

GOD'S LOVE #7 – “COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT GOD'S LOVE”

- “Lost” clip of Jack and David: “I will always love you.”

1. How can I think positively about God as a loving Father if my earthly father's love was so hurtful or distant?

- Use your experience of a broken and unhealthy father to motivate your soul to find a good and healthy father – and the best place to look is God. ► *Psalm 103:13* “As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him” ► *Matthew 7:11* “If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”
- See those behaviors/attitudes of your father as sin – against you.
- Use the security and love of God as your Father to reach out in forgiveness and love to your earthly father and see him as a broken man. After all, he, too, needs the perfect Father-love of God.

2. What if I don't feel God's love?

- We must understand that we should live on facts, not feelings. Even marital love is not always felt. ► *Romans 8:39*: “[nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” ► *2 Thessalonians 2:16-17* “May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.”
- How does his love get to our hearts and not just our heads? *We will feel the love of God when our longings match his love – when what we want is what he gives.* Ten Ways He Loves Us: By giving us his glory; by giving us all created things; by desiring us, pursuing us and being present with us; by forgiving and accepting us in spite of our sin; by satisfying our souls with purpose, love and truth; by changing our hearts to become like Jesus; by revealing himself to us through the church; by using us to love others in the world; by promising future wholeness in heaven; and by changing physical realities to give us pleasure. (These are often known in disappointment and suffering).
- Get in touch with your longings (for purpose, love, respect, friendships, acceptance, a God-centered heart, the glory of God) and then let God into that part of your life so he can satisfy them. Or, see that what you long for is not really in your best interest, and you need to realign your longings to the ways God loves. ► *1 Peter 5:7* “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

3. What should I tell someone who can't believe in a God of love because of a tragedy that happened to them?

- The universe is not as tightly controlled by God as they think it should be. God created human beings to love them and be loved by them – so he gave them the wild gift of free will (it can be used to love God or self.)

Much of the greatest suffering and evil in the world is because of people. And that was the risk that God took for love. We are not robots.

- If those who suffer are willing, God is both present in their suffering (he aches and cries with them) and he is redemptive in their suffering (he can use tragedy for good). ► *Romans 8:37* “In all these [hardships] we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”

4. Can God love me and still be displeased with me? Is the face of Jesus always a smile towards me?

- “Love” means to compassionately act in the best interests of another – so God's love can care for us and act for our good while still being sad about the choices we make and the attitudes we foster.
- Picture the face of Jesus to us: (a) The face of affection - smiling, tender, admiring, “I'm especially fond of you” - because he delights in your faith and who you are becoming and the pleasure he gets from loving you. (b) The face of compassion when we sin against him and he knows we are missing out on the fullness of his love, joy and glory - warmth, forgiveness, understanding, an invitation to something greater. It's never a scowl!

5. What are some of the most life-changing implications of living loved by God?

- People's opinions and attitudes toward me become less important because God's loving and grace-filled opinion and attitude toward me is more important.
- When I make mistakes, fail, stumble, hurt others and sin, God's grace enables me to not live in shame, self-hatred, fear or the memory of past sins.
- I will regularly look for God's love to me in the spiritual realm of my heart, mind and soul – and not primarily in terms of my physical and emotional conditions.
- If God's love never fails or ceases, and he is actively pursuing my good at every moment – then I must learn to see and appreciate the many faces of his love in each moment.
- Prayer: “Lord, I will live loved – for Your glory and my joy.”

◆ In Psalm 13 David cried out: “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart?” Life wasn't going the way he wanted it to go. (Ever feel that way?) vs. 5-6: “But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord for he has been good to me.”

- Can you trust his love?...that he will be good to you?...this very moment, and tomorrow in all its uncertainty and potential for pain? Why trust? (1) He's God; (2) “for he has been good to me” (3) Look at Jesus!

◆ When in doubt about love look to Jesus! (Heb. 12) In Jesus we see the fullness of God's love: ► *John 1:16*, “From the fullness of his grace we have received one blessing after another.” We can trust God to love us because Jesus came in the flesh and showed us what love looks like. And his resurrection says, “My love will continue to the very end of your life.” (Mat. 28:20)