

Dear Beloved Middle Schoolers,

Welcome to an exciting journey where we'll dive deep into the incredible love of God! This journey promises to shape our lives, give us strength during tough times, and fill our hearts with purpose. At the heart of it all is God's amazing grace, shown through the forgiveness of our sins that sets us free to live in His loving embrace.

Understanding God's Love as a Gift: Think about the love your parents have for you—they would do anything to see you happy. Similarly, God's love for us is a priceless gift. Ephesians 2:8-9 reminds us that salvation is a gift from God, given freely because of His grace, not because of anything we've done. Key words: salvation, gift, grace. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

God's Guidance through Love: Consider the gentle correction of a true friend—though it might sting, it's meant to help us grow. In the same way, God corrects us out of love, guiding us toward what's right. Proverbs 27:6 tells us that wounds from a friend can be trusted, showing us that correction comes from a place of love. Key words: correction, friend, trusted. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy" (Proverbs 27:6).

Invitation to Freely Love God: Ponder upon the contrast between coercion and invitation. Unlike a king who demands love through fear, God invites us to love Him willingly. Psalm 32 echoes this sentiment, urging us not to be like stubborn animals led by a bit, but to embrace God's invitation with open hearts. Imagine being invited to a party because you're wanted, not because you have to go. That's how God invites us to love Him—willingly and wholeheartedly. Key words: invitation, willingly, open arms. "The LORD says, "I will make you wise and show you where to go. I will guide you and watch over you. So don't be like a horse or donkey, that doesn't understand. They must be led with bits and reins, or they will not come near you." (Psalm 32:8,9)

Choosing to Love God Willingly: Think about what it means to have freedom—to choose without pressure. God wants us to love Him because we want to, not because we have to. John 3:16 reminds us that God's love is an invitation, waiting for us to accept it willingly. Key words: freedom, choose, invitation. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Expressing Love through Action: Consider how God's love inspires us to worship and pursue truth in every aspect of our lives. John 21:15-17 illustrates this beautifully, as Jesus entrusts Peter with the care of His sheep, symbolizing our call to express love for God through tangible acts of service. Key words: worship, truth, serving Quote: "He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' and he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep'" (John 21:17).

Finding Comfort in God's Love: Think about a time when you felt safe and loved—God's love is like that, but even stronger. In John 16:33, Jesus promises us peace, even in the midst of difficult times, reminding us that His love is our source of strength and comfort. Key words: peace, strength, comfort. "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Experiencing Forgiveness through Love: Reflect on times when you've been forgiven for making mistakes—God's love offers us that same forgiveness, no matter what we've done. Psalm 103:12 assures us that God removes our sins completely, showing us His endless love and grace. Key words: forgiveness, sins, grace. "As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12).

Discovering Purpose in God's Love: Consider how knowing you're loved and valued gives your life meaning and direction—God's love does that for us on a grand scale. John 10:10 declares that Jesus came to give us abundant life, filled with purpose and meaning, all because of His incredible love for us. Key words: purpose, abundant life, love. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

As we journey through life, let's hold onto the unfathomable love of God, which guides us, sustains us, and fills our lives with meaning beyond measure. His love is not just a concept—it's a reality waiting to embrace each one of us with warmth and joy.

**With boundless love and blessings,
Mr. Swales**