

LOVING GOD



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LifeInJesus.net

‘Loving God’
by
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LOVING GOD

There are many different words in Greek for 'love'. There is a word for love for family, one for love for a wife or husband, one for love for a friend etc. The word that is translated 'love' in the Bible when referring to God's love, is 'agape'. It means sacrificial, unconditional love. God's love for us will never change whatever we do or don't do. It is a love that sacrifices everything for us. And Jesus did just that – He laid down His life, taking the punishment for our sins, so we could be forgiven and become a child of God. He didn't say we had to be perfect first. Romans 5:8 says – '*God commends his own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*' That's agape –

sacrificial unconditional love. John 15:13 says – *“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”* This is what Jesus did for you and for me. Thank You Lord!

A New Commandment

When a lawyer asked Jesus which was the greatest commandment in the law, Jesus replied in Matthew 22:37-40 – *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”*³⁸ *This is the first and great commandment.*³⁹ *A second likewise is this, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’*⁴⁰ *The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”* The law was all about rules which God knew were impossible to keep perfectly. He

introduced it to show people that they could never earn their own way to heaven and realise that they needed a saviour.

But now Jesus has paid the price for our sin, we are no longer under the law, but under grace. Grace is the outpouring of God's agape love on us even though we don't deserve it. The night He was arrested, Jesus said to His disciples in John 13:34 – "*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also love one another.*" Interestingly, He didn't mention loving God. What He stressed was the need for them to love each other in the same way that He had loved them – with sacrificial, unconditional love. And His command to love others is for us too, as His followers today.

In this new covenant we're no longer commanded to love God. Think about it – if you commanded someone to love you and they obeyed you, you would never know if that love was real or not. There wouldn't be any joy in it for either of you. Jesus suffered the Cross for the joy of knowing we would then be able to come freely into relationship with Him. Hebrews 12:2 says that Jesus – *'for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising its shame.'* If you have accepted what Jesus has done for you personally, making Him your Lord and Saviour, then you are His beloved child – a member of His family. (To read about being born-again, go to the end of this booklet)

So now we're under grace, God wants us to receive His love for us to such a degree that we naturally love Him back, not out of duty,

but as a response to His love for us. 1 John 4:19 – *‘We love Him, because He first loved us.’* The more we register His agape love for us in our understanding and in our hearts, the more we will love Him back without even trying. Don’t make loving God your focus, never knowing if you love Him enough; instead, focus on how much He loves you. Psalm 116:7 says – *‘Return to your rest, my soul, for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.’* We can calm our negative thoughts and emotions and simply rest in Him because He has showered us with His agape love. Think on that and your love for Him will rise.

Jude 1:21 says – *‘Keep yourselves in God’s love, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.’* We keep our love for God alive by focusing on His mercy, which He

revealed to us through Jesus and which resulted in our eternal life – a love relationship with both God and Jesus. 1 John 4:10 says – *‘In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins.’*

Peter and John

Let’s contrast these two disciples. Peter did have divine revelation about who Jesus was, but he also made extravagant declarations of his love for Him on the spur of the moment. In Luke 22:33 he said – *“Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death!”* On the very night Jesus was arrested, Peter said to Him in John 13:37 – *“Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”*

John, on the other hand, never made declarations like those. But he referred to himself all the way through his gospel as ‘the disciple who Jesus loved’. This wasn’t arrogance on John’s part. He wasn't saying he was the only one Jesus loved or that He loved him more than the other disciples. He was simply stating the truth that Jesus loved Him.

Peter focused on trying to love Jesus, while John focused on Jesus’ love for him. But which one showed true love when they were faced with the horrors of Jesus’ arrest, trial and crucifixion? They reacted very differently. Peter denied he even knew Jesus in order to save his own neck and he did it three times. But John was at the foot of the Cross when Jesus died – he was as near to Him as he could be.

A Parable for a Pharisee

In Luke 7:41-43 Jesus told a parable to a Pharisee, one of the religious leaders – “A certain lender had two debtors. The one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they couldn’t pay, he forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him most?” ⁴³Simon answered, “He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most.” He said to him, “You have judged correctly.” The more we know God’s love for us, the more we will love Him.

We were forgiven when Jesus hung on the Cross, suffering the punishment for our sins, two thousand years ago. When we really understand the enormity and the wonder of what this means, our natural response is to love Him in return.

If you don't feel you love God or you want to love Him more, go to the Cross and focus on the sacrificial, unconditional love of Jesus for you. Don't think about your lack of love, but instead, choose to dwell on God's infinite love for you. Your love for Him will grow in response.

You've Already Got It!

It is reassuring to know that God has given us the love we need in order to love Him. When we were born-again, two amazing things happened. First, God took out our old sin spirit and replaced it with a brand-new perfect spirit which is identical to Jesus. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says – *'if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.'* God is love, therefore we have

His perfect love within us. Then, God's Holy Spirit came to live in our new spirit. That means we have the fruit of the Spirit in us, including love from which all the rest flow. Galatians 5:22-23 says – *'the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, ²³gentleness, and self-control.'* God has put His love in us so we can use it to love Him and others. That's good news!

If you are born-again, don't say that you can't love. We have to remember that love isn't just about feelings. Whatever we feel, the truth is we do have love, so, as we focus on God's love for us, love is always available in us to love Him back. Philippians 1:9 says – *'This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment.'* The more we know God's

agape love for us, the more our love for Him will abound.

