



SUNDAY
SCHOOL *Superintendent*

Winter Quarter | December | January | February 2026-27

Sunday School Superintendent

WINTER QUARTER

December 2026, January, February 2027

Editorials	2
The Love of God	
UNIT 1: Love Sends a Savior	
Dec. 6—The Lord's Compassion—Lam. 3:1-3, 19-39	4
Dec. 13—Salvation for Zion—Isaiah 62:1-12	6
Dec. 20—Light of the World (Christmas)—John 1:1-14	8
Dec. 27—Born of the Spirit—John 3:1-21	10
UNIT 2: Jesus' Love for the World	
Jan. 3—The Good Shepherd—John 10:1-18	12
Jan. 10—A New Commandment—John 13:31-38	14
Jan. 17—Keep My Commandments—John 14:15-24	16
UNIT 3: Living Out God's Love	
Jan. 24—Do Not Walk in Darkness—1 John 2:3-17	18
Jan. 31—Do Not Sin—1 John 3:1-10	20
Feb. 7—Love Your Brother and Sister—1 John 3:11-24	22
Feb. 14—Love and Trust in God—1 John 5:1-12	24
Feb. 21—Walk in Love—2 John 1:1-13	26
Feb. 28—Walk in Truth—3 John 1:1-14	28
Paragraphs on Places and People	30



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Editorials

BY ALEX JOVANOVIC

Affections and Actions

In this season of the year, when daylight and sunshine become scarce and the air becomes unpleasantly cold in the northern latitudes, a melancholy mood and thoughts of the dark problems of this world seem to “sneak up” on many of us. We compensate with bright Christmas lights and ornaments, yet those in Christ know that a few colorful bulbs and trinkets do not get to the heart of the matter.

And as Christians are fond of saying, the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart. If the human heart is oriented correctly toward its Creator and fellow man (cf. Matt. 22:36-40) and is energized by love toward them, things are as they should be. Yet this profound love is simply unnatural. To feel it, something must first affect the human heart, which is otherwise inclined to selfishness. In other words, this love must come from above.

Our quarter will focus on the issue of love from several angles. In lesson 1, we consider the love of God for His fallen creatures—in particular, for the apostate covenant community.

What happens after God miraculously redeems a people and gives them His laws and land, but they resistantly turn their backs on Him time and time again? Judgment, experienced by the people of Judah when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians,

was the expected outcome, yet the demise was not final. God’s very character, marked by love and faithfulness, formed the foundation for hope.

God wishes all His people to be restored and to bring Him glory. Exile is in a sense a matter of discipline that would lead to a glorious renewal—something He unambiguously promises (lesson 2).

Yet the path to this restoration is most unexpected. God Himself stepped into the time and space of the universe He created—the eternal Word became flesh and brought light to a world plagued by darkness (lesson 3). This is the supreme act of love that would ultimately lead to eternal life for those who put their trust in Jesus. The love of God was shown clearly and purely when He gave His only Son to take on the sin of the world so that those who believe in Him do not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

Certainly, the incarnation and the sacrifice of Christ on the cross are mind-boggling, considering that the Creator of the universe is at the center of them, but another perplexing concept also enters the picture—new birth (lesson 4).

When the benefits of Christ’s work are applied to the individual, he or she experiences a supernatural rebirth facilitated by God’s Spirit, giving him or

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such has given commands to His people. The way to show love for God is to obey His commands (lesson 7).

This demand is not a call for legalism but an appeal to the pursuit of a genuine relationship. Those who habitually disobey God yet claim to be in a relationship with Him show themselves to be liars (lesson 8).

Those who have truly experienced new birth, on the other hand, are God's children, and their affections should drive them to grow in the knowledge of how to please their heavenly Father (lesson 9).

Love for fellow believers becomes a key requirement for those who belong to the family of God, as the body of Christ cannot properly function if hate is present (lesson 10). This is important for more than internal reasons—brotherly love provides vital witness to the outside world. This love is inseparably tied to faith, as one must trust God when obedience seems counter-intuitive and rely on God to provide the strength to continue one's walk (lesson 11). Lessons 12 and 13 focus on how Christians can walk in God's love and truth in a society that disagrees about the meaning of these terms.

Every lesson this quarter is an opportunity to be refreshed by meditating on the incredible love of God for humanity and His willingness to extend the grace that leads to eternal life. Simultaneously, each lesson will challenge Sunday school students to think about their affections and their resulting actions.

Can we say we love God if we refuse to obey His commands? Can we say we love Him if we refuse to love His people? Of course, the answer is no, and our studies and meditations should help us clarify specific ways in which our affections and actions could better align with God's will as we walk in love and truth.

her eternal life and the ability to embark on a journey of growth in true love for God and humanity.

The love of God is shown through not only the provision of eternal life but also His ongoing care. Those who become born again may still experience satanic attacks. Jesus reassured His followers by saying He is the Good Shepherd (lesson 5). He has an intimate connection with those who are His and never abandons them. Instead, lays His life down for them.

