

Learning to Live Loved

God's love does not hinge on yours. The abundance of your love does not increase his. The lack of your love does not diminish his. Your goodness does not enhance his love, nor does your weakness dilute it. What Moses said to Israel is what God says to us:

“The **LORD** did not choose you and lavish his love on you because you were larger or greater than other nations, for you were the smallest of all nations! It was simply because the **LORD** loves you.” (Deut. 7:7-8 NLT)

God loves you simply because he has chosen to do so.

He loves you when you don't feel lovely.

He loves you when no one else loves you. Others may abandon you, divorce you, and ignore you, but god will love you. Always. No matter what.

This is his sentiment: “I'll call nobodies and make them somebodies; I'll call the unloved and make them beloved.” (Rom. 9:25 MSG).

This is his promise. “I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself. (Jer. 31:3 NLT).

Our love depends on the receiver of the love. Let a thousand people pass before us, and we will not feel the same about each. Our love will be regulated by their appearance, by their personalities. Even when we find a few people we like, our feelings will fluctuate. How they treat us will affect how we love them. The receiver regulates our love.

Not so with the love of God. We have no thermostatic impact on his love for us. The love of God is born from within him, not from what he finds in us. His love is uncaused and spontaneous. As Charles Wesley said, “He hath loved us. He hath loved us. Because he would love.” 1

Does he love us because of our goodness? Because of our kindness? Because of our great faith? No, he loves us because of his goodness, kindness, and great faith. John says it like this: “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us” (I John 4:10 NIV).

Do you know what else that means? You have a deep aquifer of love from which to draw. When you find it hard to love, then you need a drink! Drink deeply! Drink daily!

Don't forget, love is a fruit. Step into the orchard of God's work, and what is the first fruit you see? “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal.5:22 NIV, emphasis mine).

Love is a fruit. A fruit of whom? Of your hard work? Of your deep faith? Of your rigorous resolve? No. Love is a fruit of the Spirit of God. “The Spirit produces the fruit” (Gal.5:22).

And, this is so important, you are a branch on the vine of God. “I am the vine, and you are the branches” (John 15:5). Need a refresher course on how vines function? What is the role of the branch in the bearing of fruit? Branches don't exert a lot of energy. You

never hear of gardeners treating branches for exhaustion. Branches don't attend clinics on stress management. Nor do they groan and grunt. "I've got to get this grape out. I've got to get this grape out. I'm going to bear this grape if it kills me!"

No, the branch does none of that. The branch has one job-to receive nourishment from the vine. And you have one job-to receive nourishment from Jesus. "I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing" (John 15:5 MSG).

Our Lord gets no argument from us on that last line, does he? We have learned the hard way apart from him we can't produce a thing. Don't you think it's time we learn what happens if we stay attached?

His job is to bear fruit. Our job is to stay put. The more tightly we are attached to Jesus, the more purely his love can pass through us. And oh, what a love it is! Patient. Kind. Does not envy. Does not boast. Is not proud.

Let's rewrite 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 one more time. Not with your name or Jesus' name but with both. Read it aloud with your name in the blank, and see what you think.

Christ in _____ is patient, Christ in _____ is kind. Christ in _____ does not envy, Christ in _____ does not boast, Christ in _____ is not proud. Christ in _____ is not rude, Christ in _____ is not self-seeking, Christ in _____ is not easily angered, Christ in _____ keeps no record of wrongs. Christ in _____ does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Christ in _____ always protects, always perseveres. Christ in _____ never fails.

Will we ever love like that? Will we ever love perfectly? No. This side of heaven only God will. But we will love better than we have. By being loved, we will love.

My Wish For You

- ➔ Where there is pain; I wish you peace and mercy.
- ➔ Where there is self-doubting, I wish you a renewed confidence in your ability to work through it.
- ➔ Where there is tiredness, or exhaustion, I wish you understanding, patience, and renewed strength.
- ➔ Where there is fear; I wish you love, and courage.