



GOD'S GREAT LOVE

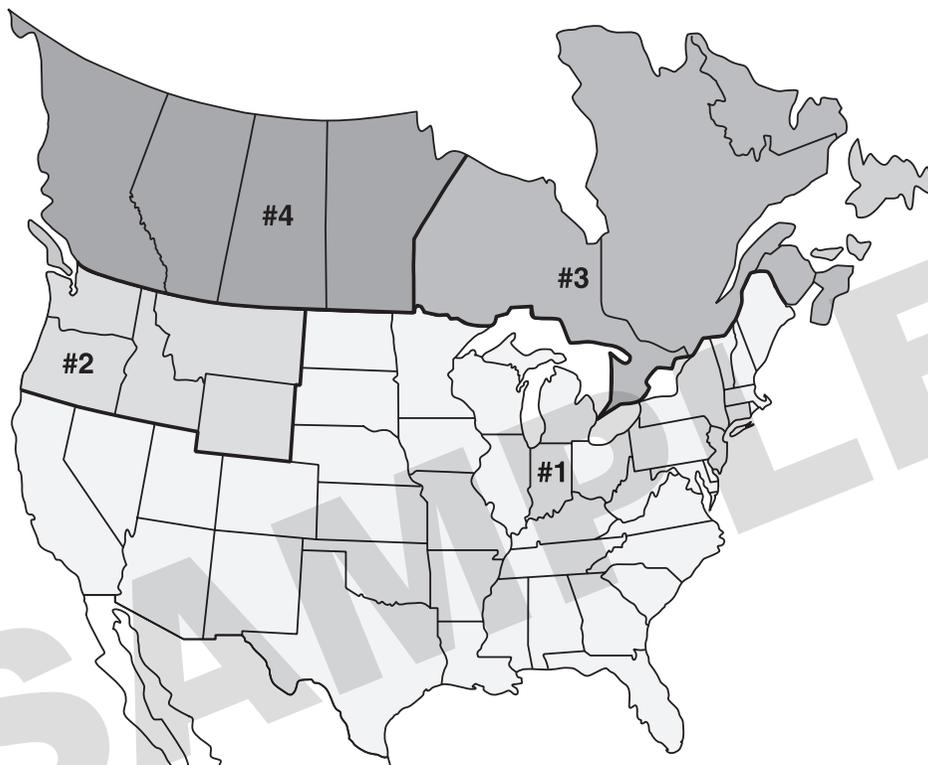
COURSE 1

GOD'S GREAT LOVE

Each human being senses a need for self-worth, acceptance, and love. This 12-lesson course announces the good news—God loves us. Through faith in Christ, we find release from sin and guilt. He heals our hurts and gives us hope. This course encourages the student to begin the new life in Christ.

Gospel Echoes Team Prison Ministry

GOSPEL ECHOES TEAM REGIONAL MAP



THIS CORRESPONDENCE COURSE PROVIDED BY:

REGION 1

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(U.S.A. except Oregon, Washington, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming)

REGION 2

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HOME BIBLE STUDIES

ENROLL in Home Bible Studies, EARN a certificate and a Bible with your name in gold on the cover by completing the FIRST FOUR COURSES.

1. GOD'S GREAT LOVE

Each human being senses a need for self-worth, acceptance, and love. This 12-lesson course announces the good news—God loves us. Through faith in Christ, we find release from sin and guilt. He heals our hurts and gives us hope. This course encourages the student to begin the new life in Christ.

3. SHARING YOUR CHRISTIAN FAITH

Our influence helps others decide for or against becoming followers of Christ. Many Christians, however, hesitate to share their faith because they lack the knowledge and skills to go about it with confidence. These 12 lessons help students become positive witnesses and, at the same time, enjoy the excitement of knowing that God uses them to touch the lives of their friends and neighbors. This course emphasizes the important influence of speech, attitudes, lifestyle, etc.

2. GROWING IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The decision to follow Christ opens the door to an exciting future. These 12 lessons offer practical insights for living the new life in Christ—finding security, gaining self-confidence, discovering God's will for our life, maximizing our strengths, etc. A valuable teaching tool for new believers.

4. GROWING TOWARD MATURITY

We can become all that God wants us to be—if we're willing to continue growing. Jesus is our example. This course shows how to value self and others, build trust, face fear, control the tongue, find contentment, learn love, feel good about our sexuality, handle fear, experience forgiveness, and more. Twelve lessons.

