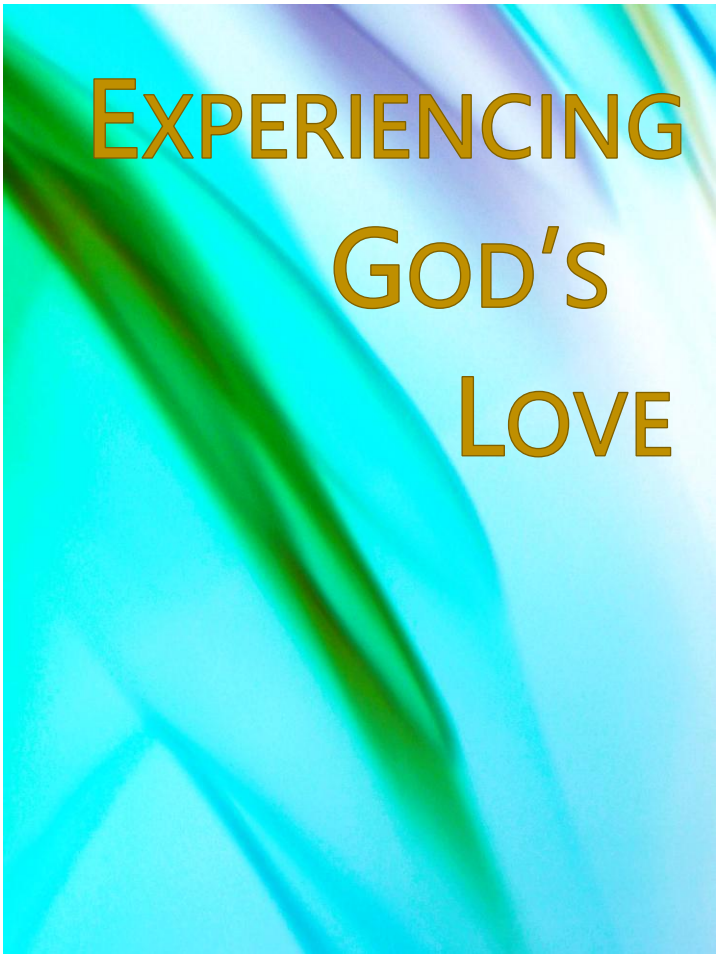

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LifeinJesus.net

‘Experiencing God's Love’
by
Katherine Hilditch

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Preface

As God’s children, we have a love relationship
with Him through Jesus.
We know He loves us
and we believe He loves us,
but do we experience His love?
Find out how you can ‘know Christ’s love which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.’
(Ephesians 3:19)

Experiencing God's Love

God loves you. Just three words that hold such a depth of meaning and the potential of such intimacy in our relationship with God through Jesus. Before I share with you about my own experience of God's love, read these verses that tell us of God's totally unconditional love for everyone – for me and for you.

1 John 4:8 – '*God is love*.'

John 3:16 – "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only born Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life*."

Romans 5:8 – '*God commends his own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*.'

Romans 5:5 – '*God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us*.'

1 John 3:1 – '*See how great a love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God!*'

In my writing I often refer to born-again believers being in a love relationship with God. In John 3:16 Jesus tells us that – "*God so loved the world, that he gave his only born Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life*." It was God's love for you and for me and for every person who has ever lived and is living and ever will live, that sent Jesus to this earth to take our sins on Himself and suffer God's punishment for them. Because He faithfully endured the sufferings of torture and the Cross for us, we are forgiven and can have eternal life. In John 17:3 Jesus explains what this means – "*This is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and him whom you sent, Jesus Christ*." Eternal life isn't just living forever; it's knowing God and knowing Jesus, both here and now on earth and through all eternity. And it isn't just knowing about Them or

believing that They love you; it's knowing God and Jesus in a relationship. It's experiencing a love relationship with Them.

I always went to church since I was a baby. My family's life was based around the church to a large extent and I was content with that. I believed in God and in Jesus and took it for granted that I was a Christian.

But when I was eighteen, I went away to college to train as a teacher and there I met Christian students who 'knew' Jesus. They loved Him and experienced His love for them. They had a joy and peace that I'd never seen before and I hadn't the foggiest idea where they were coming from. My reaction wasn't a healthy one. I didn't ask them how I could experience what they had. Instead, I became really angry.

