

1 John 4:19 Commentary

PREVIOUS

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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN
Click chart to enlarge

Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - Charles Swindoll

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			
From Talk Thru the Bible			

STUDY GUIDE

1 JOHN 4

What is this? On the photograph of the Observation Worksheet for this chapter you will find handwritten 5W/H questions (Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?) on each verse to help you either personally study or lead a discussion on this chapter. The questions are generally very simple and are stated in such a way as to stimulate you to observe the text to discern the answer. As a reminder, given the truth that your ultimate Teacher is the Holy Spirit, begin your time with God with prayer such as Psalm 119:12+

"Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes." (you can vary it with similar prayers - Ps 119:18, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135, 171, etc) The questions are generally highlighted in yellow and the answers in green. Some questions have no answers and are left to your observations and the illuminating/teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Some qualifying thoughts - (1) Use "As is" - these are handwritten and will include mistakes I made, etc. (2) They may not be the best question for a given verse and my guess is that on some verses you will think of a far superior 5W/H question and/or many other questions.

Dr Howard Hendricks once gave an assignment to his seminary students to list as many observations as they could from Acts 1:8. He said "So far they've come up with more than 600 different ones! Imagine what fun you could have with 600 observations on this passage. Would you like to see Scripture with eyes like that?" (P. 63 [Living by the Book](#) - borrow) With practice you can! And needless to say, you will likely make many more observations and related questions than I recorded on the pages below and in fact I pray that the Spirit would indeed lead you to discover a veritable treasure chest of observations and questions! In Jesus' Name. Amen

Why am I doing this? **Mortimer Adler** among others helped me develop a questioning mindset as I read, seeking to read actively rather than passively. Over the years I have discovered that as I have practiced reading with a 5W/H questioning mindset, it has yielded more accurate interpretation and the good fruit of meditation. In other words, consciously interacting with the inspired Holy Word of God and the illuminating Holy Spirit has honed my ability to meditate on the Scripture, and my prayer is that this tool will have the same impact in your spiritual life. The benefits of meditation are literally priceless in regard to their value in this life and in the life to come (cf discipline yourself for godliness in 1Ti 4:8+.) For some of the benefits - see Joshua 1:8+ and Psalm 1:2-3+. It will take diligence and mental effort to develop an "inductive" ([especially an "observational"](#)), interrogative mindset as you read God's Word, but it bears repeating that the benefits in this life and the rewards in the next will make it more than worth the effort you invest! Dear Christian reader let me encourage you to strongly consider learning the skills of [inductive Bible study](#) and spending the rest of your life practicing them on the Scriptures and living them out in your daily walk with Christ.

Although Mortimer Adler's advice is from a secular perspective, his words are worth pondering...

Strictly, all reading is active. What we call passive is simply less active. Reading is better or worse according as it is more or less active. And one reader is better than another in proportion as he is capable of a greater range of activity in reading. (Adler's classic book [How to Read a Book is free online](#))

[John Piper](#) adds that "Insight or understanding is the product of intensive, headache-producing meditation on two or three verses and how they fit together. This kind of reflection and rumination is provoked by asking questions of the text. And you cannot do it if you hurry. Therefore, we must resist the deceptive urge to carve notches in our bibliographic gun. Take two hours to ask ten questions of Galatians 2:20+ and you will gain one hundred times the insight you would have attained by reading thirty pages of the New Testament or any other book. Slow down. Query. Ponder. Chew.... (John Dewey rightly said) "People only truly think when they are confronted with a problem. Without some kind of dilemma to stimulate thought, behavior becomes habitual rather than thoughtful."

"Asking questions is the key to understanding."

--Jonathan Edwards

That said, below are the [5W/H questions](#) for each verse in this chapter (click page to enlarge). This is not neatly typed but is handwritten and was used for leading a class discussion on this chapter, so you are welcome to use it in this "as is" condition...

