



Lesson 2: SPIRIT OF LOVE-LOVING GOD.

Wherever God's Spirit is at work in the world, people are drawn more deeply to love....beginning with loving God.

Read: Psalm 116

Some people have a problem with the word **God** because of their confused image and belief. Some imagine God to be an angry old man with a beard, oppressing women and minorities, promoting discrimination and war and blessing the destruction of the planet.

- They say – how can I love the curator of a religious museum who has a taste for the outdated, archaic, dour and dusty?
- How can I love the host of an unending religious broadcast where everyone is artificially smiling excessively, unrealistically happy and desperate for you to send in your next generous financial contribution?
- How can I love a testy border guard who won't let new arrivals through heaven's passport control office unless they correctly answer a lot of technical doctrinal questions with a score of 100%?

Sadly, many have turned the word **GOD** into a name for something that is ugly, small, boring, elitist, wacky, corrupt or violent....the very opposite of what it should mean.

Maybe the distaste of many for the word **GOD** actually reveals their ultimate longing for who **GOD** really is?

Whatever ember of love for goodness flickers within us, whether feeble or small – that’s what the Spirit works with, until that spark glows warmer and brighter.

From the tiniest beginning, our whole lives – our whole hearts, minds, souls and strength – can be set aflame with love for GOD.

But we may feel a little intimidated in actually loving God, even if we have always believed.

When we love someone, we naturally move towards them in a special way. We appreciate their qualities, respect and honour their dignity, enjoy their company and support their dreams and desires.

To be “in love” is to be in a mutual relationship.

To be in love with God means to appreciate all of His qualities, honour and respect His dignity, enjoy His presence and want to know more of God’s heart.

First step: This begins when we begin to move toward God, taking a first step by simply showing up, becoming aware of God’s presence and presenting ourselves to God.

All you need to say is: God, here I am or God here You are or even God, here we are, together.

Second step: This is to show appreciation and gratitude for what it means to have God in our lives. We should never take Him for granted.

You can try to begin each day and each meal with a prayer of thankful appreciation and thanks.

Third step: This is to cultivate, honour and respect God – not just gratitude for what He does or gives us, but respect for God’s dignity and honour for His character.

You can try to begin and end each day with a few moments of praise. A single simple word like Hallelujah might help or even a Wow!

Read: Romans 8:1-17

If love means supporting the other's dreams and plans, then we show our love for God by expressing our support for what He desires.

When we pray "May Your kingdom come, may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" we are supporting God.

If love is about mutuality, then we open ourselves up to God to support our dreams and desires. Every time we cry out "Help me Lord!" we are expressing love for God.

If love is about trust, then we share the vulnerable aspects of our lives with God – our deepest fears, doubts, emptiness and disillusionment.

Every time our hearts cry out "When Lord? How long Lord? Or Why Lord? we are sharing our pain with God rather than withholding it and this turns out to be an expression of love.

Remembering our true identity in the family of creation, being rooted and grounded in love, we experience the multidimensional love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge and we are filled with the very fullness of God.

In that fullness, we simply breathe, be and let be.

This is life in the Spirit, being in love, with God – true aliveness indeed.

Read: Ephesians 3:14-21.

Engage:

What one thought or idea from today's lesson intrigued, provoked, disturbed or challenged you?

Think of a time when you felt most "in love" with God.

How do you respond to the comparison between human love and loving God?

Activate:

Use some of the simple words from this lesson to practice postures of love for God.

Meditate:

Invest a few minutes to practice simply being with God – in silence, in love.

When your mind distracts you and wanders off, simply acknowledge that has happened and turn your attention back to God, being aware of God's constant loving attention toward you.

You are encouraged to respond to some of the questions and share them with other's in our growing Bible Study Group.

These can then lead to deeper discussions and growth for all of us.