

MR. MOODY'S BIBLE CLASS

A Twelve-Part Study in the Doctrines of the Christian Faith

by

Dwight Lyman Moody

Mr. Moody's Bible Class" was a special feature published in *The Ladies' Home Journal*, a popular women's magazine of the 1890s. For twelve months beginning in November 1896, evangelist D.L. Moody published Bible studies that defined the principles of the Christian faith and encouraged readers to engage in daily Scripture reading.

Mr. Moody designed these studies for both individual reflection and group discussion. Whether you're studying alone or with others, take time to read the Scripture passages referenced and answer the reflection questions honestly before God.

These studies are ideal for personal devotions, small group Bible studies, Sunday school classes, or anyone seeking to deepen their understanding of foundational Christian doctrine.

The Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

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LESSON NINE

THE GREATEST VIRTUE: LOVE

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Love is the highest experience of the human soul. Faith and hope, it is true, are gifts from God to man, but love is the very essence of God Himself. God is love. When God imparts love to us He imparts Himself. “Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.” (1 John 4:7)

“Love is the highest experience of the human soul.”

There is no simpler truth in Scripture than this of God's love to man, and yet I know of no more difficult subject to present to the world. Any man's words fall so far short of presenting the wondrous beauty and grandeur of the truth. The closer the communion a man has with God the less do any words on this great theme satisfy him. It is almost impossible to convince the world that God is love.

THE GREATEST MESSAGE IS "GOD IS LOVE"

Could I but make the world understand and believe that "God is love" I should never preach from any other text. My last days would be devoted to proclaiming that one fact in every part of the world, and I know that every day would be a veritable Pentecost. For if the world were convinced that God was love, a God of mercy, and not of judgment, our prisons would be empty, and the Kingdom of God would be established in our midst. For love begets love; and if we can make men really believe that God loves them, many will love Him in return.

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We are apt to judge others by ourselves. If a man is covetous he thinks everyone else is covetous; if he is dishonorable everyone else is dishonorable. And so men would think of God as like themselves; and, because they love those only who are lovable, they think of God as only loving those who are good and who are deserving of His love.

DIVINE LOVE IS ETERNAL AND UNCHANGING

God's love differs from man's love in three important respects: it is unchangeable, unfailing, and everlasting. Human love is changeable. Our friendship for a man lasts only as long as he is worthy. When he is false we cast him off. If God's love were like man's love there would be small hope for us.

Many a mother gives a false and misleading impression of God to her child's mind. Often I have heard a parent say to a child:

“The Lord will love you if you are good, but He will not love you if you are naughty.”

Such teaching is false. God loves him all the time. You will find that a child growing up with such a false impression of God will, when he finds himself a man, with evil temptations and inclinations, take it as a token of God's hatred for him.

But I can imagine one of you asking, “What, then, is the meaning of the Psalmist, ‘God is angry with the wicked every day’?” (Psalm 7:11)

God's anger with the sinner for disobedience is strong proof of His love. He knows the consequences of sin, and, when a man willfully enters sin, God is angry. Suppose a father forbids his son to go swimming and the son disobeys. Is it a sign of the father's love if he is angry with that boy, or a sign that he hates him? It is because God loves the sinner that He is not indifferent to his evil ways.

THE GLORY OF THOSE WHO LOVE GOD

It often happens that there is great profession of esteem and affection when a man is in prosperity. Let hardships come, and the professed friend fails. But Christ manifested a love that was boundless. In the Apostle John's record of the last supper he tells us that Christ “having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” (John 13:1)

Judas, who betrayed Him with a cruel kiss, never lost Christ's love, and Peter, in the darkest hour of his backsliding, still was loved with an unfailing love.

And what God is seeking from men today is their love for Him. He overrules all things for the benefit of those who love Him. In his Epistle to the Romans Paul writes that “we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God.” (Romans 8:28) Some people leave out that little word all. They say some things work together for good. A successful bargain would be working together for good, or a good appointment would be of God. But a financial reverse or the failure of some undertakings would not, in their judgment, be working for their good. Now God often shows His love by sending disappointment. Success very frequently works harm, and “all things work together for good, to them that love God.”

