

Reading Plan

September 21 - October 4

By: Melanie Hill

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

Take a few moments to process what was talked about at MomLife yesterday... what Christy said... what was discussed around your table... go back and read any notes you made...

Journal some thoughts about what you are processing at this point about what love is and what it is not.



Spend some time praying about how God may be working in your life, softening your heart to be more open to noticing and receiving his very real and great love. If you still have questions and feel some tensions in understanding his love versus distortions of love, be honest with Him. I promise, He can handle your questions, hesitancy, and even your doubt. Ask that God would open your eyes and your heart to notice one new thing about love today.

With your kids and/or spouse:

Talk to each other about how you saw love today. *How did you feel love today? How did you show love today? How did love make you grateful today? What's one thing that made you more aware of God's love today?*

FAMILY ACTIVITY:

- (1) Continue (or start) a family GRATITUDE JOURNAL.
- (2) Check out this visual activity for understanding God's love and how it's meant to be shared if you haven't done it already:
grclrk.co/momlifesept
- (3) See how creative you can be in encouraging your family to memorize Scripture and be sure to give positive reinforcement for progress!

(We will give new activities at the beginning of each month.)

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

When the weekend comes we know a change in routine comes as well. Use today to pray, REST, (maybe catch up on your reading) and reflect on the Scripture we are working to memorize this month. *We will move on to memorizing v. 13 in October.*

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience..." Colossians 3:12 (ESV)

With your kids and/or spouse

What does it look like to love and REST with your family today?

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

All Scripture is breathed out by God and is ultimate truth and authority. When we memorize it, we carry TRUTH with us wherever we go. Use today to *practice* memorizing Colossians 3:12. Write it out. Say it

out loud. Make it your prayer. Think about how this process of meditating on this Scripture and committing it to memory is changing your heart and how you view love and relationships.

With your kids and/or spouse

Work on memorizing Colossians 3:12 together.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

This passage talks about how we can do lots of things: speak with great eloquence and power (v. 1) with great knowledge of the unknown; we can have great faith in trusting God with the impossible (v. 2); and we can give everything we own to the poor and even offer our bodies as martyrs (v. 3). Yet without love, those things are all empty and meaningless. To be very clear, it says that without love...

- we are like noisy gongs – like the terrible sound of an instrument being misused
- we *are* nothing
- we *gain* nothing

I don't know about you, but those words are convicting to me! It makes me want to figure this whole love thing out even more! How do these verses challenge you? Finish these statements:

Without love, I feel _____

Without love, I am _____

How do you think love is connected to contentment and joy?

How does love impact the way you live? _____

With your kids and/or spouse

Discuss the question, "Why is love important?" You might get some interesting answers from your 2-6 year olds, but sometimes the simplicity in their innocent responses can be both profound and delightful. Don't try to force an answer (however old your children are), simply see what it means to them. Depending on how interested they are in the conversation, you might want to share your thoughts from today's reading.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

According to these verses, love IS:

→ _____

→ _____

→ _____

→ _____

→ _____

→ _____

→ _____

→ _____

According to these verses, love is NOT:

→ _____

→ _____

→ _____

→ _____

→ _____

→ _____

→ _____

→ _____

**Don't stress... different versions list these things with different wording, so you may or may not use all the blanks. Fill them out as best you can, the point is to clearly see the differences between what love is and is not.*

Jesus is the perfect picture of love, perfectly exhibiting all these qualities. Aren't you grateful to have his example? He exercises these qualities naturally and consistently, sharing love with us with the deepest intensity. Because of Jesus we know what true love looks like; and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, this is the kind of love that others can know through you.

The Message version describes love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 as:

Love never gives up.	Doesn't revel when others grovel,
Love cares more for others than for self.	Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,
Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.	Puts up with anything,
Love doesn't strut,	Trusts God always,
Doesn't have a swelled head,	Always looks for the best,
Doesn't force itself on others,	Never looks back,
Isn't always "me first,"	But keeps going to the end.
Doesn't fly off the handle,	Love never dies.
Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,	

Which of these qualities is the most challenging for you? _____

How has God shown *you* love through that quality? _____

Use this prayer to bravely ask God to help you grow in that quality:

Abba Father, You are the perfect example of _____ love.

Help me to love my family, myself, my neighbors, etc. with _____.

You know my heart and my struggles. Thank you for loving me and pursuing me even in my weaknesses, imperfections and insecurities. Help me to do the same for those around me.

With your kids and/or spouse

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 together. Talk about what love is. Ask which quality of love is the most difficult to show? Come up with one specific example of how they can practice that quality of love. Pay attention to notice when your spouse or child loves others well and affirm them.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

Let's talk about being brave for a minute. Here's Day 20 from 100 Days to Brave by Annie F. Downs:

"God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?" (Numbers 23:19, NLT)

You know who had some serious courage? Gideon. The one from the Bible.