I was angry with my home church because, having attended it and been part of it for so many years, I had never learnt about experiencing a relationship with God. I couldn't even have explained what 'Jesus died for you' meant. And I was angry with God because of this. Ultimately I blamed Him. Of course it wasn't His fault and I shouldn't have been angry with Him. There is never a reason to be angry with God — I know that now. He never sends the bad stuff, only the good. John 10:10 tells us – "*The thief only comes to steal, kill, and destroy. I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly*."

God was always on my side and had always wanted me to experience a love relationship with Him. In Jeremiah 31:3 He says – "*Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore I have drawn you with loving kindness*." What a beautiful picture. His love for me and for you is everlasting and because of that love, He is always drawing us with loving-kindness. But I didn't know any of this at the time and angry I was.

The anger built up inside me over some months and it wasn't good. I never let it show and, as far as I can remember, I only talked about it with one other person who was a friend and seemed to understand where I was coming from, which didn't help. I didn't talk to one of the Christians who had been the start of it all. Nor did I talk to the pastor of the church near college which I continued to go to, despite how I was feeling. The anger just sat inside me until one day, alone in my college room, I said to God, "I can't do this anymore." Instantly He spoke my name so warmly – "Katherine" and I fell to my knees, completely overwhelmed with His love. It surrounded me and enveloped me and filled me.

My anger had gone, never to return. It wasn't God's fault that I hadn't experienced a love relationship with Him before. He had been drawing me to Himself all my life. My home church may have been at fault in failing to teach about having a relationship with God through Jesus, but maybe it had taught it but I just hadn't had ears to hear. Jesus often said, after He'd been teaching the people, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." In Matthew 23:37 Jesus said – "*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I would have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not!*" This is such a powerful picture of Jesus longing to draw people to Himself, but He never forces us. We always have a choice whether to respond or not. The freedom He gives us is part of His love for us. We need to accept His invitation and allow Him to gather us under His wings. That's what He did for me that day.

Jesus gave His life so that we might know God's love. And once I had experienced that love, thinking about anger and trying to work out who was to blame was completely irrelevant. All of that

just totally disappeared in an instant. It was drowned by the love of God for me personally through Jesus.

We can talk glibly about the power of love, but I experienced it. It was so beautiful. It was strong and gentle at the same time. And it has never left me. There have been times in my life when I've not focused on it, but even during those periods of time when I didn't even think about it, God's love never left me. It was always there to return to. Romans 8:38-39 says – '*For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, [39]nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from God's love which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*.' God's love will never fail. My love relationship with Him continues no matter what. He just keeps loving me.

There have also been times in my life when I've been overwhelmed with His love all over again. My husband and I have been to quite a few Christian conferences over the years and there are two I remember where, once more, I became so aware of God's love for me again in an almost tangible way. It was as though I fell even more deeply in love with Him each time. And I remember lying in bed one night after my husband had passed away, and saying to God, "I know You love me and are always with me, but right now, help me to be more aware of it." And again, those waves of love poured over me.

Each time I've experienced another outpouring of God's love for me, it's changed me. It's taken me deeper into my love relationship with Him through Jesus and each time, it's made a greater impact on my day-to-day life. Now, I believe that a day rarely goes by when I don't think about His love for me. And when I think about it, I feel it inside me, sometimes more strongly, sometimes more gently, but always there.

Just to clarify, when I talk about experiencing God's love, I'm not referring to supernatural manifestations. One evening at church many years ago, small pieces of a gold-coloured shiny substance appeared. They covered the platform at the front. They wound round some strands of one person's hair. They appeared in the palm of some people's hands, including mine. My piece was about five millimetres across and was shaped like a heart. I kept it for quite a while. It was an amazing, exciting demonstration of God's favour and love on us. It was a single event which remained special, but then became something that had happened in the past and eventually I threw my piece of 'gold' away. You can't base your relationship with God on something spectacular but transient. I would never swap knowing God's ever-present love inside me for that kind of experience.