The extravagant love that God shows toward His people is ultimately a model of the love He wants them to show for one another. At the Last Supper, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples—a task of a lowly servant—and informed them that He expected them to serve one another in a like manner. Ultimately, they were to love one another as He loved them (lesson 6)—a lofty goal indeed!

Of course, proper love for others is impossible without the prior love for God. God is above all beings, the supreme Ruler of the universe, and as

The Lord's Compassion

Lesson Text: Lamentations 3:1-3, 19-39

GOLDEN TEXT—"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

OPENING MOMENTS

Suggested Song (Adults)

"Great Is Thy Faithfulness"
(Chisholm, Runyan)

Suggested Song (Children)

"I Will Sing of the Mercies of the Lord
Forever" (Fillmore)

Icebreaker

Think of situations in your life that triggered your sense of compassion.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. Affliction and judgment
(Lam. 3:1-3)
2. Hope and mercy (Lam. 3:19-24)
3. Discipline and compassion
(Lam. 3:25-39)

KEY ISSUES

My father was not a strict disciplinarian. One time in my childhood, however, he resorted to unusually harsh punishment. He had warned me for many days not to behave in a certain shamefully inappropriate way, yet I blatantly disobeyed. My father had a tender heart, and he clearly took no pleasure in doing what he then did, yet he believed that he had exhausted all other means. While the discipline was unpleasant, it effectively corrected my behavior while increasing my respect for my father.

The tension between holy God and disobedient humans permeates history. Worse yet, rebelliousness often

comes from within the Lord's covenant community. God often mercifully withholds judgment; at other times, however, He righteously pours wrath on the guilty.

The people of Judah received many warnings regarding their disobedience, but their recalcitrance ultimately resulted in the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. That was God's judgment on them.

The book of Lamentations contains deep emotional reflections on this tragedy. They are not entirely raw outpourings; they are expressed in highly stylized poetry.

Each chapter in Lamentations, including the one we are studying today, is a well-crafted poem, and all except the final chapter are acrostics, with each section beginning with a subsequent letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Although he used poetic form, the prophet Jeremiah wrote from an eyewitness standpoint and vividly described his pain, sympathizing with all of Jerusalem and sharing in its agony.

In the passage we are studying today, Jeremiah used intense metaphors to describe his experience, such as "wormwood," a bitter plant associated with hardship, and "gall" (bitterness). This section shows that it is permissible for God's people to express agony while suffering and anguish, even if that suffering comes from divine discipline.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

Sunday school is an opportunity to study themes that reappear throughout the Bible. One example is the “Day of the Lord,” a time of judgment accompanied by darkness (Amos 5:18; Joel 2:1-2). Lamentations 3:1-3 alludes to this by connecting judgment and darkness. The theme appears in the New Testament exclusively as an eschatological (end-times) event (2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:10), showing that the historic smaller-scale outpourings of God’s wrath were a foretaste of the final judgment.

But things must not stop with lamenting. Hope is a critical ingredient in Lamentations 3. A key change in our passage happens in verse 21, wherein Jeremiah remembered his reason for hope, which then leads into the golden text: “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness” (Lam. 3:22-23).

Note the word “mercies” (vss. 22, 32). The underlying Hebrew word *chesed* primarily means faithfulness, goodness, and graciousness and is one of the key descriptors of God and His character in the Old Testament. Thus, God’s very character is the foundation of hope for restoration.

The writer acknowledged that although God’s judgment could have been more severe, His loving, gracious, and merciful disposition toward His people caused Him to act compassionately.

Jeremiah’s earlier depression then turned to joy as he realized that God’s compassions are “new every morning” (meaning always available to us), and he joyfully declared that the

Lord was his “portion”—his source of meaning and joy and the only foundation of hope (vss. 23-24).

That joyful hope brings the realization that patient endurance paired with genuine humility through the season of discipline—which is only for a time—will result in a greater blessing. God loves His people, and even when suffering comes to them, He will ultimately show compassion (vss. 31-33).

Finally, knowing God’s zeal for holiness and His divine plan to purify His people, we must see a higher purpose in the traumatic event of destruction and oppression by the Babylonian pagans, knowing that all things work together to conform believers to Christ’s image (Rom. 8:28).

BRINGING IT HOME

Even though we are in Christ, we are all imperfect. Thus God will use painful discipline (Heb. 12:4-11) when we persist in sin. When this happens, it is important to recognize discipline’s benefits and embrace it as a loving act meant for our betterment. We can come to this recognition only if we clearly understand His loving, merciful, and compassionate character, which is our source of hope.

As the beloved hymn “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” says, “Thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not.”

Times of discipline should be used to allow God to shape our character as we reflect on the circumstances, discern the error of our ways, repent, and ultimately find ourselves drawn closer to Him.

Finally, we should consider all this in a Christocentric manner. Remind your class that on the cross, Christ experienced the ultimate darkness of judgment on our behalf, thus displaying God’s loving character and providing us with a daily source of hope.