



Six Actions of Love from Zechariah, the Easter Prophet and Mark the gospel writer.

Zechariah was a prophet who was full of God's love for the people of God who were in exile in a country called Babylon. Mark was one of Jesus' closest friends. Through their letters we can know the same love of God for us today.

God gave Zechariah a message of hope which would change the world. That message pointed forward to Jesus on the cross and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Take your time, don't rush, read the following sections of the love letters slowly and carefully, like you'd read any love letter. First read Zechariah and then the readings from Mark's gospel which are next to each other.



Grab a pen. Do some scribbling and writing and thinking.

We'll be considering how Jesus fulfilled the many prophecies about him.

And we'll be thinking about what God's love is like and how we are to love God and each other?

Prayer for Good Friday

Almighty God, in mercy look on this your family,
for which our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed
and given up into the hands of wicked men and to suffer death upon the cross,
who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.



The love letter of Zechariah and Mark's gospel start with love through repentance.

Zechariah 1:6

But did not my words and my decrees, which I commanded my servants the prophets, overtake your ancestors?

'Then they **repented** and said, "The Lord Almighty has done to us what our ways and practices deserve, just as he determined to do.'"

Mark 1:14-15

Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. **Repent** and believe the good news!'

Q. What comes to mind when you hear the word **repent** or **repentance**?

Stop and think. Don't turn the page yet. Are your thoughts about repentance positive or negative? Why do you think that way?

Repentance is a wonderful love word. It means turning back to God in love.

Repentance is what we do BEFORE we say sorry after a fight, hug each other and promise to try not to do wrong again. Repentance is realising what we have done wrong and turning back to someone.

Ask God to show you ways he wants you to love Him and others through repentance.

Write in this space any way God is calling you show love to someone through repentance and ask him to help you do it.



God's love for Joshua the high priest and the love Jesus has for you, forgiveness.

Zechariah 3:3-5

Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. The angel said to those who were standing before him, 'Take off his filthy clothes.'

Then he said to Joshua, 'See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you.' Then I said, 'Put a clean turban on his head.' So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him.

Mark 2:9-12

Which is easier: to say to this paralysed man, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Get up, take your mat and walk"? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.' So he said to the man, 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.' He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God.

Q. Without thinking about God or how God sees you, just thinking about yourself, your self-esteem, or self image, do you think you are a good person or bad person? Do you feel clean or dirty? Do you feel proud or ashamed, loveable or unlovable?

Stop and think. Don't turn the page yet. Why do you feel this way about yourself?

God's love for us is amazing. He sees all people like he sees Joshua. He sees our badness, our dirty secrets and filthy choices and he chooses to forgive.

Forgiveness is one of the greatest acts of love. Forgiveness is what we feel in our hearts towards any bad, dirty, filthy people in our lives. Forgiveness is choosing to feel differently about people who have hurt us.



Ask God to show you ways he wants you to know His forgiveness.

Write in this space any way God is calling you show love to someone through forgiveness and ask him to help you do it.

God shows His love for us by being merciful and just.

Zechariah 7:4-5, 8-10

Then the word of the Lord Almighty came to me: 'Ask all the people of the land and the priests, "When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted?"

And the word of the Lord came again to Zechariah: 'This is what the Lord Almighty said: "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other."

Mark 12:28-33

'Of all the commandments, which is the most important?'

'The most important one,' answered Jesus, 'is this: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself." There is no commandment greater than these.'

...to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.'

Q. Do you love doing religious duties or do you love God and other people?

Stop and think. Do you think it is more important to have high standards or to live and let live?

It feels like a tough choice between high standards and letting people live, but God's love makes the choice easy. We are to act justly and love mercy.

First, act justly. This means trying to keep the high standards of God ourselves. Do you know and keep the 10 commandments out of love or religious duty?

Second, show mercy. This means not punishing people if they break God's law. Showing mercy is loving people by not treating them in the way they deserve.

We all tend to get this upside down. We set high standards for other people but show ourselves great mercy, excusing our own bad behaviour.

Ask God to show you ways he wants you to love others by being just and merciful.

Write in this space any way God is calling you to show love to someone by acting justly (high standards for yourself) and showing mercy to them.



God promised to change our hard hearts through grief flowing from love

Zechariah 12:10-12

'And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be as great as the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. The land will mourn, each clan by itself.

Mark 15:40-41

Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: 'Before the cock crows twice you will disown me three times.' And he broke down and wept.

Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs.

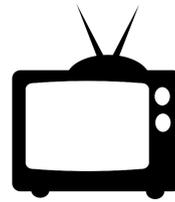
Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. (John 20:11)

Q. When you think of the way Jesus was treated by religious leaders, judges, false witnesses, brutal soldiers and even his friends, who deserted him, how do you feel?

Stop and think. How can we say we love God if we do not weep or grieve for Jesus?

Ask God to love Him and others by softening your heart when you see injustice and brutality, especially the ways Jesus was abused.

Write in this space where God has shown you he wants you to love him by standing up for truth and justice for someone.



The love of God is shown in what we love and live for

Zechariah 13:1-4

‘On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.

‘On that day, I will banish the names of the idols from the land, and they will be remembered no more,’ declares the Lord Almighty. ‘I will remove both the prophets and the spirit of impurity from the land...

‘On that day every prophet will be ashamed of their prophetic vision.

Mark 16:6-8

‘Don’t be alarmed,’ he said. ‘You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, “He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.”’

Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

Q. Whose do you listen to most? Jesus or other prophets, politicians or newsreaders?



The sign of the Holy Spirit is a deep desire to seek the love of Jesus and to cleanse the land of messages of fake love, fake hope and fake visions.

Ask God to help you seek the true love, true hope and true visions of Jesus above all else.

Write in this space any fake message or conspiracy, fake hope or fake vision which Jesus wants you to cleanse from your life and this land.

Six love actions: Repentance, forgiveness, justice, mercy, grief over the sin which killed Jesus and love of the truth.

Prayer for Good Friday

Almighty and everlasting God,
by whose Spirit the whole body of the church is governed and sanctified,
receive our prayers which we offer to you
for the many different members of your holy church
so that every one in his vocation and ministry
may truly and devoutly serve you through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Merciful God, you have made all people
and hate nothing that you have made,
nor do you desire the death of sinners
but rather that they should be converted and live:
have mercy on all who do not know you
or who deny the faith of Christ crucified.
Take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart,
and contempt for your Word
and bring them home to your fold, blessed Lord,
so that we may all become one flock
under one shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.