

4 Ways to Satisfy Your Aching Hunger for Love

Editor's Note: This is Part 2 of a two-part series. For Part 1, [click here](#).

What Does a Love for God Look Like?

The apostle John wrote in 1 John 3:16a, "By this we know the love of God: that He laid down His life for us." Love = Sacrifice.

When you truly love someone, you are willing to sacrifice something of yourself, (time, money, personal rights and privileges, and so on), for their good—even your life if necessary.

"In this is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sin" (1 John 4:10). Once again, love = sacrifice.

"Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God" (Eph. 5:2). Love = Commitment and Sacrifice.

"Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it" (Eph. 5:25b-26a). Once again, love = commitment and sacrifice.

It is clear that the biblical definition of love, not only for one another but for God as well, is a commitment to their good and the natural fruit of sacrificial actions. The source of love, the nature of love, the very being of love is God Himself.

"God is love" (1 John 4:16b). Love is not how He acts, but who He is. Therefore, you will only find true love where God is

expressing His very being through someone. The world cannot do this, because the world does not know God.

We have so diminished the word “love” in this culture that it has lost its meaning. One moment we’re proclaiming, “I love you!” and five minutes later shouting, “I love ice cream!”—the latter often said with more passion.

Where evil is involved, where worldliness is involved, that which professes to be love is a deception, no matter how good it looks, no matter how good it feels. It is the product of Satan, who masquerades as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14) in order to deceive us. For example:

—God (love) is not involved when you are divorcing your wife for another woman.

—He (love) is not involved when you are romancing a homosexual lover.

—God (love) is not meeting your need when you turn to pornography for comfort.

—The Creator of all that is seen and unseen (love) is not involved in any desire or behavior that contravenes the moral standards that He has carefully and clearly laid out in His Word, especially those that masquerade as love.

The deception behind false versions of love is that they pander to our feelings and emotions, as well as to our sinful nature, in order to entice and distract us from the sacrifice and commitment that real love demands, which is to forsake the flesh and the world in demonstration of true love for God and for each other.

Paul writes in Ephesians 5:25b-27, “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, and that He might present to Himself a glorious church, not having spot,

or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

The Capacity to Love is Communicated Through Christ

1 John 4:19 states, “We love Him because He first loved us.” In other words, we develop the desire and ability to love by following the example of Jesus. His love then flows through us as we regularly seek Him to release it from within.

The capacity to love is on one level a learned behavior. We see it and emulate it. It is imparted and received when we are born again and as we maintain an authentic relationship with God. And it is strengthened through a mature, grace-filled and self-sacrificing relationship with the world and the Christian community.

What Do You Do if You Haven't Been Loved?

Upon learning what genuine love is, many will realize that they have never been truly loved by another human being. The good part of that discovery is that it propels us into the arms of the only one who can perfectly love us: God Himself. We needn't miss out on love just because a fallen world has destroyed its true essence. The Savior and King of all the universe stands at the door, inviting us to join Him in His river of love (John 4:10, 13-14, 7:38; Rev 7:17, 22:17).

So, is love never having to say you're sorry? To the contrary! For Adam's race, the foundation and the learning of love only begins with saying you're sorry. As we repent and surrender our lives to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, love itself comes to live within us, calling us to live by love and enabling us to love according to His definition and His power.

In truth, our response to St. Francis of Assisi's cry that “Love is not loved” must be to cling to the one who alone is Love. Theologian Emil Brunner once wrote, “God loves us not because of who we are, but because of who He is.” St.

Augustine added, "God loves each one of us as though there's only one of us to love."

Here's some sage advice for those who want to love and be loved:

1. Pursue an intimate relationship with God so that you can directly experience His love for you (Deut. 4:29, Jer. 29:11-14, Acts 17:27-28).

2. Listen and hear God's affirming voice—directly, in His Word, through His still, small voice, (which usually comes during worship or prayer) and through His people, imperfect as their love will be.

3. Practice God's definition of love—commitment and sacrifice—by believing God in everything He says, obeying God in everything He asks, remaining faithful no matter what the trial and by serving God and others.

4. Forgive those who have hurt you, for that is the supreme act of love.

For many of us, it is a bully, an abuser or even our own parents who seem impossible to forgive. This was my dilemma the night the Lord asked me to forgive my father. He was the man I most hated on this earth. So I said to the Lord: "You know I will say the words because You've asked me to, but You also know that I won't mean them." (The hurt had been so deep and had lasted so long.)

The Lord replied, "You are your father—literally (referring to his DNA). The hatred that you have for your father is what has generated the self-hatred that has plagued you all your life." It was an awesome revelation, but it still didn't enable me to forgive him.

So I replied, "I still can't say the words and mean them, Lord."

He continued, "Look up at Me!" And so I looked up and saw a vision of Him standing in heaven with His arms outstretched. Moving one of His hands, He said, "What do I have in My hand?" I don't know how I knew, but I said, "You have forgiveness in your hands, Lord," to which He replied, "I can forgive your father. Why don't you take forgiveness from Me and give it to your father?"

So I turned to my father (in the Spirit) and said, "Father, with the capacity that Jesus has to forgive you, I forgive you." As I said those words, a current of forgiveness poured out of the heart of Jesus, into my heart and out into my father's heart. In that moment, Christ had done the impossible, and I was set free from the sin and bondage of unforgiveness.

And what was the outcome? The acid that used to rise up on the inside of me at the very thought of my father vanished and has never returned. The self-hatred that used to dominate my every thought and action began a rapid slide into oblivion. Over time, as the Lord revealed my father in a new light, he went from being the man I most hated to the man I most loved.

Jesus is love! And He will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, not only in salvation, but in sanctification as well. Turn to Him now and let Him do a miraculous work in you, too. Let love be loved, not only in your heart, but in your actions as well. What a glorious Lord we serve. Hallelujah! {eoa}

Dr. David Kyle Foster *is the author of Transformed Into His Image, Love Hunger and Sexual Healing and is the founder/director of Mastering Life Ministries (). A major revision and expansion of Sexual Healing (The Sexual Healing Reference Edition) can now be ordered at:*