



PREVIEW

CCO FAITH STUDY SERIES
PARTICIPANT GUIDE

DISCOVERY

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Discovery Participant Guide

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Feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola

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The cover image chosen for *Discovery* is a sunrise. It represents our desire for the person and presence of Jesus to be unveiled and discovered in the hearts of all. *Discovery* participates in the mission of St. John the Baptist:

*'And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.*

*By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.'*

Luke 1:76-79

*The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness —
on them light has shined.*

Isaiah 9:2

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*To St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Francis Xavier
who longed for the name of Jesus
to be proclaimed and exalted the world over.*

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***DISCOVERY* Small Group Information**

TIME:

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PLACE:

LEADER:

PHONE NUMBER:

EMAIL:

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PARTICIPANTS:

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LESSON 1

God's Love

Introduction

Christian faith is built upon the love of God. God's love is the central message of Christianity and the source of our faith. We need to understand God's love if we are to make sense of anything else the Catholic Church professes.

The expression "God loves you" is familiar to many—so familiar, in fact, that we risk forgetting what it means. If we were to ask at a Christian gathering who thinks God loves them, the majority of people would likely raise their hands. One has to wonder, though, do we *really* know God loves us?

Many people think of God's love in general, vague or detached terms; their experience of it is thus rather thin, shallow and impersonal. Surely, if God is God, his love should give us much more than a vague sense of comfort. It *must* be more than this.

1 What happens in our hearts when we are loved? How are we affected?

God's Personal Love

God's love for us is personal, proven, merciful and offered. We will look at these aspects of God's love throughout this faith study. It is important to understand all of them in order to appreciate the true character of God's love for us. It can be difficult to believe that God loves us as individuals and knows and cares about our personal lives. The truth is that he knows each of us by name. He knows all the details of our lives, even to the number of hairs on our heads! He loves us and delights in us individually. We need to hear these truths.

2 Write down what strikes you about God's personal love in these passages:

JEREMIAH 29:11

ISAIAH 49:15-16

PSALM 139:1-3

God's Secure Love

3 Write down the qualities of God's love expressed in the following passages:

JOHN 10:10-15

ROMANS 8:35, 37-39

4 How would you describe God's love in light of these reflections, Scripture verses, and any personal experiences?

Our Personal Love for God

We may find it hard to believe that God loves us personally. This is perhaps because we relate to him in an impersonal way, thinking of him as a faraway cosmic entity. Because we don't believe he is personal or accessible, we treat him in a detached and distant kind of way.

5 How would we relate to God if we considered him as a Person (as a close friend)?

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6 Read Matthew 18:2-3. How might we relate to God if we approached him with a childlike heart?

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Summary

God's love for us is very real. *Discovery* will look at how God's love is personal, proven, merciful and offered. In this first lesson, we have focused on God's personal love; his care and concern for each human being is central to our Christian faith. We are invited to be secure in his intimate, unchanging, eternal and unconditional love.

Living It Out

CHALLENGE

Choose one way to relate to God as someone who is personally present in your life.

MEMORIZE JEREMIAH 29:11

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.