

The Good and Beautiful God
Chapter 5
God is Love

This chapter begins with a young mother's story of rejection by a church leader and at the end of the chapter we are told how God changed her story to one of restoration—a life of serving the One who first loved her. Her story is real life of how God's love meets us where we are and invites us into relationship with Him. This chapter continues the theme of God's generous heart. The "Love" poem by George Herbert on page 103 and explanation that follows is awesome!

A Gospel message of unconditional acceptance that our author highlights is "The Calling of Matthew" (Matthew 9:9-13). Pharisees were shocked when Jesus called a despised tax collector, someone they saw as unworthy, to be one of His disciples. Notice how Jesus responds to the criticism. The Pharisees' criticism of Jesus welcoming and eating with sinners continues. Jesus responds with a story about the heart of God as seen in the Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32. The father welcomes home the prodigal son before he can make up for his mistakes. These scripture stories and the story of the young mother invite you to consider how your own story has been joined with God's story of redemption.

Last but certainly not least is John 3:16-17, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. This passage has brought comfort to countless people, and is considered by many to be a summation of the entire Bible. Paul echoes this truth when he says in Romans 5:8 "God proves His love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us."

Please read the chapter with an "eye" to God's steadfast love for you whose goodness and mercy fill all your days. Remembering when and why your heart turned to Him can rekindle in you the fire of His love.

Our Soul Training exercise this week is lectio divina, sacred reading of the scriptures. A guest pastor in our church recently incorporated lectio divina in his message. The spiritual exercise is explained at the end of the chapter. If you can, practice this exercise several times this week. The hope is that this way of reading scripture will ignite your learning experience of what God is saying to you through His written word.