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1 John 4:19 We love, because He first loved us ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek - hemeis agapomen (1PPAI) hoti autos protos egapesen (3SAAI) hemas .

KJV 1 John 4:19 We love him, because he first loved us.

BGT 1 John 4:19 με ς αγαπ μεν, τι α τ ς πρ τος γ πησεν μ ς.

NET 1 John 4:19 We love because he loved us first.

CSB 1 John 4:19 We love because He first loved us.

ESV 1 John 4:19 We love because he first loved us.

NIV 1 John 4:19 We love because he first loved us.

NLT 1 John 4:19 We love each other because he loved us first.

NRS 1 John 4:19 We love because he first loved us.

NJB 1 John 4:19 Let us love, then, because he first loved us.

NAB 1 John 4:19 We love because he first loved us.

YLT 1 John 4:19 we -- we love him, because He -- He first loved us;

MIT 1 John 4:19 We love, because he first loved us.

GWN 1 John 4:19 We love because God loved us first.

BBE 1 John 4:19 We have the power of loving, because he first had love for us.

RSV 1 John 4:19 We love, because he first loved us.

NKJ 1 John 4:19 We love Him because He first loved us.

ASV 1 John 4:19 We love, because he first loved us.

Amplified - We love Him, because He first loved us.

Wuest - As for us, let us be constantly loving, because He Himself first loved us. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

- 1Jn 4:10 Lu 7:47 John 3:16 Jn 15:16 2Co 5:14,15 Ga 5:22 Eph 2:3-5 Titus 3:3-5
- [1 John 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

1 John 4:10+ In this is love, **not that we loved God, but that He loved us** and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

John 6:44+ "No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

WHY DO WE LOVE? HOW IS IT EVEN POSSIBLE?

We love ([agapao](#) - present tense), **because** ([hoti](#)) **He first loved** ([agapao](#)) **us** - Refers to **we** John and all believers as in 1Jn 4:17. **We love** describes an active, dynamic love (not an emotional feeling) and in the present tense speaks of our lifestyle. Agape love is divine love and implies, indeed must have, a supernatural source, the indwelling Spirit (Gal 5:22-23+). So if a man loves with this quality of love, it is clear indication he has the Spirit of Christ. **Because** is a term of explanation so John is explaining why believers can even exhibit agape love. John's point is that God's love always takes the initiative and our love is (or should be) a response to His love. [Stott](#) adds that "God's love was primary; all true love is a response to his initiative." "All human love is preceded and generated by the love of God." ([Vincenz](#)) John has already explained how **He loved us** writing "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that **He loved us** and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1Jn 4:10+) One could think of believers as "conduits" of vertical love which is then displayed horizontally.

*God's love is: spontaneous in its source; universal in scope;
long-suffering in intensity; self-sacrificing in character,
aggressive in action; and constant in duration.*

-- W Griffith-Thomas

John MacArthur - It was God's perfect and eternal love that first sovereignly drew believers to Him (1Jn 4:10; John 15:9, 16, 19; Acts 13:48; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 1:4), thus enabling them to reflect His love to others. (See [1-3 John - Volume 5 - Page 171](#))

Without God's initiative

we would have not known genuine love

[David Smith](#) - The thought is that the amazing love of God in Christ is the inspiration of all the love that stirs in our hearts. It awakens within us an answering love—a grateful love for Him manifesting itself in love for our brethren (cf. 1Jn 4:11+).

John Butler - The love which God has for us is the great prompter of love in us. His love for us is the great motivation for love in us. If His love does not inspire, your heart is extremely hard.

