

GOD'S LOVE FOR US

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We hear a lot about the love of God: God is love, Jesus loves you, but how do you feel loved by an invisible spirit? Why is it so important to know about God's love for us?

There are many, many verses in the Bible about God's love for us and our response:

John 3:16 "For here is the way God loved the world-he gave his only, unique Son as a gift. So now everyone who believes in him will never perish but experience everlasting life."

Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

John 13:34-35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

1 Cor 16:14 "Do everything in love."

Ephesians 2:4-5 "But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in our transgressions-it is by grace you have been saved."

Ephesians 5:2: "and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

I don't think simply reading these verses in an academic manner will help you understand God's love for us, or prompt any change in us unless we let the Holy Spirit into our heart & soul. If God's love was only academic, it would be nothing but a religion or a fairy tale. When you accept Jesus' gift & invite Him in, you find out He's real, and He really starts to make a difference in your life. God's love is a deep and constant interest towards us producing and fostering a reverential love in us towards God the giver. Then it produces practical love in us towards others, and a desire to help others seek this Giver.

It is God's deliberate, free will choice to love us. There is no reason for Him to do that other than it is His nature. 1 John 4:8 "Whoever does not love does not know God, for **God is love.**"

Love can be known only from the actions it prompts. The King James translation often renders the word love as charity-an action motivated by compassion. I like that because it's specific and actionable. God's giving of his Son to us is an act of love, but not one done in response to our excellence, because we did nothing to deserve that.

Christian love is not exercised from feelings and sometimes runs contrary to natural inclinations. It isn't even given to those for whom we have an affinity. Love seeks the welfare of all and doesn't harm anyone. It seeks an opportunity to do good to all people, especially those who call themselves Christians.

Isaiah 43:25 "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, **for my own sake**, and remembers your sins no more."

God did that 'for his own sake' as noted in Isaiah. I like that, because to me it speaks of a God of principles, ones he adheres to regardless of, and in fact, in spite of, the complete unworthiness of the object of his love. Wow! That is what agape love means!

Agape is called 'the characteristic word of Christianity.' The New Testament describes this attitude of God toward His Son in John 17:26. (Jesus praying for all believers) 'I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that **the love you have for me may be in them** and that I myself may be in them'. The Father's love for Jesus in us, and Jesus in us-now His invisible Holy Spirit is visible in us.

Once we understand and accept this God kind of love it cannot help but produce a response in us. It may take longer in some than others, but it will bear fruit. Galatians 5:22 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law." I think it's important to note that fruit is an agricultural term. Plants don't bear fruit to feed themselves, they bear it to reproduce and feed others. The fruit of God's love in us is to be given to other people.

So, once we've experienced God's love and all it implies, how do we give back to God?

Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:5-6 when the Pharisees asked him to name the greatest commandment in Matthew: 22:37-38. 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.'

John 14:21 "whoever has my commands **and obeys them**, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."

John 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command."

1 John 5:3-4 "True love for God means obeying his commands, and his commands don't weigh us down as heavy burdens. You see, every child of God overcomes the world, for our faith is the victorious power that triumphs over the world." (Passion translation) Therefore, self-will, that is, self-pleasing, is the negation of love to God. The 'world' mentioned here as in 1 John 2:15 & defined in 16 is not the world of people, or the created world, but the world, or realm of sin controlled by Satan & organized against God & righteousness.

So loving God is about obeying His commands-not the ten commandments, because we can't obey those, and Jesus fulfilled them through his death and resurrection. So, what did Jesus command? A couple are love God with everything you've got, and love people as much as you love yourself. You can't do the second without doing the first, and you can't do the first without repenting of your sins (changing your mind) and acknowledging Jesus as the only way to God.

If all we got out of this was God's love and eternal life that would be fantastic! But God promise's more: overcoming the world! God gives us the power to live in the peace and provision of His Kingdom life according to our faith-as outlined in 1 John 5:3-4 above. If your experience of life doesn't seem to line up with all the good things the Bible promises, maybe you need to go back to the beginning and make sure you've repented, gotten saved, and are letting God's love for you permeate your life so it can empower your faith and produce fruit. This is an ongoing process, but God is patient..and HE LOVES YOU!