

THE GOD WHO LOVES ME
GUIDES SERVICE

Noah had just finished escaping the flood that destroyed the world. He had been in the ark with his wife and family and all the animals and was glad to escape; I'm sure he was glad to survive and glad to be out of the smell of the ark, as well! God made a promise to Noah: "I'll never do that again; I'll never destroy the whole earth again by a flood!" To help Noah realise that this promise was serious and a promise that God would keep, God gave Noah a sign: when He saw the rainbow in the sky God said "*Whenever the...*" (*Genesis 9:16*) God will see the rainbow and remember His promise to love the world and keep it safe. Noah knew, from that day on, that God would never let him down. He was not the only one.

Hagar was running away. She was a servant-girl and she was pregnant and her mistress was angry with her and it was even more complicated than that. She decided that the only way out of the mess her life was in, was to run away! So that's what she did! She ran away. God found her in the desert by a well where she was trying to find some water to drink. God spoke to her kindly and carefully; He told her to go back home and that He would help her. God had heard her cry and would help her even when life was hard. She gave God a new name that day: *The God who sees me!* She was cheered up by that.

The crowd had followed Jesus. He'd really been looking for a bit of peace and quiet after a busy time, healing people and helping others. He took His friends away into the hills on their own, but the crowd saw them go and followed them. Jesus welcomed them; He didn't chase them away; He had compassion on them and taught them. Then when it was late, He suggested that His friends give them something to eat. All they had to offer was a little boy's packed lunch of 5 loaves and 2 fishes and so Jesus had the crowd sit down and the story tells us that Jesus took the 5 loaves and 2 fishes, gave thanks to God for this food and divided it up and everyone had enough to eat and there were still 12 baskets' full of leftovers. There were 5000 people in that crowd and Jesus loved them.

These are just three stories of the God who loves us. Sometimes we think that God's love is only for certain people, only for people whose lives are good and sorted. Perhaps we've come through a hard time, life's been a bit of a struggle for a time, someone has been ill, or unemployed, or some such. Like Noah, God's love is for us when life is tough.

Someone else is making your life a misery, someone at work, school, even in your family; you wish they'd stop and maybe even have asked them to stop, but no! Like Hagar, God's love is for us when we just want to run away.

You're wanting to hear something that will make life better; you're wanting to meet someone who will care for you; you're wanting to find meaning and purpose in life. Like the crowd, God's love is for us when we are longing to be loved.

God's love is for all of us. He is the God who loves us. He has shown that to people all through the Bible story and all through history; He is the God who loves us. Best of all, He has loved us so much that He gave us Jesus and that Jesus died for us on a cross. God knows us and God loves us; no matter where we go or what happens to us, or what we do, God loves us; our challenge is to love Him back with all our heart.