*if you are struggling to love someone, especially someone who has wronged you,
meditate on God's love as it was shown to you at the cross*

Steven Cole - Lest we become proud in thinking that we can love others on our own, John goes on to show (1Jn 4:19) that God is the Source of all love. Love that gives us **confidence in the day of judgment** (1Jn 4:17+) comes from God. Spurgeon has five different sermons on verse 19 alone (**ED: [see resources where there are actually 6 messages](#)**), so I must be very incomplete here! The original almost certainly reads, "We love, because He first loved us." (The KJV, "We love *Him*," is based on later manuscripts that copyists altered.) John's point in the context is that if we love God or others to any extent with genuine biblical love, we need to remember that such love did not originate with us. It came from God, who loved us while we were yet sinners. It is evidence that we have experienced His love in a saving way. One practical application of 1Jn 4:19 is, if you are struggling to love someone, especially someone who has wronged you, meditate on God's love as it was shown to you at the cross. You did not deserve it in any way. On the contrary, you deserved His wrath and judgment. But in spite of all of your sins, Jesus willingly suffered the penalty that you should have received. Now He wants you to be the channel for His love to other sinners. ([1 John 4:17-21 Facing the Judgment with Confidence](#))

*It was for me that Jesus died! for me, and a world of men
Just as sinful and just as slow to give back His love again;
He didn't wait till I came to Him, but He loved me at my worst;
He needn't ever have died for me if I could have loved Him first.*
-- Dora Greenwell

William Barclay - Human love is a response to divine love. We love because God loved us. It is the sight of His love (**ED: AND THE EXPERIENCE OF HIS LOVE AS THE SPIRIT POURS THIS LOVE OUT IN OUR HEARTS - Ro 5:5+**) which awakens in us the desire to love Him as He first loved us and to love our fellow-men as He loves them.

Danny Akin says [Alfred Plummer](#) "gives three reasons why this fact is significant: (1) Our love owes its origin to God's love. (2) Love is characterized by fear when there is a doubt it will be returned. We have no fear of this since God's love was prior to ours. (3) Affection can easily flow from a heart filled with gratitude for God's initiation of love toward us." (See [1.2.3 John: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition](#))

John Stott - John makes a general affirmation about God's people. Our great characteristic, he says, is not that we fear, but that we love. (Borrow [The Letters of John](#))

Paul describes how God **first loved us**

For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. 4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and [His] love for mankind appeared (IN THE PERSON OF HIS SON), 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:3-5+)

*The reason for our love is found in free grace.
God first loved us, and now we must love him; we cannot help it.*

C H Spurgeon - The reason for our love is found in free grace. God first loved us, and now we must love him; we cannot help it. It sometimes seems too much for a poor sinner to talk about loving God. If an emmet or a snail were to say that it loved a queen, you would think it strange, that it should look so high for an object of affection; but there is no distance between an insect and a man compared with the distance between man and God. Yet love doth fling a flying bridge from our manhood up to his Godhead. "We love him, because he first loved us." If he could come down to us, we can go up to him. If his love could come down to such unworthy creatures as we are, then our poor love can find wings with which to mount up to him. (Exposition on 1 John 4)

William MacDonald - The only reason we love at all is because He first loved us. The Ten Commandments require that a man should love his God and neighbor, but the law could not produce this love. How then could God obtain this love which His righteousness required? He solved the problem by sending His Son to die for us. Such wonderful love draws out our hearts to Him in return. We say, "You have bled and died for me; from now on I will live for You." (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

*A Christian ought to become what God is, and "God is love."
To argue otherwise is to prove that one does not really know God!*

Warren Wiersbe - A large quantity of radioactive material was stolen from a hospital. When the hospital administrator notified the police, he said: "Please warn the thief that he is carrying death with him, and that the radioactive material cannot be successfully

hidden. As long as he has it in his possession, it is affecting him disastrously!" A person who claims he knows God and is in union with Him must be personally affected by this relationship. A Christian ought to become what God is, and "God is love." To argue otherwise is to prove that one does not really know God! ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

C H Spurgeon has a number of quotes related to the love for God -

This is a fact for every true follower of Jesus. "There is no exception to this rule; if a man loves not God, neither is he born of God. Show me a fire without heat, then show me regeneration that does not produce love to God."