I know deep inside, at an emotional level, that I am truly loved by God and that I am in love with Him. It's something that is so hard to put into words. Romans 5:5 says that – '*God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us*.' That helps me to describe what it feels like — pure and perfect unconditional love being poured over me and into me. It's not just knowing in my head that it's happening — it's knowing it in my heart. It's experiencing it.

In Ephesians 3:14-19 Paul prays for the Christians in Ephesus – '*For this cause, I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, [15]from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, [16]that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that you may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner person, [17]that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, to the end that you, being rooted and grounded in love, [18]may be strengthened to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and height and depth, [19]and to*

know Christ's love which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.'

Paul's prayer for these believers is all about love. He prays that they may be rooted and grounded in love. You can't build your life on a love that you haven't experienced. God wants His love for us to be the firm foundation of every part of our lives.

Then he prays that they may be strengthened to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and height and depth of God's love for them. His love for us is infinite. We will never plumb its depths or scale its heights or reach its edges. But as we experience it more and more, the deeper it settles in our heart and the more it fills us.

Next, Paul prays that they will know Christ's love which surpasses knowledge. This sounds contradictory, but he doesn't mean knowing about the love of Jesus, he's talking about knowing it through experiencing – a deep, inner knowing that goes beyond head knowledge.

And finally, he prays that they may be filled with all the fullness of God. The Bible tells us in 1 John 4:8 that – '*God is love*.' He isn't just loving, He is love. It's His very DNA. So to be filled with all the fullness of God is to be filled with His love. These words contain so much. God wants us to be filled with His love. That's amazing enough. But then he goes on to say filled with all. And then there is even more – God wants us to be filled with all His fullness. This is His desire for everyone, for me and you, that we are filled with all the fullness of God's love!

If you've never had a personal experience of God's love, it doesn't mean that He doesn't love you. He loves you as much as He loves me and all people. Acts 10:34 says – '*God doesn't show favouritism*.' His love for you is constant and faithful. Just go to

His Word and discover for yourself how much He loves you. Keep thanking Him for it and speaking it out and over time, you will find an assurance that settles in your heart and puts down roots and becomes just as powerful as any experience. You will know its personal reality deep inside just as powerfully as I have.

Ever since that day in my college room all those years ago, to some degree or another I've longed for all Christians to know God's love for them in a tangible way. And lately the longing has been increasing. It touches me deep inside that many believers live their lives so faithful to God, but never fall in love with Him, never experience His love pouring over them and into them.

I started writing this not knowing if it was just for me or if it would be a booklet which I would publish publicly on my website and on Kindle. I felt hesitant about doing that because it is so personal, but that's the whole point – God's love isn't general, it is personal. And it's available to be experienced personally by anyone and everyone who will believe it and receive it. And if by sharing my experience, I can help someone else reach out and experience the outpouring of God's love for themselves, then of course I should publish this. So here it is.

2 Peter 3:9 tells us that the Lord is – '*patient with us, not wishing that anyone should perish, but that all should come to repentance*.' Notice that I've underlined the word 'all'? That means every single person, no matter what they've done or not done. And that includes you. Romans 2:11 says – '*For there is no partiality with God*.' And Galatians 3:27-28 says – '*For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ. [28]There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*.'

This relationship, this experiencing God's love, is available to you personally. It's not for me because I teach and write booklets. It's available to me because God loves me, full stop. His love is totally unconditional. It has nothing to do with what I do – it's all to do with what Jesus did as He suffered on the Cross. Romans 5:8 says – '*But God commends his own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*.'

Don't listen to thoughts that say you're not good enough. You are in a love relationship with God, whether you experience it or not, because of what Jesus has done, not what you do. Romans 8:1 says – '*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus*.' When we compare ourselves with others or with what we think we should be, we'll always end up feeling inferior or inadequate. 2 Corinthians 10:12 says – '*But they themselves, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding*.' When those thoughts come, turn away from them. Instead of focusing on yourself, focus on God's unconditional love for you. You are not some kind of 'lesser Christian' if you haven't had a personal experience of God's love. You are just as loved by Him and, if you are born-again, your relationship with God and with Jesus is just as real.

I do not deserve God's love at all and I can never earn it. I can never be good enough or repentant enough. All I had to do was admit I couldn't carry on in my own way and accept Jesus as my Lord and Saviour. And it's exactly the same for you.

