

Complete Love

I found I could not love others because I had never truly received God's love for me.

After I committed my life to the Lord Jesus Christ, I began to hear sermons about the importance of loving others. I wanted to walk in love, but I couldn't seem to do it. I made elaborate plans but always failed in carrying them out. I had the "want to" but not the power to perform (see Rom. 7:18).

I felt very frustrated and wondered what was wrong with me. I didn't realize that I couldn't give away something I didn't have. I was impatient with people, legalistic, harsh, judgmental, rude, selfish, unforgiving—and more!

A breakthrough in understanding came when God began to show me that I could not love others because I had never truly received His love for me. I was like a thirsty person holding a glass of water without ever drinking it. I mentally acknowledged that God loved me, but it was not a reality in my heart.

Why does God love us as imperfect as we are? Because He wants to—it pleases Him. Ephesians 1:5 (The Amplified Bible) tells us, "For He foreordained us (destined us, planned in love for us) to be adopted (revealed) as His own children through Jesus Christ, in accordance with the purpose of His will [because it pleased Him and was His kind intent]."

God conquers evil with good (see Rom. 12:21). He does that by pouring out His limitless grace upon us so that if we sin, His grace becomes greater than our sin. Just as it is impossible

for God not to love, so it is impossible for us to do anything to keep Him from loving us.

God loves because that is His nature. He is love, the Bible says (see 1 John 4:8). He may not always love everything we do, but He does love us. God's love is the power that forgives our sins, heals our emotional wounds and mends our broken hearts (see Ps. 147:3).

God's love is unconditional; it is based on Him, not us! Once you realize that God loves you regardless of what you have or haven't done, you can quit trying to earn His love and simply receive it and enjoy it.

Start by confessing that God loves you. Say it out loud several times a day when you are alone. Get used to hearing it—bask in His love, soak in it, and let it saturate your thinking and emotions.

Imagine the glory of it—God loves you! Once your heart is filled with the awareness of God's love, you can begin to love Him in return: "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Everyone desires to be loved and accepted. But many of us try to find happiness the wrong way. We attempt to find it in getting, but it is found in giving. The love of God is the most wonderful gift we are given. It flows to us, and then it should flow through us out to others.

Love must give. It is the nature of love to do so, as John 3:16 states: "For God so greatly loved and dearly prized the world that He [even] gave up His only begotten (unique) Son,

so that whoever believes in (trusts in, clings to, relies on) Him shall not perish (come to destruction, be lost) but have eternal (everlasting) life.”

First John 4:10-11 also highlights the giving nature of love: “In this is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (the atoning sacrifice) for our sins. Beloved, if God loved us so [very much], we also ought to love one another.”

We can show love to others by meeting their needs—practical as well as spiritual. Love is expressed through edification and encouragement, patience, kindness, courtesy, humility, unselfishness, good temper, gentleness (believing the best), and sincerity.

Love is a process. First, God loves us and, by faith, we receive His love. We then love ourselves in a balanced way, give love back to God, and learn to love other people.

Love must follow this course or it is not complete. Once we have God’s love in us, we can give it away. We can choose to love others lavishly. We can love them as deeply and unconditionally as God has loved us.