"I cannot imagine a true man saying, 'I love Christ, but I do not want others to know that I love him, lest they should laugh at me.' That is a reason to be laughed at, or rather, to be wept over. Afraid of being laughed at? Oh sir, this is indeed a cowardly fear!"

Look through all the pages of history, and put to the noblest men and women, who seem to still live, this question, 'Who loves Christ?' and, at once, up from dark dungeons and cruel racks there rises the confessor's cry, 'We love him;' and from the fiery stake, where they clapped their hands as they were being burned to death, the same answer comes, 'We love him.' If you could walk through the miles of catacombs at Rome, and if the holy dead, whose dust lies there, could suddenly wake up, they would all shout, 'We love him.' The best and the bravest of men, the noblest and purest of women, have all been in this glorious company; so, surely, you are not ashamed to come forward and say, 'Put my name down among them.'

"Be out-and-out for him; unfurl your colours, never hide them, but nail them to the mast, and say to all who ridicule the saints, 'If you have any ill words for the followers of Christ, pour them out upon me.... but know this—ye shall hear it whether you like it or not,—"I love Christ."

"Every man that ever was saved had to come to God not as a lover of God, but as a sinner, and then believe in God's love to him as a sinner.

"Jesus loved you when you lived carelessly, when you neglected his Word, when the knee was unbent in prayer. Ah! He loved some of you when you were in the dancing saloon, when you were in the playhouse, ay, even when you were in the brothel. He loved you when you were at hell's gate, and drank damnation at every draught. He loved you when you could not have been worse or further from him than you were. Marvellous, O Christ, is thy strange love!"

"I have sometimes noticed that, in addressing Sunday-school children, it is not uncommon to tell them that the way to be saved is to love Jesus, which is not true. The way to be saved for man, woman, or child is to trust Jesus for the pardon of sin, and then, trusting Jesus, love comes as a fruit. Love is by no means the root. Faith alone occupies that place."

"Love believed is the mother of love returned.

"Yet we must not try to make ourselves love our Lord, but look to Christ's love first, for his love to us will beget in us love to him. I know that some of you are greatly distressed because you cannot love Christ as much as you would like to do, and you keep on fretting because it is so. Now, just forget your own love to him, and think of his great love to you; and then, immediately, your love will come to something more like that which you would desire it to be.

"Now remember, we never make ourselves love Christ more by flogging ourselves for not loving him more. We come to love those better whom we love by knowing them better ... If you want to love Christ more, think more of him, think more of what you have received from him."

"Oh, if you do really believe that he has loved you so, sit down, and turn the subject over in your mind, and say to yourself, 'Jesus loves me; Jesus chose me; Jesus redeemed me; Jesus called me; Jesus has pardoned me; Jesus has taken me into union with himself.' "

Love (verb) ([25](#))([agapao](#)) means to love unconditionally and sacrificially as God Himself loves sinful men (John 3:16), the way He loves the Son (John 3:35, 15:9, 17:23, 24). Note that [agapao](#) is a verb and by its verbal nature calls for action. This quality of love is not an emotion but is an action initiated by a volitional choice."expresses the purest, noblest form of love, which is volitionally driven, not motivated by superficial appearance, emotional attraction, or sentimental relationship." (John Macarthur)

Vine writes that "Love can be known only from the actions it prompts. God's love is seen in the gift of His Son, 1 John 4:9, 10. But obviously this is not the love of complacency, or affection, that is, it was not drawn out by

any excellency in its objects, Ro 5:8. It was an exercise of the divine will in deliberate choice, made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God Himself." ([Collected Writings](#))

Wuest says agape "speaks of a love which is awakened by a sense of value in an object which causes one to prize it. It springs from an apprehension of the preciousness of an object. It is a love of esteem and approbation. The quality of this love is determined by the character of the one who loves, and that of the object loved." ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

