

The Authentic Christ, and Love— November 25 & 26, 2017
Follow-up Bible Studies

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Day One: Psalm 33:16-22

- We erroneously assume some things can save us. What are they (16-17)? In today's world, what do people think can save them? What truly saves (18-19)? How should we posture ourselves before God in order to experience his salvation (18)?
- Consider your own respect for God's greatness and "hope in his unfailing love." How do you think the Lord feels about these sentiments? What do you want to be different about them?
- With what posture do we wait for the Lord (20)? Why (20)? What causes our hearts to rejoice (21)? What is the psalmist's concluding prayer (22)? God's love for us is so great that we can experience it even as we wait for his arrival. How is this true in your own life? This week, share about this truth and hope with someone who'd be blessed by the message.

Day Two: Isaiah 9:2-7

- What has changed for those living in darkness (2)? The light of Jesus' love can illuminate anything. What was once dark in your life but is now light? Thank God for the light of his love.
- How does this new light change things for God's people as a whole (3-4)? Visualize these scenes in your mind's eye. What do you see? Hear? Feel in your heart? Specifically regarding war and violence, what will happen (5)?
- Exactly how will all of this goodness invade the earth (6)? Summarize Isaiah's description of this child (6-7). Sit with the truth that Jesus, just one person, is the source of all light and goodness in the world. Rest in his loving presence; fling your arms open and say, "Lord, love me!" Respond in praise: tell God how thankful you are for everything Jesus has done, is doing and will do.

Day Three: Luke 15:1-10

- Describe who was present as Jesus told these parables; what was the atmosphere like (1-2)? With a stingy and self-righteous spirit the Pharisees positioned themselves to hear Jesus teach. How do you position yourself when receiving from Jesus? Pray for grace to sit at his feet in openness, wonder and adoration.
- Summarize the parable of the lost sheep (4-7). Joy and celebration, all over finding one sheep – just 1% of the herd, conclude this story. God loves you so much that he will risk everything for *only* you. Talk to the Lord about this extravagant initiation of his love. What do you sense him speaking in return?
- What happens in the parable of the lost coin (8-10)? God loves us so much that he doesn't give up until we are once again found in him. And like the prior parable, the story ends with rejoicing. Whenever you turn from darkness and sin – anything short of God's ideal – do you picture angels rejoicing? Pray for a deep sense of how heaven responds whenever you turn to Jesus.

Day Four: John 3:16-21

- How does God feel about the world, despite any hatred it has for him (16)? How did he express his love, and what did it accomplish (16)? What clarifications does John then make (17-18)?

- God's love always makes the first move, and Jesus perfectly embodies it. Read 1 John 4:10, another place where John expresses this truth about God's love. In Christ, your existence begins and ends with love, never condemnation. Sit with your hands open to God and receive more of this love now.
- Despite the beautiful light God has brought into the world via Jesus, some reject it. Why (19-20)? Ask the Lord what role he wants you to play in helping others to "come into the light" of his love. What is he speaking, and how will you respond?
- What is characteristic of those who "live by the truth" (21)? In what ways do you see yourself in this verse? Which parts of your life don't fit; what are you hiding in darkness? Repent and come into God's loving light, where he awaits you.

Day Five: 2 Corinthians 5:11—6:2

- Why does Paul "try to persuade others" (5:11)? How does he want the Corinthians to think of him (11-12)? Some assert Paul is "out of his mind;" what is his response (13)? What does Christ's love compel him to do (14-15)? What does Jesus' love compel *you* to do? Pray your motivation would stay tethered to his love.
- What spiritual viewpoint can we now embrace (16-17)? To what extent do you view things this way, both regarding yourself and others? If you struggle to see that "the new creation has come," spend several minutes meditating on verses 18-19, and pray Jesus would open your eyes to what his love has accomplished.
- What does it mean to be "Christ's ambassadors" (20-21)? How does both reconciliation and righteousness seem evident in your life? How should we *not* receive God's grace (6:1)? As in verse 2, receive his favor and salvation now. Pray you'd always respond to the "now" aspect of his love. Receive it as it comes; don't put it off.