Ready for More?

The following advanced courses are available by request:

5. THE CHRISTIAN WAY IN MARRIAGE

God planned marriage to be a fulfilling, lifelong experience, but many couples today experience heartache, separation, and divorce. This 12-lesson course outlines God's blueprint concerning sexual relationships, choosing a life companion, building a strong marriage, and relating to children. Several lessons deal with conflict between husbands and wives and parents and children, faithfulness between partners, and forgiveness for unfaithfulness. Certificate given.

7. GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS

Who is Jesus, and how can he help us? Most scholars believe Mark's Gospel was the first written account of Jesus' life and teachings. Jesus brought healing and wholeness to the men and women of His day. That good news is still available today. This 12-lesson book study is an excellent one for persons who express interest in becoming Christians, or for Christians who want to enrich their life. Certificate given.

6. GROWING THROUGH BIBLE STUDY

Life need not be sterile or stagnant. The Bible, a neglected treasure, can put new zip into a tired life. This 12-lesson course, written by a seasoned Bible student and scholar, shows how to set aside time to "dig" into this largely unexplored treasure. An excellent tool for personal enrichment or for group study and discussion. Certificate given.

8. THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

In what way does the Holy Spirit work in the life of the believer? This 15-lesson study examines the life of the early church—how the Spirit empowered the early disciples to witness for Christ, to overcome fierce opposition, to solve problems as Gentiles were brought into the church, to build the community of faith, and to face death for Christ. This thrilling story of Acts contains helpful insight for Christians today. Certificate given.

A SPECIAL CERTIFICATE

is given when the whole series of these eight courses is completed.

SAMPLE

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SAMPLE

LESSON 1

GOD LOVES YOU

The story is told of an Italian orphan who wanted more than anything else to come to America. One day the boy met an American. They became friends. They talked a lot about life in Italy and America. The man grew to like the boy.

When the man mentioned going to school, the boy objected. “I don’t want to go to school,” he said. And the man said gently, “In my family, we try to learn as much as we can.”

Another time they talked about being honest. “In my family, we respect the property of other people,” the man exclaimed. And he grew to love the boy.

They also talked about being kind. “In my family, we try to help people—not hurt them,” the man said. The boy began to love him.

One day the man offered to adopt the boy and take him to America. He left the decision up to the boy.

“I do love you,” he said. “And I would like to be your son. But I’m not sure I can live like you do.”

The man reached out his arms. He said, “If you really want me for your father, you can be my son. Together we can learn how to live.”

The message of this course is similar to the story. The course doesn’t begin with a boy, however, but with a heavenly Father who loves people and wants to have a personal relationship with them. He wants us to be part of His family. And together we can learn how to live.

Our heavenly Father created each of us to share His love with us. His love for us will go on forever. He keeps constant watch over us. From the moment we are born—God is there.

*“You created every part of me;
you put me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise you because you are to be feared;
all you do is strange and wonderful.
I know it with all my heart.
When my bones were being formed,
carefully put together in my mother’s womb,
when I was growing there in secret
you knew I was there—
you saw me before I was born.*

*The days allotted to me
had all been recorded in your book,
before any of them ever began” (Psalm 139:13-16)*

We are very important and special to God. He sees us all as persons of great value and worth. God’s love doesn’t depend on what we do or don’t do. He values each of us equally—presidents, housewives, businessmen, factory workers, educators, preachers, ditch diggers, etc. He loves us all.

This first lesson gives us the story of the whole course in a nutshell. We want to discover how we can respond to God’s love. Why do we need God and how can we have a loving relationship with Him? How can we come to know God as “our Father”? Are the steps difficult or easy?

The following lessons tell the story of God’s love in more detail. All Scripture references are taken from the *Good News Bible*—Old Testament copyright © American Bible Society 1976; New Testament copyright © American Bible Society 1966, 1971, 1976. Used by permission. The line drawings by Annie Vallotton are from the *Good News Bible* (Today’s English Version), copyright by permission of the American Bible Society.

“I love you,” God is saying to us. “If you make up your mind that you want Me for your Father, you can be My child and learn My ways.”

**God’s love
doesn’t depend on
what we do or
don’t do.**

SELF-TEST

1. The following are true about God’s love *except* one. Check (✓) these correct statements about God’s love.
 a. God’s love will go on forever.
 b. God’s love was with us the moment we received life.
 c. God’s love depends on what we do or don’t do.
 d. God’s love is for everyone.
2. Mark each statement *true* or *false*.
 a. God wants us to be part of His family.
 b. God values us equally.
 c. God keeps constant watch over us.
 d. God loves the people in important jobs more than others.