In Judges 6, all the Israelites were misbehaving in serious ways – the kind of ways that separate them from God. The Lord gave them over to their enemies, and there were living in fear – hiding away and being defeated and robbed. Then the Israelites began to cry out to God for rescue. (I know that move, don't you? Hiding from God when I feel like I've messed up but then asking Him to rescue me when I've gotten myself in a bad spot.) God decided to show mercy and deliver them, defeating the other armies by using the Israelite army. And Gideon, this unlikely little guy, was about to have a unique call to courage.

Starting in Judges 6:11, we see Gideon threshing his wheat while hiding out in a winepress (instead of separating the wheat in a normal place). An angel of the Lord appeared and said, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior" (Judges 6:12, NIV). This statement surprised Gideon because, well, he was *hiding*, which is not your typical "mighty warrior" behavior. But the Lord told Gideon that he was the guy who would lead the army to save Israel from the Midianites.

When he heard this, Gideon immediately started explaining to God why he was the wrong guy for the job – he belonged to the weakest clan, and he was the weakest of the weakest clan. You know what was happening there? Gideon was looking at himself and his own abilities rather than looking at God and believing that He is who He says He is.

You are deeply loved and called to be courageous by a God who is perfect and perfectly trustworthy. If you feel stuck looking at your own shortcomings, look upward to your Jesus, who is exactly who He says He is, who defeated death itself, and who empowers you to be brave.

Are YOU hiding from God right now? Know that you don't have to – *"You are deeply loved and called to be courageous by a God who is perfect and perfectly trustworthy."* God is loving you with the perfect love of 1 Corinthians 13. How might a distorted view of love make you want to hide?

Journal about how you can identify with Gideon and how you need to be brave and trust the Truth in Numbers 23:19 that God does not lie or change His mind or fail (especially in regard to His love)...

With your kids and/or spouse

Read Numbers 23:19 together. What does this show about the character of God? How do these words promise that God's love is true?

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

Now that we've talked about how we can be brave and trust that God is true... that He always comes through on His promises - especially in regard to loving us well... let's look at the idea that Christy talked about last week that God's love might not always feel warm and fuzzy and comfortable. She talked about God's perfect ability to love and hate sin (bringing wrath) at the same time.

... [deep breath] ... I know, I need one too... this is a big thing to process...

I think it's so hard for us to fully grasp this concept, because as humans, we do a pretty poor job of balancing merciful and gracious love with hating sin. We don't know how to do it because it *feels* like they can't go together.

Read Jude 17-22. *It's all the way in the back, right before Revelation. It's so short there aren't even chapters, just verses to look for.*

Jude is written by Jude (seems obvious, I know, haha), the brother of James and Jesus. He's writing a warning to the church about others who are perverting Truth with false teaching. They seem to be gaining influence, so the church needs to step up and aggressively defend the Truth of Scripture. I think this is important for us to know because we too are fighting constantly against so many things/people

who are distorting what God says to be true. The world tries to influence us to follow our subjective feelings and make us believe that ungodly passions are no big deal.

What are the things around you fighting to distort your idea of love? *Christy mentioned how our culture, books, tv, movies, social media push the idea that you get to make your own truth about love and life...*

What does Jude say to DO in the midst of these distortions (look at verses 20-21)? *I'd encourage you to read this passage in a couple of versions to help get a better picture of what Jude is challenging believers to do (the NLT or Message versions may be especially helpful).*

And how is Jude saying we should respond to those who hesitate in their faith? Look at how the Message version words verses 22-23:

“Go easy on those who hesitate in the faith. Go after those who take the wrong way. Be tender with sinners, but not soft on sin. The sin itself stinks to high heaven.”

The only way we will be able to (1) recognize distortions and (2) be able to love and be tender with sinners while also not being soft on sin is to intentionally build our own faith and live and pray in the Holy Spirit. We don't have the power to do either of those on our own.

Spend some time praying for your perseverance and faithfulness to follow God's Truth in the midst of the world's distorted views. Pray for friends and/or family who you know are hesitating in their faith. When we pray for others, God has a wonderful way of softening our hearts to better know how to love with the delicate balance of grace and Truth.

With your kids and/or spouse

Start a conversation with your family about how the only way we will know what's true and right is to read the Bible. The world will try to tell us all kinds of things about how to look and live and feel, but the way that will bring the most life, peace, hope, and contentment will be found in the Word of God.

