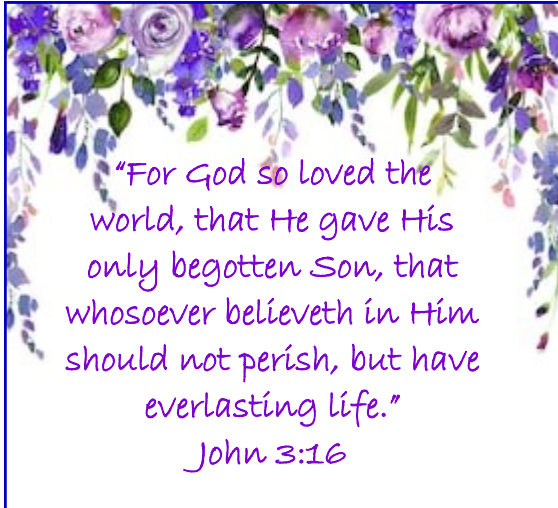


Am I Loving Enough



When Jesus was nearing the end of His time on this earth, many people were confused and some were angry because they saw their power dwindling. One day Christ was speaking in parables to the crowds. Some of the Pharisees and Sadducees were a part of the crowd and they started asking questions hoping to make Christ stumble. One of the Scribes knowing the commandments asked Christ which one was the greatest. Jesus answered *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."* Mark 12:30. But Christ didn't stop there. He issued them a challenge and added *"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."* Mark 12:31.



Another verse in 2 John 1:6 defines love this way: *"And this is love: that we walk in obedience to His commands. As you have heard from the beginning, His command is that you walk in love"*. Is this just a feel-good verse or does Christ command that we walk in love all the time? We walk in His love daily, but sometimes we don't walk loving other people all the time. The love is there, we just sometimes can't get it all together. It is sometimes difficult to love certain people. We may call them the unlovely, but Christ does not see them any differently than He sees us. He loves us all the same all the time.

"I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love." Mother Teresa.

When Christ gave them these two sayings they had a hard time accepting them. Many times we think we are a little bit better than our neighbor, but do we have to love them as much as we love ourselves or family and friends? Christ told them they had to love the neighbor

KNOW THAT YOU WERE FORMED BY GOD'S HANDS, DREAMED UP IN HIS HEART, & PLACED IN THIS WORLD FOR A PURPOSE.

as they loved themselves. We have that same challenge today.

Another passage, 1 Corinthians 13 also speaks about love. *"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal."* We are just a noise maker and nothing more. Is that what we think about ourselves? Each person, during his or her lifetime, will learn about the most important aspect of life - love. Love is difficult to describe, but at some point, everyone will feel it.

The most important kind of love is love for God. His love is unconditional, indescribable love. No matter how good love feels it can be a confusing emotion. Attempting to understand the feelings of love can help you find a deeper, more profound love.

We all experience love from the time we are born. Loving can be rewarding

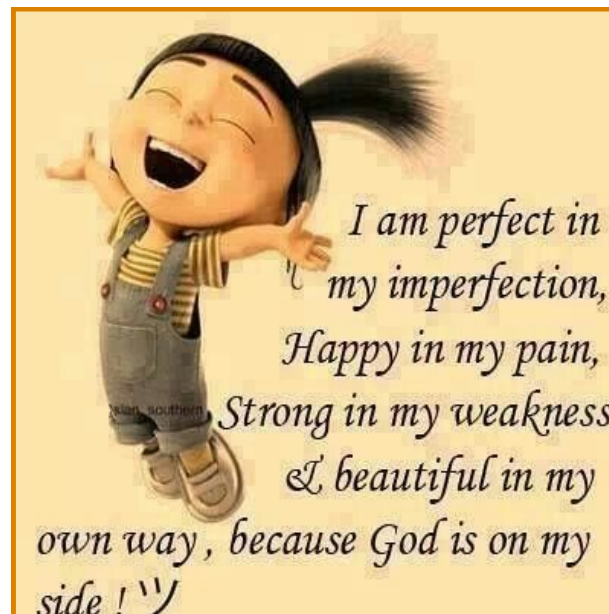
and challenging. We love as a child because we are loved. But as C. S. Lewis states in his book "The Four Loves," it can make us defenseless and vulnerable. Lewis says: *"To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, and irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable."*

Love is a beautiful gift, but it is given to each of us with no obligation on our part by our Heavenly Father. It also presents us with a wonderful challenge as to how we are going to be loving to others and to God. I don't think we can feel love if we don't give love.

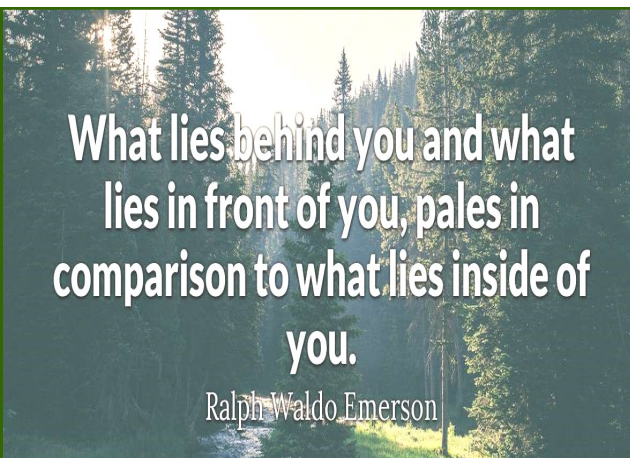
In To Kill a Mockingbird, by Harper Lee, Atticus Finch speaks to his daughter, Scout, about the problems with the young black man who is accused of rape. He tells her sometimes we may feel unloved. He tells her *"You never know someone, until you step inside their skin and walk around a little."* Only when we love others can we really feel the love of God. That takes loving on our part.

We can never have the unconditional love that God has for us, but we can feel love and we can be loving, if we want to take the time to know the person and try to feel their pain.

George Bailey the principle character in the movie "It's a Wonderful Life" says *"All you can take with you is that which you've given away."* These words have a wonderful message for each of us.



We have been given so many gifts and yet we know that the greatest of these is love. First we have to accept love from God, and then we have to give it away. Through that love, all things are possible.



Prayer: Father, help us to feel love for each other as you have commanded through the love that You give to us. Help us to reach out and give love away in abundance. Amen

1. What are the dangers of loving another person?
2. How did Jesus show his love to people when He was here on earth?
3. How did those who received His love react?
4. How do we share His love?

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