A. GOD—OUR DEEPEST NEED

God made us because He wanted friendship—persons to talk to. He wanted persons to love and who could love Him in return. He wanted a personal relationship with each of us.

God made us to have freedom of choice. He made us to be respectable persons. He placed us on the earth to cultivate and care for it.

Instead of responding to God's love and obeying Him, Adam and Eve, our first parents, chose to break their relationship with God and be independent. Since then sin has become a part of all people—and is causing a deep separation between us and God. As sinners, we find ourselves alone, hopeless, and despairing without Him.

God still continues to love us, and He wants to help us out of our desperate situation. He wants to lift us out of a life of sin and death. We need His help. We need God!

B. JESUS—THE WAY TO GOD

Because God loves us so much, He Himself once entered a human body like ours and came to this world. He came to us through His Son, Jesus. Jesus could identify with us in our aloneness, in our joys, and in our sorrows. God was in Jesus showing us His love and making a way to bring us back into His family once again. Jesus is the true Shepherd bringing the lost back into God's fold again (Matthew 18:10-14).

The climax of God's love for us came with Jesus, His Son, willingly giving Himself to die for our sins. Jesus was crucified on the cross as our substitute. He took our place and made a way for us to have a personal relationship with God. John 3:16 describes God's love in this way:

“For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die, but have eternal life.”

God laid on Jesus the guilt and sins of every one of us. When we turn to Jesus, He washes our lives clean—just as if we had never sinned! Jesus Christ came to bring us new life! In Him we can have a new relationship with God.



*“He will go . . . and look for the lost sheep”
(Matthew 18:12)*

SELF-TEST

3. Check the correct statements. When God made us—
- a. He wanted friendship.
 - b. He gave us freedom of choice.
 - c. He wanted a personal relationship with us.
 - d. He made us responsible to care for the earth.

4. Check the correct statements. We need God because we are—
_____ a. hopeless without Him.
_____ b. sinners.
_____ c. good enough to deserve Him.
_____ d. separated from Him.
5. Mark each statement *true* or *false*. Because Jesus was crucified on a cross in our place, we can—
_____ a. be a part of God’s family.
_____ b. have a personal relationship with God.
_____ c. sin, but not feel guilty.
_____ d. begin a new life.



C. REPENTANCE—TURNING TO GOD

When we see just how much God loves us and realize our need of Him, we have taken the *first* step in becoming a part of God’s family. The *second* step is to repent of our sins and turn to God.

Repentance is like this example: If in traveling we find ourselves going the wrong way, the wisest thing to do is to turn around. If we are sincere and genuine in our repentance, our whole attitude toward God will change. We will want to learn what pleases Him as we respond to His love for us.

D. CONFESSION—TURNING FROM EVIL

The *third* step in becoming a part of the family of God is to confess our sins and turn from evil. First John 1:9 says, “But if we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise and do what is right: he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing.”

Confession is telling God that we want Him to be our Father and that we are changing directions in turning to Him. We can tell Him that we are very sorry about the sins that have hurt our relationship. We want to be done with sinning once and for all!



SELF-TEST

6. Check *one* correct statement. After we have realized our need of God, the next step toward becoming a part of God’s family is to—
_____ a. keep going the same direction.
_____ b. repent of our sins and turn to God.
_____ c. do what we want to do.
_____ d. keep the same attitude.
7. Complete the two following sentences. If we are sincere in our repentance, our attitude toward God will _____.

8. To become a part of God's family we must _____
_____.



E. GOD'S PROMISES—OUR HOPE

In the verse from 1 John 1:9 we learn that God will keep His promise of forgiveness. Now that we have turned to Him through confession, we can believe that He will keep His promise.

Romans 10:9 says, "If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from death, you will be saved."

We can have confidence that God will do what He says He will. We can have faith in Him who loves us so and wants us to be part of His family. This is the *fourth* step in our way to a new life.

F. FORGIVENESS—OUR RELEASE

When we believe God's promises, we trust Him for forgiveness. This is the *fifth* step in becoming a child of God.