Pray over your children that they will carefully build themselves up in their faith through prayer and Scripture, staying in step with the Holy Spirit, right at the center of God's love. Pray they will keep their arms and hearts open and ready for the grace and goodness and mercy of Jesus because that is where they will experience the most full and abundant and *real* life.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

Do something different today – find a quiet moment, a quiet place to sit with this idea of God's perfect ability to love and hate sin (bringing wrath) at the same time. What's difficult for you to grasp about this idea? What's encouraging to you about it? How have you experienced it? How have you shown it (the easiest example is to think about how you are able to love your children while still being very angry/disappointed in their choices or behavior)? How does it deepen God's love for you? How does it deepen your love for others? What Scriptures are helping you to process this?

With your kids and/or spouse

Find an intentional moment to practice balancing love with Truth with your family. Pay attention to how it plays out and how it feels and how they respond.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

When the weekend comes, we know a change in routine comes as well. Use today to pray, REST, (maybe catch up on your reading) and reflect on the Scripture we are working to memorize this month.

“Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience...” Colossians 3:12 (ESV)

With your kids and/or spouse

It's the Hope Walk day! If you decide to participate in the walk, take a moment to talk to your family about why you're doing it and why it's important to support ministries and organizations like Hope in our community. Take a moment today to pray for the staff of Hope and the women and families that come through their doors.

If you're not participating in the Hope Walk4Life today, talk with your family about something you could do to show love to other people in your neighborhood or community. *Take cookies to someone who just moved in, invite some new friends to the park, collect some items for Hope (listed below), visit a grandparent or friend in the nursing home, make and send a card to someone who is sick or having a rough day/week.*

Immediate needs of Hope Pregnancy Center: Diapers (sizes newborn and 6), wipes, NEW sleepers (size preemie, newborn and 0-3 month), NEW sleep sacks, NEW diaper bags, NEW pants (sizes newborn and 0-3 month), girl bibs, girl burp cloths, NEW newborn mittens and hats, baby toiletries, baby bath towels, diaper rash cream, NEW baby bottles (large and small), NEW car seats, gently used maternity clothing. Drop off items @ Hope: 325 N 2nd Street // Call 931-645-2273 with questions. For more information about Hope, visit hopepregnancy.net.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

All Scripture is breathed out by God and is ultimate truth and authority. When we memorize it, we carry TRUTH with us wherever we go. Use today to *continue* to practice memorizing Colossians 3:12.

With your kids and/or spouse

Continue to work on memorizing Colossians 3:12 together.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 1

Christy referenced the book “The Difficult Doctrine of God’s Love” by DA Carson in her teaching last week. Read this excerpt:

“God’s love for the world is commendable because it manifests itself in awesome self-sacrifice; our love for the world is repulsive when it lusts for evil participation. God’s love for the world is praiseworthy because it brings the transforming Gospel to it; our love for the world is ugly because we seek to be conformed to the world. God’s love for the world issues in certain individuals being called out from the world and into the fellowship of Christ’s followers; our love for the world is sickening where we wish to be absorbed into the world.”

“But clearly we are to love the world in the sense that we are to go into every part of it and bring the glorious Gospel to every creature. In this sense we imitate, in our small ways, the wholly praiseworthy love of God for the world.”

Read 1 John 2:15-17.

Be in the world, but not of the world. Love the people of the world, but not the ways of the world. This can be a very difficult practice. How do you see the world's view of love contrasting with God's love?

How can you be a light of God's love in the world?

With your kids and/or spouse

Read the Message version of 1 John 2:15-17 with your family: "Don't love the world's ways. Don't love the world's goods. Love of the world squeezes out love for the Father. Practically everything that goes on in the world—wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important—has nothing to do with the Father. It just isolates you from him. The world and all its wanting, wanting, wanting is on the way out—but whoever does what God wants is set for eternity." How can we, as a family, be a light of God's love to other people?

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 2 & WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 3

Take these two days to read 1 Chronicles 16:8-36. Break up the reading however you like, or read the whole thing twice. And journal some thoughts with the following prompts:

If you want some backstory to this song of thanksgiving by David, read 2 Samuel 6 and 1 Chronicles 15-16:7.

What does this passage say about the character of God?

What does it say about God's love?

What does it say about what God deserves?

How do David's words of worship move *your* spirit to worship?

What does worship in response to God's love look like to you on a normal day?

With your kids and/or spouse

Read your favorite verse(s) from this passage with your family and tell them why they stand out to you. Ask them how they would offer a song of thanksgiving or worship to God?

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 4

Say a prayer for MomLife today (we'll be talking about worship as our *response* to God's great love):

Pray for your experience, pray for connections to be made with the moms at your table, pray for your Table Leader and Mentor Mom. Pray for who will be teaching from stage today. Pray that God would show you something about himself and who he has created you to be. Pray that God will open your heart to better understand how he's created you for worship.