AGAPAO USES BY JOHN - Jn. 3:16; Jn. 3:19; Jn. 3:35; Jn. 8:42; Jn. 10:17; Jn. 11:5; Jn. 12:43; Jn. 13:1; Jn. 13:23; Jn. 13:34; Jn. 14:15; Jn. 14:21; Jn. 14:23; Jn. 14:24; Jn. 14:28; Jn. 14:31; Jn. 15:9; Jn. 15:12; Jn. 15:17; Jn. 17:23; Jn. 17:24; Jn. 17:26; Jn. 19:26; Jn. 21:7; Jn. 21:15; Jn. 21:16; Jn. 21:20; 1 Jn. 2:10; 1 Jn. 2:15; 1 Jn. 3:10; 1 Jn. 3:11; 1 Jn. 3:14; 1 Jn. 3:18; 1 Jn. 3:23; 1 Jn. 4:7; 1 Jn. 4:8; 1 Jn. 4:10; 1 Jn. 4:11; 1 Jn. 4:12; 1 Jn. 4:19; 1 Jn. 4:20; 1 Jn. 4:21; 1 Jn. 5:1; 1 Jn. 5:2; 2 Jn. 1:1; 2 Jn. 1:5; 3 Jn. 1:1; Jude 1:1; Rev. 1:5; Rev. 3:9; Rev. 12:11; Rev. 20:9

First ([4413](#))([protos](#)) technically **prōtos** is the superlative adjective form of the term pro. Thus **prōtos** means "foremost, first". (1) first in time or place (1a) in any succession of things or persons 2) first in rank 2a) influence, honour 2b) chief 2c) principal 3) first, at the first

Gingrich - **1. first—a. first, earliest, earlier** Mt 12:45; 21:28; Mk 12:20; Lk 2:2; 20:29; Jn 1:15, 30 (both = earlier); Jn 5:4 v.l.; 20:4; Acts 1:1 ; 20:18; 26:23; Phil 1:5; 2Ti 4:16; Heb 9:15; 10:9; Rev 1:17 .—**b. first, foremost, most important, most prominent** Mt 20:27; Mk 6:21; 12:28; Lk 13:30; Acts 25:2; 1Cor 15:3; Eph 6:2; 1 Ti 1:15.—**c. outer, anterior** Heb 9:2, 6, 8.—

2. the neut. proton as adv.—a. of time or sequence first, in the first place, before, earlier, to begin with Mt 5:24; 8:21; Mk 4:28; 13:10; Lk 12:1; J 15:18; 18:13; Ac 7:12; Ro 1:8; 15:24; 1 Cor 12:28 ; 15:46.—**b. of degree in the first place, above all**, especially Mt 6:33; Acts 3:26; Ro 1:16; 2:9f; 2 Cor 8:5; 1 Ti 2:1; 2 Pt 1:20 . [English words using **proto-**, a combining form, in protomartyr, protomorphic protozoa; proton]

Hymns Related to 1 John 4:19

- [Christ's Love Is All I Need](#)
- [Ever by My Love Be Ownèd](#)
- [God Helping Me](#)
- [Gone from My Heart](#)
- [Him on Yonder Cross I Love](#)
- [How Can I but Love Him?](#)
- [How Can I Help but Love Him?](#)
- [I Know Not Why!](#)
- [I Love Him](#)
- [I Love Him Because He First Loved Me](#)
- [I Love Thee](#)
- [I Sought the Lord](#)
- [I Will Love Jesus](#)
- [I Will Sing of Jesus' Love](#)
- [I'll Praise Him While I Live](#)
- [Lord, Who Hast Sought Us Out, Unsought](#)
- [My Jesus, I Love Thee](#)
- [Never Will I Cease to Love Him](#)
- [O How I Love Jesus](#)
- [Savior, Teach Me Day by Day](#)
- [Then Do I Love Jesus](#)
- [There Is One Whom I Love](#)
- [When the Lord of Love Was Here](#)
- [Why Do I Love Jesus?](#)