When You Love You Obey

Interestingly it is John, ‘the disciple Jesus loved’, who talks about the connection between loving Jesus and obeying Him. For example, he says in 1 John 5:3 – *‘For this is loving God, that we keep his commandments. His commandments are not grievous.’* Obeying God doesn’t make Him love us, or us love Him. Obeying Him shows we love Him in response to His love for us. There is a world of difference between the two. When we receive His love, it will lead to us loving Him which will lead to us wanting to obey Him. Action doesn’t lead to love, but love leads to action.

Notice, John mentions in 1 John 5:3 that – *‘His commandments are not grievous.’* Under grace, we don't have the heavy burden of many rules to keep. We have a simple call to love others and to do whatever God asks of us. It will never be difficult when we decide to obey God, because He is always there with us and gives us everything we need in order to obey Him. Psalm 37:4 says – *‘delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.’* This is such an encouraging and reassuring verse. It doesn't mean that God will give us everything we want. It means that, when we delight in Him, He will put His desires in our heart, so His desires become our desires.

Some years ago God asked me to hold a public meeting to tell people about God's agape love for them. He even told me to

hold the event in a specific cafe. At first I was quite shaken and my immediate reaction was to wish He hadn't asked me! As I was at a conference at the time, I went for prayer about it, but that didn't seem to help much. But this request from God burned inside me and I knew I had to obey. I also knew that ultimately everything would be fine because God's commandments aren't hard, so I chose to stop worrying about it and trust Him. That's when peace came. It was a whole couple of years later that a real desire to do this rose in me and I started to feel excited about it. It went ahead in the café God had told me about. Yes, I was a bit nervous beforehand but I was excited too and I really enjoyed the evening. And most importantly of all, at least one person accepted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Things turned around when I chose to trust

God, and I could do that because I knew how much He loved me. Then, at the right time, He put His desire in my heart to do it. His desire became my desire and I could obey, not grudgingly and fearfully, but willingly and happily.

The one thing Jesus asks of all His followers is to love others. Then He may ask different things of different people at different times. It may be something small like making a phone call or smiling at the person at the till in the supermarket. Or it might be something big or something in between. But whatever it is, we never need to be afraid of obeying God. When He asks you to do something, remember how loved you are and He will make His desire your desire. Then it's easy for you to obey as an outcome of your love response to God. Jesus said

in John 14:15 – *“If you love Me, keep My commandments.”*

In John 15:10-12 Jesus says – *“If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, even as I have kept my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. ¹¹I have spoken these things to you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be made full.”* Keeping or obeying Jesus’ commandments from a sincere heart helps us to remain in His love. It doesn’t affect His love for us even if we disobey, but as we obey Him, we are more aware of His love for us and that causes our love for Him to grow in response. And the result is true joy.

Loving Him Above Everyone Else

The fact that we are loved by God and love Him in response should impact all areas of our lives. Sometimes this can mean having to make a choice between God and our spouse or family. In Matthew 10:37 Jesus says – *“He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me isn’t worthy of me.”* This doesn’t mean that we’re not to love our family – Jesus tells us to love others. He’s saying that He should take the highest place in our lives. Everything else falls into its right place when we put Jesus first, whatever the consequences may be. We don’t need to fear. 1 John 4:18 says – *‘perfect love casts out fear.’* The more we know how much God loves us, the easier it is not to fear.

You Are the One Jesus Loves

Just like John, you can call yourself ‘the one Jesus loves’. God’s love for you is infinitely sacrificial and unconditional. 1 John 4:10 says – *‘In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins.’* Thank Him for loving you personally. Do it out loud with full assurance that it is true. Go back and declare the verses in this booklet about God’s love. As you focus on His love for you, you will feel your love for Him rising and you will desire more and more to live to please Him. Thank You Lord for loving me. I love you with all my heart. Hallelujah!

Being Born-Again

When you acknowledge Jesus as God and decide to follow Him, you make Him your Lord. When you accept His sacrifice on the Cross for you personally, you make Him your Saviour. You are then born-again. God becomes your Father and you His child, and you can start to enjoy your personal relationship with Him.

Romans 10:9 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.’* Say this prayer out loud and believe it in your heart – “Jesus, I declare that You are Lord and that God raised You from the dead to live forevermore. Thank You for dying for me personally. I receive my forgiveness and my

salvation now. Thank You Jesus, my Lord and Saviour.”

You are now born-again and Jesus has come to live in you. All your sins are forgiven, past, present and future, and you have a new perfect spirit. And after this life is over, you'll live in love, peace and joy with your Father God for ever.

As a child of God, you now have a whole new family of brothers and sisters. Tell a trusted Christian that you are now born-again so they can help you in your new life in Jesus. And you have the Bible to help you understand and experience more of God's love for you and all Jesus has done and won for you. It will help you to live your life in the best possible way – His way.

Life in Jesus

To read more about Jesus
and all He has done and won for us
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Under the law,
God commanded people to love Him.
Now we are under grace
He wants us to receive His love.
No longer do we have to try and love Him.
Now we simply focus on
His sacrificial, unconditional love for us
and we will naturally love Him in response.
There is such freedom in this.



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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