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ALL THINGS CHANGE BUT GOD'S LOVE

Mr. Spurgeon (*Charles Spurgeon, the renowned British Baptist preacher, 1834-1892*) was visiting a friend in the country, and, when being shown about the place, he noted a large weather-vane bearing the text, “God is love.”

“Do you mean to tell the whole countryside,” asked Mr. Spurgeon, “that God's love is as changeable as the wind?”

“No,” replied his friend, “I mean to tell them that God is love no matter which way the wind blows.”

“God is love no matter which way the wind blows.”

THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE OF LOVE

In the late Professor Drummond's book, “The Greatest Thing in the World” he tells of meeting with natives in the interior of Africa, who remembered David Livingstone. (*Henry Drummond, Scottish evangelist and author; his book The Greatest Thing in the World remains in print today.*) They could not understand a word the kind Doctor uttered, but they recognized the universal language of love through which he appealed to them. It had been many years since that Christian hero had passed their way, but the very remembrance of his presence among them would kindle a friendly smile.

It is this very selfsame universal language of love, divine, Christ-like love, that we must have if we are going to be used of God. The world does not understand theology nor dogma, but it understands love and sympathy. A loving act may be more powerful and far-reaching than the most eloquent sermon. I have heard many a powerful minister preach and move an audience marvelously, and yet in a few days I would forget every word he uttered.

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MY FIRST DISMAL JOURNEY AWAY FROM HOME

On the other hand there are acts of love, shown me when I was a mere child, that have influenced my whole life. There were nine of us children, and my widowed mother had very great difficulty in keeping the wolf from the door. My next older brother had found a place for me to work during the winter months in a neighboring village about thirteen miles away, and early one November morning we started out together on our dismal journey. Do you know November has been a dreary month to me ever since?

As we passed over the river and up the opposite side of the valley we turned to look back for a last look at home. It was to be my last view for weeks, for months, perhaps forever, and my heart nearly broke at the thought. That was the longest journey I ever took, for thirteen miles was more to me at ten than the world's circumference has ever been since.

LOVING DEEDS LIVE LONG IN OUR MEMORY

When at last we arrived in the town I had hard work to keep back my tears, and my brother had to do his best to cheer me. Suddenly he pointed to someone and said:

“There's a man that'll give you a cent; he gives one to every new boy that comes to town.”

I was so afraid that he would pass me by that I planted myself directly in his path. He was a feeble, old, white-haired man. As he came up to us my brother spoke to him, and he stopped and looked at me.

“Why, I have never seen you before. You must be a new boy,” he said. He asked me about my home, and then, laying his trembling hand upon my head, he told me that, although I had no earthly father, my Heavenly Father loved me, and then he gave me a bright new cent.

I do not remember what became of that cent, but that old man's blessing has followed me for over fifty years, and to my dying day I shall feel the kindly pressure of that hand upon my head. A loving deed costs very little, but, done in the name of Christ, it will be eternal.

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This divine love is what the Church of God needs today. We discuss and argue over methods and means, but, after all, the solution of the problem is love.

THE REGENERATING POWER OF LOVE

We must hold “the truth in love.” (Ephesians 4:15)

Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, teaches that a man may know all prophecies and have great wisdom, but if he is lacking in love, it counts for nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3) I have known men who have had a marvelous knowledge of Scripture, and seemed to understand the Old Testament prophecies to a remarkable degree, but they were seemingly not filled with God at all. I have wondered at it till, in some way, the conversation would expose a heart void of love, and then it has been clear why there was no power.

I believe the church has less to fear from heresy than from animosity. Show me a church where there is love, and I will show you a church that is a power in the community.

In Chicago a few years ago a little boy attended a Sunday-school I know of. When his parents moved to another part of the city the little fellow still attended the same Sunday-school, although it meant a long, tiresome walk each way. A friend scolded him one day for going so far, and told him that there were plenty of others just as good nearer his home.

“They may be as good for others but not for me,” was his reply.

“Why not?” she asked.

“Because they love a fellow over there,” he replied.