J. C. Philpot. RICHES The soul melts at the sight!

"We love Him, because He first loved us." 1 John 4:19

Our affections never flow unto Jesus, until we have had some divine discovery of Him to our heart and conscience. We may try to love Him—we may think it our duty to do so—we may be secretly ashamed of our miserable coldness, and may lament our barrenness in love to Jesus. But no power of our own can raise up true love to Jesus. We cannot love the Lord until we know that the Lord loves us—nor can we love Him with all our heart and soul, until He tells us that He loves us with all His. When He says "I have loved you with an everlasting love," and sheds abroad His love in the soul—this gives power to love Him. When, too, He sets Himself before our eyes in His divine beauty and blessedness—this makes us fall in love with Him. For beauty kindles love. It is so often in natural love—and always so in divine love. Jesus has but to touch the heart and it softens. He has but to appear—and the soul melts at the sight! - J. C. Philpot. RICHES

Robert Morgan - The Pearly Gate - Borrow [From this verse : 365 inspiring stories](#)

We love Him because He first loved us. 1 John 4:19

William Tyndale was a brilliant, winsome scholar whose life was changed by finding today's verse in Erasmus' Greek New Testament. He called it the pearly gate through which I entered the Kingdom. I used to think that salvation was not for me, since I did not love God; but those precious words showed me that God does not love us because we first loved Him. No, no; we love Him because He first loved us. It makes all the difference!

Tyndale was born at a critical time. Christopher Columbus was discovering whole new worlds; the printing press was churning out books; and Luther's Reformation had rediscovered evangelical theology. As a young man, Tyndale felt the time was ripe to translate the Bible into the common languages, and began dreaming of rendering the Bible into English.

But his idea was poorly received by the British Church and State. Sir Thomas More was commissioned by Henry VIII to refute Tyndale, and the two carried on a war of words. In one of his early salvos, Tyndale published a letter in 1531 from Antwerp where he was in hiding. It began: Our love and good works make not God first love us, nor change Him from hate to love. No, His love and deeds make us love, and change us from hate to love. For He loved us when we were evil, and His enemies; and chose us to make us good and to shew us love and to draw us to Him, that we should love again. If ye could see what is written in the first epistle of John, though all the other Scriptures were laid apart, ye should see all this. ...

Tyndale died at the stake at age 42, but he produced so accurate an English translation of Scripture that more than 90 percent of all his wordings appeared nearly 100 years later in the King James Version. He is called the "Father of the English Bible."

David Jeremiah -THE PEARLY GATE (borrow [Sanctuary](#))

1 JOHN 4:19 We love Him because He first loved us.

Why does God love us? Not because we're lovable by nature. Deuteronomy 7:7–8 offers this remarkable answer: "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you...." Read that again! "The LORD ... set His love on you ... because ... the LORD loves you." He loves us just because He loves us. His nature is to love.

Why do we love God? Not because we're loving by nature. First John 4:19 offers a remarkable answer: "We love Him because He first loved us." Our love is responsive. William Tyndale, who was later burned at the stake for translating the Bible into English, was a brilliant, winsome scholar whose life was changed by finding 1 John 4:19 in the Greek New Testament. He called it "the pearly gate through which I entered the Kingdom." Tyndale wrote, "I used to think that salvation was not for me, since I did not love God; but those precious words showed me that God does not love us because we first loved Him. No, no; we love Him because He first loved us. It makes all the difference!"

Greg Laurie - THE CHOICE WE ALL MUST MAKE

We love Him because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

Man, who was created uniquely in the very image of God, was placed in a literal paradise on Earth—heaven on Earth, if you will. He had every legitimate comfort that this world could offer. There was nothing that Adam lacked. He was surrounded by unparalleled beauty. It was a perfect climate. The animal kingdom was subdued. There was no crime, no violence, no perversion—just absolute perfection. Not only that, but God brought a companion for Adam named Eve. And the best feature of all: Adam was able to walk in undisturbed fellowship and communion with God, twenty-four hours a day.

