

God Is Love

"God is Love", but how do we define it? Dictionary defines love as "an intense affection for another person based on familial or personal ties" We love other people, or we say we love other people, when we are attracted to them and when they make us feel good. Notice that a key phrase in the dictionary definition of love is the phrase "based on." This phrase implies that we love conditionally; in other words, we love someone because they fulfill a condition that we require before we can love them. How many times have you heard or said, "I love you because you are cute;" or "I love you because you take good care of me;" or "I love you because you are fun to be with"?

Our love is not only conditional, it is also mercurial. We love based on feelings and emotions that can change from one moment to the next. The divorce rate is extremely high in today's society because husbands and wives supposedly stop loving one another-or they "fall out of love". They may go through a rough patch in their marriage, and they no longer "feel" love for their spouse, so they call it quits. Evidently, their marriage vow of "till death do us part" means they can part at the death of their love for their spouse rather than at their physical death.

Can anyone really comprehend "unconditional" love? It seems the love that parents have for their children is as close to unconditional love as we can get without the help of God's love in our lives. We continue to love our children through good times and bad, and we don't stop loving them if they don't meet the expectations we may have for them. We make a choice to love our children even when we consider them unlovable; our love doesn't stop when we don't "feel" love for them. This is similar to God's love for us, but as we shall see, God's love exceeds the human definition of love to a point that is hard for us to comprehend.

God is Love: How does God Define Love?

The Bible tells us that "God is Love" (1 John 4:8). But how can we even begin to understand that truth? There are many passages in the Bible that give us God's definition of love. The most well known verse is John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." So one way God defines love is in the act of giving. However, what God gave (or should we say, "who" God gave) was not a mere gift-wrapped present; God sacrificed His only Son so that we, who put our faith in His Son, will not spend eternity separated from Him. This is an amazing love, because we are the ones who choose to reject God, yet it's God who mends the separation through His intense personal sacrifice, and all we have to do is accept His gift.

Another great verse about God's love is found in Romans 5:8, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." In this verse and in John 3:16, we find no conditions placed on God's love for us. God doesn't say, "as soon as you clean up your act, I'll love you;" nor does He say, "I'll sacrifice my Son if you promise to love Me." In fact, in Romans 5:8, we find just the opposite. God wants us to know that His love is unconditional, so He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us while we were still unlovable sinners. We didn't have to get clean, and we didn't have to make any promises to God before we could experience His love. His love for us has always existed, and because of that, He did all the giving and sacrificing long before we were even aware that we needed His love.

God is Love: It's Unconditional

God is Love, and His love is very different from human love. God's love is unconditional, and it's not based on feelings or emotions. He doesn't love us because we're lovable or because we make Him feel good; He loves us because He is love. He created us to have a loving relationship with Him, and He sacrificed His own Son (who also willingly died for us) to restore that relationship.

God is Love: How Should we Define Love?

When the Scriptures say, "God is love," they aren't telling us that God is some vague, warm feeling of love. The writers who write the scriptures weren't saying that in our limited form of human love we will find God. And when we say that God defines love, we don't mean that He defines it like dictionary might define something -- we mean that God is the very definition of love itself. There is no such thing as love without

God. As hard as we might try, we cannot define love outside of knowing God. This essentially means that our human definition of love is incorrect.

God is the Creator of all things, and by His very nature, He is love. God says love is unconditional and sacrificial, and it's not based on feelings; therefore, love is not an "intense affection... based on familial or personal ties". To understand what true love is and to be able to truly love others, we must know God, and we can do this through a close personal relationship with Him. We can have that close relationship with God by putting our faith in Jesus Christ, who was God's sacrifice of love for us.

God is Love: God's purpose

The ultimate purpose of God—what God is doing because of His nature of love. "God is fundamentally and essentially LOVE: not merely is loving." . Love is the fundamental essence of His nature and character—His very being. God is perfect in love. God's love is manifested by His absolutely pure desire to care for, share and give. The greatest expression of His love toward humanity is revealed in the purpose for our creation. The apostle John wrote in 1 John 3:1, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" God's purpose for creating humankind is that He wants a family—children. God wants a family of sons and daughters of His own kind. In 2 Corinthians 6:17-18 the apostle Paul records this awesome truth when he wrote, "Therefore 'Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.' 'I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.'" God's plan and purpose for human salvation is to offer all humanity the opportunity to become His own sons and daughters in His own family—on His level of life. God's purpose for creating humankind is to give all of us the opportunity to become heirs with Christ, a part of the ruling God family—to become the sons and daughters of God—brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:14-17; Hebrews 2:9-11; Titus 3:7). John recorded further in 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He [Jesus Christ] is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Once we receive the Holy Spirit, God considers us His children; but we must complete a process of spiritual development before the fullness of the process of birth into God's family can occur. Our destiny (if we submit to God and go through the process of conversion) is to become a member of the God family like God's firstborn. If we inherit life in God's family, we will become like God the Father and Jesus Christ. This is why God created us the way They did.

In Genesis 1:26 we read, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion.'" We were patterned after God's image and likeness. With power and authority in the family of God also comes the requirement that all must be done in love, not in selfishness, pride, greed or arrogance. We must become like God in character and nature if we are to become like Him in being!

God is Love: True Love Only Comes Through a Relationship With Him

God is Love! As such, true love -- God's love -- can be summed up in this passage of scripture: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4:7-11). If you want to know this love - true love -- get to know God. He is ready to pour out His love on you, and He wants to teach you how to love others as He loves you.

God is love. God in His love wants us to become His sons and daughters. All we have to do to become His children—to become at one with Him—is to learn to love Him, His family and His creation, as He loves. "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me" (John 17:22-23).

God is Love: To love God and Love neighbour

To receive this incredible gift of eternal life in the family of God, all that God wants to see us do is to learn to grow toward loving Him as much as He loves us. The question that must be answered is, How does God want us to show love toward Him? God answers that question in His Word. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3).

"Loving God" and "keeping His commandments" are two truths that are often linked in the Bible in the Old and New Testaments. "Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess. ... You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:1, 5).

"And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?" (Deuteronomy 10:12-13).

"Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you. ... And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. ...

"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them" (Deuteronomy 30:1, 6, 19-20).

"And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, and said, 'O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments'" (Daniel 9:4).

"'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?' Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets'" (Matthew 22:36-40).

"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:3-6). These passages are just a sampling of the many scriptures that link these truths.