If only we could make the world believe that we loved them there would be fewer empty churches and a smaller proportion of our population who never darken a church door. Let love replace duty in our church relations, and the world will soon be evangelized.

AWAKENING LOVE AND SYMPATHY IN LIFE

Let me give you a rule in life for awakening your love and sympathy.

First, put yourself in the other person's place and then try to help him. You are compelled to associate with some persons—it may be in your home, or at school, or in business—who always seem to do every little thing in such a way as to make themselves unendurable. To use a homely expression, “they always rub you up the wrong way.”

Now just imagine yourself in their place. Make their sorrows your own, give full credit to their virtues and then try to help them. It may be that they have some anguish of soul, or some hidden disappointment, which, did you but know it, would melt your heart with pity for them. If their surroundings were yours, it may be that you, too, would be far less endurable than you are.

Let us thank God that we do not have to judge, but that we may always sympathize. You cannot sympathize and work for a person without beginning to love him, and we cannot love a person for Christ's sake but that He will give us a fuller realization of His love to us.

And thus, as we show forth His love, we acquire the stamp of His likeness; for “if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.” (1 John 4:12)



Read More About ...

Mr. Moody teaches that “love is the very essence of God Himself,” and serves as the model for how we should love others. Through examples drawn from his own childhood and a little boy’s Sunday school experience, Mr. Moody shows that when we love and sympathize with others, we come to understand God’s love for us more deeply.

Study these passages to explore how God’s love for us is unchangeable, how He calls us to love Him in return, and how we can reflect His love in the kindness and empathy we show to others.

Love as the Greatest Commandment

- Matthew 22:37 – 39
- Mark 12:30 – 31
- John 13:34 – 35

God’s Unconditional Love for Us:

- Jeremiah 31:3
- John 3:16
- Romans 5:8
- Romans 8:38 – 39
- 1 John 3:1

God’s Love Expressed Through Discipline:

- Hebrews 12:6
- Proverbs 3:11 – 12
- Revelation 3:19

Christ’s Unshakeable Love for Judas:

- John 13:1 – 2
- John 13:21 – 27
- Matthew 26:45 – 50

Showing Kindness and Loving Deeds for Others:

- Luke 6:35
- Romans 12:10
- Galatians 6:9 – 10
- Ephesians 4:32
- Colossians 3:12
- 1 Peter 3:8 – 9

Putting the Needs of Others Before Your Own:

- Philippians 2:3 – 4
- Romans 12:15
- Luke 6:31
- Galatians 6:2
- Proverbs 17:17

Love versus Knowledge—The Limits of Doctrine Without Love

- 1 Corinthians 13
- Colossians 3:14

The Powerful Testimony of Loving Deeds:

- Matthew 5:16
- John 13:35
- 1 John 3:18



PERSONAL APPLICATION

"God's love differs from man's love in three important respects: it is unchangeable, unfailing, and everlasting," Mr. Moody writes, yet many Christians believe God's love is conditioned on whether we live a "good" life. Mr. Moody himself experienced this kind of unconditional love firsthand — in the trembling hand of an old man who stopped to bless a homesick ten-year-old boy and remind him that his Heavenly Father loved him. That simple act of grace left an impression that lasted a lifetime.

Use the following questions to examine your own understanding of God's love, and to identify ways He may be calling you to show a deeper and more genuine love for others.

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

The core text of this Bible study—Mr. Moody's teaching on love as the greatest virtue—was originally published in *The Ladies' Home Journal* in 1897. As a work published over 125 years ago, Mr. Moody's original text is in the public domain and free for anyone to use. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version, also in the public domain.

ABOUT THIS TEXT

This edition faithfully preserves D.L. Moody's original teaching. We have made minimal edits for modern clarity—correcting obvious errors, updating a few archaic terms, and adjusting occasional grammatical inconsistencies—while keeping Mr. Moody's voice and meaning completely intact.

WHAT'S NEW IN THIS EDITION

This 2025 edition includes:

- Updated formatting for modern readers
- Reflection and study questions
- Organized Scripture references
- Introductory paragraphs to sections titled “Mr. Moody’s Bible Verses,” “Read More About ...,” and “Personal Application”

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