

Becoming Love

In His final words before going to the cross, Jesus said this:

“I made known to them [all who believe in Jesus] your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:26, ESV).

I really want you to catch the magnitude of this. Jesus asked the Father to cause us to love Him like the Father loves Him. How does God feel about God? How does the Father feel about Jesus? There is no end to that shoreless ocean. We are invited into this kind of love. It's no wonder God intends to fill the earth with singing.

The Cross Has Spoken

You may be wondering, *How can God love us so much in the midst of our brokenness and in light of our sin and failure?* First, it is His character to love. He is more merciful than any of us. Having said that, there is one profound reason we can have this relationship of love and enjoyment: the cross of Christ.

On the cross Jesus not only died in our place; He took our shame, punishment, sin and brokenness. He took it all. It is finished. All who have surrendered their lives to Jesus and trust in Him are as holy as Jesus is because of what He accomplished at Calvary.

We don't have to be good enough to receive God's love—we can't be. The cross silences human pride. It is the ultimate expression of love and justice. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, you and I are now in the family of God as His children forever. God had the final word in Jesus' work on the cross.

The Kiss of the Word

There is one practical key that is perhaps the most important of all to receiving the love of Christ. It is expressed in the Song of Solomon.

The Song of Solomon, or the Song of Songs in some Bible translations, is an eight-chapter love song written by David's son Solomon. Many people skip this poetic book because of all its pomegranates and palm trees. But at its core it is a picture of love between a man and his wife. Marriage is probably the greatest analogy Scripture gives to show us what God's relationship with His people looks like. Paul said marriage speaks of Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32). This is why seeing Jesus as the eternal bridegroom helps us better understand God's love for us.

In the first chapter of the Song of Solomon, the bride says, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine" (v. 2, emphasis added). The Song of Solomon is an allegory of Christ's relationship with the church, and it's important to understand that this verse is not in any way referring to a physical relationship with Jesus. It is analogous to the Word of God touching our hearts when it is communicated by the Holy Spirit.

The Word is a kiss from God on your heart. Allowing the Holy Spirit to touch your heart with the Word of God is the greatest tool for growing in love. That's when you discover that Jesus' love is "better than wine." Wine speaks of the pleasures of the world, not all of which are sinful. God's love communicated to your heart is better than any pleasure the world could offer us. It is the highest form of pleasure. That is why David, the great theologian of joy, said, "In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures forevermore" (Ps. 16:11).

How do we receive God's kiss on our hearts? This happens when

we take the time to meditate on the Bible and use the Word to engage in a conversation with Jesus. This is called praying the Bible, and this is how it works.

Find key verses that speak of God's heart and what He has done through Jesus. Study them so that you don't miss the context. But just as importantly, turn them into a conversation with God directly. Ask God questions about the verse. Pray each phrase back to Him. Use your own language to express what the verse is saying back to God in a dialogue. You may even want to sing it. Commit out loud to obey anything the text says to do. Write in a journal what God is revealing to your heart from the passage. Do this regularly. The Holy Spirit thrives in communicating God's affections to you, and if you pray His Word, He will reveal Himself more and more to you over time.

Seemingly small encounters with God really matter; they are real and they do change us. The greatest supernatural event that is taking place is not tents that host God's presence being set up around the world; it is that broken people are discovering who God is and are beginning to love God the way God loves God. *Jesus, You have won us over. We are freely Yours forever.*

This has been excerpted from Chapter 6 of Awaken the Dawn by David Bradshaw (Charisma House). {eo}

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