfect love?

GPS for Families

GrowPrayStudy.org/family

Christmas can be an overwhelming "me" fest for kids. Marketers are using every means possible to convince them that they cannot be happy unless they have one more thing. It's our job as parents to take the focus off of them and put the focus on Christ and others. Christ came into the world as a helpless human baby, willing to give up all he had for us, even those of us who were not yet born, those who are less than perfect and those who have yet to acknowledge his gift. That is how great his love is for us. Teach your children that because of this enormous love, we have plenty to share. We should share that love all year long, but Christmas is an easy time to give to others.

Make a point of doing just one thing different this year to share God's love with others. Start a new tradition of giving to people outside of your family and friends. Choose a budget of time, money or other resources that you want to share. Then let your children help you decide how to use or spend it. Give them several options, and let them think of a few as well, then decide as a family how to share the gift and how to make sure God gets the glory. This may mean doing something anonymously or in someone else's name. If you need ideas, check out *Gifts That Go Beyond* on our website, www.giftsthatgobeyond.org.

MESSAGE "Christmas Is for Saving!"

SCRIPTURE Matthew 1:18-23

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"Today salvation has come to this house . . . For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:9a,10)

- He is born of the Holy Spirit.
 Note: This is the same Spirit that created the world, breathed life into humanity at creation and filled the Church at Pentecost.
 - He will be called Jesus.
 Note: God named his Son; His name came from heaven, as Jesus did.
 - He will save His people from their sins.
 Note: The Bible does not say Jesus came to save His people from the Romans or religious leaders but from their own sin.
 - He is Emmanuel, God with us.
 Note: Christmas is God come into the world as a human, the Incarnation.
1. The Bible teaches that Jesus came to save souls, lives, relationships and the world.
 2. Sometimes we want God to do something other than what He sent Jesus to do.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Holy and loving God, I give you thanks for the gift of Christmas. As I celebrate the coming of our newborn King, I pray that you would forgive me of my sin, bind up my wounds and cast out all my worries and fear. May the life I live this day and every day testify to my belief that Jesus has come to save my life and redeem the entire world. Amen.

Unlike the Gospel of Matthew and Luke, John does not begin with a narration of Jesus' birth. Instead, John connects Jesus' coming into the world with the original creation story. In Genesis 1, God speaks the world into existence. John asserts that "the word" was Jesus. He elaborates in John 1:14 saying, "The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." The awesome power that brought the world into being had come down to make his home among his creation.

According to verses 4 and 5, what is Jesus bringing into the world? Where in your life do you need the light of Jesus to come and shine in the darkness?

In John 10, Jesus says, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." What has your relationship with Jesus taught you about life? What are you learning right now?

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Many of the most well known portions of the Gospels come from the Gospel of John. We continue our look at the life of Jesus from that perspective this week in the reading of 1 John. 1 John is believed to have been authored after the completion of the Gospel of John and was written for the purpose of being circulated and read by Christians throughout the Roman Empire.

The theme of Jesus being "the light" that comes to penetrate the darkness pervades John's writing. In verse 7 we find the instructions to "walk in the light, as he is in the light." What has helped you to stay in the light?

In verse 9, John mentions a specific practice that keeps us in the light and purifies our lives. What is it? How has confessing your sins to God helped you stay in the light?

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In our reading from Monday of this week, we looked at how John connected the coming of Jesus with the original story of creation. In those opening verses of John's Gospel, he writes, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." In 1 John 3 we see him taking this thought a step further. If we have been created by him, that means we belong to him.

You are a child of God. You are loved by God. Though we have all been marred by sin, one day "we shall be like him." Who you are today is not who you will one day be. There is a spirit working in you more powerful than you can imagine.

Carry in your heart today these simple words, "I am a child of God. I am loved by God."

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During our *Guilt and Grace* series this summer, we looked at these verses from the fourth chapter of John's first letter. In that reading we noted the following. The NIV Bible translates the first part of verse 7 as "dear friends." Other translations choose to render the first part of this verse as "beloved," a term that is commonly associated with John's writing. In calling the reader to a life of love, John begins with the reminder that we are already "much loved" by God.

What does John offer as "evidence" of God's love? How does he use this evidence to describe what it means to offer and share love with others?

Understanding how much God loves you allows you to more fully love others. Do you agree with that statement? If so, how have you seen that in your own life?

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