

GOD'S LOVE #6 – “WHAT DOES GOD'S LOVE LOOK LIKE?”

- When you hear “God loves you” what do you hear? When you read Romans 8:39, “[nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” what are you picturing?
- You may be expecting love to look a certain way and if you don't see it, you think God isn't loving you. Or, God may be loving you in a particular way but because you don't recognize it as love, you think he doesn't love you. These will erode your relationship with God.
- Man/woman love? Parent love? What love expectations are there?
 - ▶ *Romans 8:28* “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” → “God works for our good.” = LOVE!
 - ▶ *Romans 8:31* “If God is for us, who can be against us?” → “God is for us.” = LOVE!
 - **Love is “compassionately acting in the best interests of others.”**

The Many Faces of God's Love to Us

- We must know what He's up to so we can begin to look for his love, expect it, and shout with gratitude when we see it.
 - **God loves us by. . .**
- 1. Inviting Us to Share in His Glory.** It's what we've been created for – to know and show God's greatness. So his love calls us to his glory.
 - ▶ *Psalms 115:1* “Not to us, Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.” How do you enter into the experience of this glory-love? - by stepping through the doorway of surrender and death to self.
- 2. Giving us the Gifts of Creation and Human Life.** All creation shouts “I love you!” ▶ *Acts 17:25* “he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.” (Also the messy gift of human freewill to choose good or evil = a “groaning earth”.) If you ever feel unloved, look around you.
- 3. Desiring Us, Pursuing Us and Being Present With Us.** Relationship! You're valuable and cherished; He's always making the first move towards you; He knows what you're going through - your feelings, fears, needs. God's love-gift of his Holy Spirit lives in us!
 - But how can love stand by and watch someone be uncomfortable? The answer is: When it's in the other's best interests to be loved in some other way. ▶ *Acts 17:27-28* “God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’”
- 4. Forgiving and Accepting Us.** ▶ *Ephesians 1:7* “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.” He paid the price of his death to restore us to a relationship with God; he wipes out any punishment our sins deserve. We don't have to ask for forgiveness each time we sin – merely accept it,

enjoy it and express our gratitude for it. ▶ *Ephesians 2:8* “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith...”

- 5. Satisfying our Souls with His Truth.** ▶ *Isaiah 55:1-3* “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; ...Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live.” God isn't expecting us to pick between happiness and him. He is the source of happiness.
 - Truth is love – it acts in our best interests by directing our souls to where life truly is. When you read his commands, do you hear Love? Truth is also about affirmations and promises – about who He is, and who we are, and what life is really all about. All these are given for our good. They give us meaning and purpose and joy and peace.
- 6. Changing our Hearts through Repentance.** ▶ *Romans 8:29* “[we have been] predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.” What greater love can there be than to invite us to be free from our sin?...Humility instead of pride; Peace instead of fear/anxiety; Love instead of self-centeredness; Self-control instead of self-indulgence...So we can handle every situation and relationship like Jesus!
 - The path is repentance. When we see the harm and consequences of our sin we will thank God for this revelation. We won't resist having our weaknesses exposed because we know this is necessary if we're going to receive the love of being changed to be like Jesus.
- 7. Revealing Himself through the Church.** The church is called the Body of Christ - we are extensions of God's above love to one another.
- 8. Using us to Love Others.** Genesis 12 – we are “blessed in order to be a blessing.” We are called to be partners with Jesus in his mission of bringing his kingdom, his rule, to earth. So to call us to love is actually loving us! When we have the opportunity to love, and the heart to love, and the unique abilities to love, and the strength to love, we can say Thank You to God for being used by him to love.
- 9. Promising Future Wholeness in Heaven.** This gift helps us endure the wild, messy and unholy world we live in. ▶ *1 Peter 1:13* “...set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.” It's the promise of future love – and present hope.
- 10. Changing Physical Realities to Give us Pleasure.** This love isn't promised with regularity – but it does happen (heal, change weather patterns, jobs, halt wars, sales, etc.)
- 11. Using Disappointments, Suffering, Unfairness and Silence to Point us to the above Expressions of Love.** ▶ *Romans 8:37* “In all these things [trouble, hardship, persecution, wars] we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” He promises to meet us in love in the midst of these hardships. “How can I trust a Love who is so wild? Indeed, how do we not only trust him, but love him in return? There's only one possible answer: You could love him if you knew his heart was good.” (Eldredge, “Sacred Romance”). When dark days come, they are always invitations to look for God's love with a face we didn't expect. He's always acting for our good - our basic problem is that we don't always know what's good for us.