

This Is Why You Can't Overcome That Stubborn Sin

My grandmother-in-law used to tell my wife that we all have a "love bank." When someone loves us well, it deposits coins in our love bank. If someone picks on us at school and our love bank is full, it won't affect us. As we grow older, if we are tempted to look for love in the wrong places, yet our love bank is full, we won't have such a difficult time doing the right thing. This is what happens when you see how Jesus loves you ... suddenly your "love bank" is filled up, and you have more love to give to others.

The kind of love that can change the world is an expressly Christian kind of love. It is a love for others that can only be fueled and motivated by the cross, shed blood and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The kind of deep love God calls us to give to our families, friends, fellow Christians, neighbors, communities and even our enemies is such that it can only be fueled by God's love inside of us. We don't have enough love in ourselves to keep up, but when our hearts believe in God's love through Jesus, and when "God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5, NIV), we suddenly begin to overflow to the people around us. We love others best when we experience God's love. That is what we need more of: connection to God and His love, for our hearts and our spiritual eyes to be opened to how much He loves us, whereby we can become a conduit of His love into our world.

Our churches are filled with well-meaning Christians who know God's truth but don't always walk in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness or self-control. But the thing is, these fruits actually make us influential for the truth in

our families, our workplaces, our communities. Often, the power to walk in the fruit of the Spirit to which the Bible calls us seems just out of reach, beyond our power to grasp and maintain. Life gets busy, things happen, and anxieties rise in our soul:

Am I enough?

Do I have what it takes?

Will this job be stable and help me provide for my family?

What do I need to worry about around the corner?

Why don't I ever have enough me-time?

Why do I feel so exhausted?

Why can't I control my anger?

I know because I've been there. More often than I want to admit. I can identify with the book title by Lane Adams from so many years ago, *Why Am I Taking So Long to Get Better?* Lane wrote about his struggle with anger toward his family even while he served as a pastor. As an associate evangelist for Billy Graham's ministry for many years, he had access to godly teaching, and yet the struggle to walk in patience and self-control stubbornly remained in his life. None of us is exempt. We all need to learn to allow God to work in us to make us people who are more loving and more patient—especially with the people who matter most to us.

What has your relationship with your parents shown you about God? Or how has that relationship hindered and kept you from understanding the love of God? You may have to wade through some memories you'd rather push aside. You may have to confront some of those memories, because moving forward in the Lord requires dealing with the past and understanding where our emotions, and ultimately our split-second attitudes and actions, stem from.

It can be difficult to grasp God's incomprehensible love for us. We've heard it a thousand times, but it skips past our comprehension, sounding like make-believe. We hear it, we repeat it, but we struggle to believe it. It hasn't penetrated our heart and soul. When it does, it changes us. Our heart softens when we come to understand God's love. It is a beautiful thing to experience.

Grasping the love of God means journeying the 18-inch gap between head knowledge and heart knowledge, and that is something many of us never do. We know what the Bible says, but we can't understand why God would love us so much. When we finally grasp His love, deep down, it changes us and changes how we love the people around us.

Paul wrote about this in Ephesians, praying that our spiritual eyes would be opened to how much God loves us and how much He has done for us in Christ. He showed us how important it is to pray for this in our own lives. If you want to see more of this, you can simply ask God to open your eyes. We need God to help us see the magnitude of His love for us. Paul also talked about the benefits of Jesus in the first few chapters of Ephesians. There is something about mulling over all the good things you have because of Jesus . . . all the ways He has loved you and changed you . . . reading about them in God's Word and meditating on them can help you understand more of the magnitude of God's love for you as well. {eo}

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