But God gave Adam another wonderful treasure, something that we all have. It is called free will. God loved Adam and wanted to have fellowship with him. But God wanted Adam to love Him not out of fear, but out of love, because love, by its very nature, must be voluntary.

If we are going to really love God, then we need to be able to choose to do so out of our own free will. Involuntary love is a contradiction in terms, and there really is no such thing. If Adam was free to love God on his own initiative, then he also was free not to love God. If he was able to make the right moral choice, then he was, by necessity, also able to make the wrong moral choice. And we all know the choice that he made.

God's creation of morally free beings in His own image clearly ran the risk of having them reject Him and His love. Tragically for Adam and Eve, the wrong choice was made, and we have been feeling the repercussions of it to this very day.

Kenneth Osbeck - Amazing Grace ([borrow](#))

MY JESUS, I LOVE THEE

William R. Featherston, 1846–1873

We love Him because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)
And shall I use these ransomed powers of mine
For things that only minister to me?
Lord, take my tongue, my hands, my heart, my all,
And let me live and love for Thee!
—Unknown

The spiritual depth of “My Jesus, I Love Thee” is made all the more remarkable by the knowledge that it was written by a teenager. William Ralph Featherston of Montreal, Canada, is thought to have written these lines of heartfelt gratitude to Christ at the time of his conversion experience when only 16. It is believed he then sent a copy of his poem to an aunt in Los Angeles, and somehow the text appeared anonymously in print in an English hymnal, The London Book, in 1864.

Several years later, a well-known American Baptist pastor, Dr. A. J. Gordon, discovered the anonymous hymn in the English hymnbook and decided to compose a better melody for it. With its new tune the hymn has since been included in nearly every evangelical hymnal and has been sung frequently by believers everywhere during hushed moments of rededication to God.

How marvelous are the workings of God in bringing together expressions such as these, providing a hymn that has been used in a remarkable way for more than a century to direct Christians to a deeper relationship with their Lord. May these words cause each of us even now to renew our devotion to God so that this love for Christ may be reflected in all of the activities of this day.

My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine—For Thee all the follies of sin I resign; my gracious Redeemer,
my Savior art Thou: If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I love Thee because Thou hast first loved me and purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree; I love Thee for
wearing the thorns on Thy brow: If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I'll love Thee in life, I will love Thee in death, and praise Thee as long as Thou lendest me breath; and say
when the death-dew lies cold on my brow, “If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.”

In mansions of glory and endless delight, I'll ever adore Thee in heaven so bright; I'll sing with the glittering
crown on my brow, “If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.”

For Today: John 14:23; Ephesians 2:4, 5; 1 Peter 1:8; 2:9; 1 John 4:7–21

Express your own love for the Savior in fresh and fervent words; reflect on what He has done for you, what He is presently doing, and the future glory that still awaits. Determine to demonstrate your loving devotion

Kenneth Osbeck - Amazing Grace ([borrow](#))

O HOW I LOVE JESUS

Frederick Whitfield, 1829–1904

We love because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

This simply stated, lilting musical testimony has been another of the Sunday school favorites since it was first published in leaflet form in 1855. It has since been translated into various languages and has been included in numerous evangelical hymnals.

The words express so well the response of believers of any age as we reflect on all that Christ has done and continues to do for us daily. Indirectly, the hymn also exalts the written Word, for it is only through the study of the revealed written Word that we gain a true knowledge of the Living Word.

The text originally included eight stanzas. Several interesting verses not found in present hymnals include these words:

It tells me of a Father's smile that beams upon His child.
It cheers me through this little while, through deserts waste and wild.
It bids my trembling soul rejoice, and dries each rising tear.
It tells me in a still small voice, to trust and not to fear.