God begins to change our lives when He forgives us. In Jesus Christ, He releases us from our sins. God says that if we believe in Jesus, every sin we have ever done—or that we might do—is totally and completely paid for. After we ask and receive His forgiveness, He looks at us as being clean. Ephesians 1:7, 8 says, "For by the death of Christ we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven. How great is the grace of God, which he gave to us in such a large measure!"

Because God forgives us, He does not hold our sins against us (Isaiah 43:25). We no longer need to feel guilty, because God has dealt with our past. We can now trust in God rather than in how we feel.

Because God forgives us, we can forgive ourselves. We belong to the family of God. God is our Father. We can trust Him to guide us and teach us His ways.

An important part of belonging to God's family is the fellowship we can have with our "brothers and sisters." Together we share a

relationship with God. This fellowship is part of God's plan for us. He wants us to depend upon each other, as well as our Father. We share our needs and problems. We share how we are experiencing Jesus in our lives. Seeing Jesus in others, we find hope and are freed to trust Him more.

When we have this kind of relationship with others, our fellowship with Jesus grows, too. Ephesians 4:13 says, "And so we shall all come together to that oneness in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God; we shall become mature people, reaching to the very height of Christ's full stature." These, then, are the steps we can take to be saved and become a member of God's family. This is the way we can have a personal relationship with Him as our Father.

Because God forgives us, He does not hold our sins against us.

It is our decision whether or not we want to take these steps. We need not be in a church or any other religious building to decide to follow Jesus. We can talk to God anywhere and He'll be listening. And we can be sure He'll keep His promise.



SELF-TEST

9. Check the correct statements. When we believe God's promise we can—
- _____ a. know that God will do what He says He will.
 - _____ b. have faith in Him.
 - _____ c. have forgiveness.
 - _____ d. expect nothing to happen.
10. Mark each statement *true* or *false*. When God forgives us, He—
- _____ a. frees us to change our lives.
 - _____ b. releases us from guilt.
 - _____ c. frees us to forgive ourselves.
 - _____ d. does not hold our sins against us.



TO THINK ABOUT

1. In what ways have you felt God's love?
2. How does Jesus' life on earth express God's love?

SAMPLE



INSTRUCTIONS

1. You will not be graded according to the amount of time it takes you to complete the course. We encourage you to study each lesson in the course thoroughly, taking an hour or more for each one. While studying these lessons, use your New Testament or Bible to study the references cited in the lessons. (If you do not have one, check with your chaplain. If he does not have one, you can borrow or request one from the regional address in the front of the book.)

Note: The Bible is printed in various translations and your answers will not be counted wrong simply because the wording is different, as long as the meaning is the same.

2. Answer the questions at the end of the lesson text and compare your answers with those at the back of the book to see how much you have learned. These are for self-evaluation and are not to be sent in for grading.

3. Complete the removable test sheets (in center section) as you go through the course. Upon completion of all the test sheets, check with your chaplain and he will:

- return the test sheets to the grading center for your institution or
- advise you to send it to regional address in the front of the book or give you the address of your grading center.

4. If your chaplain does not have the next course, be sure to request it from your grader when you return the test sheets by indicating on the form below.



(Cut and detach)



PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM

Grading: Return only test sheets to Chaplains for mailing.
Does Chaplain stock next course? Yes No

IF YOU TRANSFER, and are continuing your Home Bible Studies, we must have your new address. This form is provided for you to fill out if you are transferring and wish to receive your course at a different address. By doing this, it will also help to assure you of receiving your certificate and Bible.

NEW transferring address

Name _____ Number _____

Institution _____

Address _____

Old Institution _____



GOD'S GREAT LOVE

GOSPEL ECHOES TEAM

Name _____

Inmate # _____ Block # _____ Cell # _____

Institution _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

TEST SHEET

COURSE 1

TEST FOR LESSON 1

1. Mark *true* or *false*.

- _____ a. God created us to share His love.
- _____ b. God watched over us even before we were born.
- _____ c. God places greater value on some persons than others.
- _____ d. God wants everyone to be a part of His family.

2. Write John 3:16 in your own words. _____

3. Check five steps for finding our way back to God.

- _____ a. Realize our need.
- _____ b. Turn from doing wrong.
- _____ c. Trust our feelings.
- _____ d. Confess our sins.
- _____ e. Give up hope.
- _____ f. Accept God's promises.
- _____ g. Accept God's forgiveness.

4. In the space below, describe the most forgiving person (friend, father, mother, etc.) that you know other than God.

INSTRUCTOR'S
REMARKS

(Turn to the other side)