



[Show Slide 1] What is love? That’s kind of a complicated question, right? How would you answer it? Check out this clip from Jimmy Kimmel Live and its attempt to tackle the question:

[Video Clip] Kids Explain: What is Love? (3:25)  
<https://youtu.be/HkUGSNNy4dl>

Does anyone have some kicks to demonstrate?

[Show Slide 3] Here’s the thing: we don’t have to wonder what love means because the Bible defines love for us. In *1 John 4:16 (NLT)*, John wrote, “**God is love.**” But we also know there are different types of love, right? I love my wife, but I also love tacos. I don’t love tacos in the same way I love my wife, right? Both are types of love, but are expressed very differently – hopefully.

We are diving into the book of Genesis today. It’s a massive book with too much to tackle in a handful of weeks! But when you boil it down, Genesis becomes a collection of ancient stories that give us a glimpse into what love is. I think we typically think of it as the beginning of everything; in fact, “Genesis” literally means the origin or beginning of something. What we’re going to see over the next four weeks is that Genesis is the beginning of love; it’s the beginning of God showing us the different aspects of what love is and how He has called us to love.

[Show Slide 4] To set the stage, here are a few basics about Genesis:

- We believe it was written around 3500 years ago.
- It’s part of one larger book, known as the Pentateuch. At that time in history, writings were put on scrolls. But the Pentateuch was too big to fit on one scroll, so it was split into five scrolls. Today we know these as the Old Testament books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
- Genesis is attributed to Moses; tradition says that Moses wrote it, but there is a lot of debate about that. Scholars wonder if he was the author, or if it was written by a handful of authors writing with his authority.

- Genesis is a history book with a theological purpose and message, which means there were different driving motivations shaping it compared to a traditional history book. The stories chosen to be included served that bigger purpose and message, part of which is to show us God's love.

Today, we're going to look at the story of Abraham and Sarah. Their story shows us how love trusts, love has faith, and love brings hope.

[Show Slide 5] *Genesis 11:27-30 (NLT) [highlights from the verses] This is the account of Terah's family. Terah was the father of Abram ... The name of Abram's wife was Sarai ... But Sarai was unable to become pregnant and had no children.*

Abram and Sarai are better known for the names God gave them in Genesis 17, Abraham and Sarah. Abraham is perhaps the biggest name in Jewish history, with more of Genesis focused on his story than anyone else.

[Show Slide 6] *Genesis 12:1-3 (NLT) <sup>1</sup> The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."*

This represents a dramatic shift in Genesis. Up to this point, the focus had been on the whole world, whether it was the creation, the flood, or the tower of Babel. But now, here, the story began to focus on one family. Until now, God had been reacting to and punishing humanity's failures with hints of a future Messiah. Here, God became proactive, beginning in earnest His plan to bring a Messiah to the world and restore humanity to Himself. In so doing, He painted a vivid picture of what His love looks like.

Sarai being unable to become pregnant is an important part of their story. It parallels Christ's arrival. In the same way that Mary became pregnant with Jesus through divine intervention, we will see Sarai become pregnant only through the divine intervention of God. In the same way Jesus brought salvation, Sarai's child would be the way God brought blessing to the world.

What is incredible was Abram and Sarai's faith. Their love for God produced an incredible faith. Genesis records that they picked up and left their homeland and headed to Canaan, a land they didn't know, solely on the basis that God had told them to go. They had faith that God would provide, and that they would build a nation despite Sarai's barrenness. It is easy for us to miss how outlandish these promises were, because we are on the other side of history. We know that God did build a nation through Abram and Sarai, God did provide a Savior, and God did bless the world through them. We know how it worked out. They simply had faith.

**[Show Slide 7]** *Hebrews 11:8-10 (NLT) <sup>8</sup> It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup> And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. <sup>10</sup> Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.*

Throughout Abram and Sarai's story, God reminded them of and emphasized His promises to them – His covenant. This culminated in Genesis 15 where God formalized His commitment to make them into a nation, to provide an heir, to bless the world through them:

**[Show Slide 8]** *Genesis 15:9-10 (NLT) <sup>9</sup> The Lord told him, "Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon."<sup>10</sup> So Abram presented all these to him and killed them. Then he cut each animal down the middle and laid the halves side by side; he did not, however, cut the birds in half.*

**[Show Slide 9]** *Genesis 15:17-18 (NLT) <sup>17</sup> After the sun went down and darkness fell, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses.<sup>18</sup> So the Lord made a covenant with Abram that day and said, "I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt to the great Euphrates River."*

What's described here was an ancient practice, a type of blood oath that represented a solemn and weighty binding of two parties. What's fascinating is that normally a covenant required commitments from both sides, but God's covenant with Abram was unique because it was one-



- Have you ever prayed the way the servant did, asking God for a sign? Is that a way that we should approach God today? Explain.
- Read 2 Corinthians 6:14; explain the concept of a yoke. Why could being “unequally yoked” be a bad thing? When have you seen this happen?
- Do you agree with God’s expectation that as believers, our closest relationships are to be limited to other believers? Why or why not?
- How could this principle be applied to dating relationships?
- What stands out to you about Rebekah? In what ways is she an example to us today?
- God is not directly seen in this story, yet His influence is seen throughout. Have you had a time in your life when you can look back and see God’s guidance and influence in hindsight? What does that teach you for the future?
- How do you think your parent(s) would do picking a spouse for you?
- What do you learn about love from this story?
- Have you ever made an important decision based on someone else’s faith? What was that like?



## Week Four | Joseph

### Genesis 39:21a (NLT)

<sup>21</sup> But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love.

### Genesis 50:20 (NLT)

You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.

### Acts 2:22-24 (NLT)

<sup>22</sup> “People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. <sup>23</sup> But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him. <sup>24</sup> But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip.

### What is Faithful Love?

Even in hard times, God is \_\_\_\_\_

God’s \_\_\_\_\_ may not always feel \_\_\_\_\_

God is in \_\_\_\_\_



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## Week Three | Jacob

### Genesis 28:20-21 (NLT)

<sup>20</sup> Then Jacob made this vow: "If God will indeed be with me and protect me on this journey, and if he will provide me with food and clothing,<sup>21</sup> and if I return safely to my father's home, then the Lord will certainly be my God.

Jacob is a deceiver

Jacob has human conflict AND divine conflict!

### The Big Picture

- A name change means character change
- A name change means submission to God

### The Key to Jacob's Transformation?

God's forgiving love

### Acts 3:19 (NLT)

Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away.

### 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!



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