Romans 10:9-11 says – '*if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. [10]For with the heart one believes resulting in righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made resulting in salvation. [11]For the Scripture says, "Whoever*

believes in him will not be disappointed."' Notice the word 'whoever' – that includes you. Do this sincerely and you are born-again and have started your love relationship with God your Father and with Jesus your Saviour and you will not be disappointed.

If you've been born-again, you have a love relationship with God through Jesus. It's real. But do you experience it? However long it's been since you accepted Jesus, be it seconds or decades, God wants you to experience your love relationship with Him. He's drawing you with His loving-kindness, asking you to lay down all the questions and doubts and maybe anger and simply allow yourself to receive the love He's pouring out on you; to fall in love with Him, never to be the same again. You will not be disappointed. Whenever I write the phrase 'a love relationship with God' in my booklets, this is what I'm talking about.

Do what I did that night as I lay awake in bed – sincerely thank Him for loving you and ask Him to make you more aware of His love. "Thank You Lord for loving me. I choose to acknowledge Your love for me personally right now. Please help me to be more and more aware of it. Praise You Lord." For me it was sudden. For some people it may be gradual. But it is real. God wants every individual person to know His love in a way that goes beyond knowledge. And the more you focus on His love for you, the more you will understand as it says in Ephesians 3:18-19 – ''*the width and length and height and depth, [19]and to know Christ's love which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God*.'

Make remembering God's love for you a habit – it's a good one. Remember it when things are going well and remember it when things are difficult. His love never changes according to circumstances or how you feel or anything else. In the good and

the hard times, remind yourself that God loves you. Romans 1:7 says you are – '*beloved of God*'. That's so wonderful and it's who you are – it's the truth and it remains true whether you feel it or not, so you can always thank God for loving you. You are always and will always be His beloved.

Refuse to waver from this truth or to allow other people or negative circumstances to distract you from it. Jude 1:21 says – '*Keep yourselves in God's love, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life*.' This verse makes it clear that we have a responsibility in making sure we continue to be aware of God's love for us. Determine now to play your part. We need to keep our focus on God's Word, where we can find His merciful, unconditional love no matter what is going on. And we can be sure that, because of the love Jesus demonstrated for us, we have eternal life – a love relationship with God, here and now on earth and through all eternity. Keep yourself in the love of God by experiencing His love day by day in the truth of the Word.

I didn't experience the pouring out of God's love on me and in me, by being passive. If I had just drifted along in my faith, waiting to see what would happen, I firmly believe those experiences would never have come. The first time it happened, I had turned to God admitting that I couldn't do it my way anymore. At the conferences, I had put myself under anointed teaching on the love of God and chose to respond to it when I heard it. And the fourth time, in my grief, I asked God to make me more aware of His love. There are no formulas or steps to follow. God is always drawing us to Himself with loving-kindness. He never stops. But He doesn't force Himself on us – we have to respond and reach out to receive from Him. It only takes a moment, maybe just a whisper, but God will always respond to us when we move towards Him.

I started writing this as a testimony to the reality of God's love for me and then it has, perhaps inevitably, moved into teaching. But my prayer is that what I've written here reassures you about God's love, affirms you in it and encourages you to respond to it as God continually draws you to Himself with His loving-kindness. Yes, we need to know about God's love in Jesus and we need to understand it, but then He wants us to experience the reality of it in our lives. In John 15:9&11 Jesus says to us – "*Even as the Father has loved me, I also have loved you. Remain in my love. … [11] I have spoken these things to you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be made full*." A love relationship with God is all about joy. It brings Him joy and when we experience it, our joy will be made full – this is what Jesus wants for us all.

God's love has been poured into my heart through the Holy Spirit who was given to me (Romans 5:5) and I am full of joy and forever thankful. You can be too. Hallelujah!

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and all He has done and won for us
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God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

(Romans 5:5)

Katherine Hilditch has been teaching in local churches for many years. In 2013 she wrote her first booklet and since then has written many more. She created her website to make all the booklets freely available to everyone. They can be read online or printed out. Katherine's threefold purpose is to help people understand more about Jesus and all He has done and won for them, to encourage them to go deeper in their relationship with God and to provide material to help them share their faith with others. To read her story and find all the booklets go to –

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