The author, Frederick Whitfield, was an Anglican church clergyman. He is credited with more than 30 books of religious verse. The anonymous tune is a typical 19th century American folk song used in the campground meetings of that time.

Even a century after they were written, these ageless words are still appropriate for expressing our love and devotion for Christ:

There is a name I love to hear; I love to sing its worth; it sounds like music in mine ear, the sweetest name on earth.

It tells me of a Savior's love, who died to set me free; it tells me of His precious blood, the sinner's perfect plea.

It tells me what my Father hath in store for ev'ry day, and, tho I tread a darksome path, yields sunshine all the way.

It tells of One whose loving heart can feel my deepest woe, who in each sorrow bears a part that none can bear below.

Chorus: O how I love Jesus, O how I love Jesus, O how I love Jesus—because He first loved me!

For Today: John 14:23; Philippians 2:9–11; 1 Peter 1:8; 1 John 4:7–21; Jude 21

Breathe a prayer expressing your love to Christ for all that He means to you. Thank Him for initiating His love on your behalf. Thank Him also for the daily sunshine He gives. Carry this little musical nugget with you throughout the day—

Alexander Maclaren - The Ray and the Reflection 1 John 4:19 (See [several articles on 1 John 4:19](#))

The correct reading of my text, as you will find in the Revised Version, omits 'Him' in the first clause, and simply says 'we love,' without specifying the object. That is to say, for the moment John's thought is fixed rather on the inward transformation effected—from self-regard to love—than on considering the object on which the love is expended. When the heart is melted, the streams flow wherever there is a channel. The river, as he goes on to show us, parts into two heads, and love to God and love to man are, in their essence and root-principle, one thing. So my text is the summary of all revelation about God, the ultimate word about all our relations to Him, and the all-inclusive directory as to our conduct to one another.

I. The ultimate word about God. 'He first loved us.' Properly and strictly speaking, that 'first' only declares the priority of the Divine love towards us over ours towards Him. But we may fairly give it a wider meaning, and say—first of all, ere Creation and Time—first of all things was God's love: last to be discovered because most ancient of all. (1) Consider, for a moment, the relation which all the other perfections of the Divine nature have to this central and foundation one. There is the central blaze: the rest is but the brilliant periphery that encloses it. (2) Are we not warranted in believing that in that which we call the love of God there do abide the same elements as characterise the thing that bears the same name in our human experience? The spectrum has told us that the constituents of the mighty sun in the heavens are the same as the constituents of this little darkened earth. And there are the same lines in the Divine spectrum that there are in ours.

II. Here we have the ultimate word as to our religion. (1) A simple trust in the love of God, as manifested in Jesus Christ, our Lord, is the only thing which will so deal with man's natural self-regard and desire to make himself his own object and centre, as to substitute for that the victorious love of God. (2) If we love Him, it will be the motive power and spring of all manner of obedience and glad services. St. Augustine's paradox, rightly understood, is a magnificent truth, 'Love! and do what you will'.

III. Here is the ultimate word about our conduct to men. The only victorious antagonist to the self-regarding temperament of average men, and the only power which will change philanthropy from a sentiment into a self-denying and active principle of conduct, is to be found in the belief of the love of God in Jesus Christ, and in answering love to Him. —A. Maclaren, *Triumphant Certainties*, p. 305.

Octavius Winslow Daily Walking with God

"We love him, because he first loved us." 1 John 4:19

All love to God in the soul is the result of His love to us; it is begotten in the heart by His Spirit: He took the first step, and made the first advance—"He first loved us." Oh heart-melting truth! The love of God to us when yet we were sinners, who can unfold it? what mortal tongue can describe it? Before we had any being, and when we were enemies, He sent His Son to die for us; and when we were far off by wicked works He sent His Spirit to bring us to Him in the cloudy and dark day. All His dealings with us since then—

His patience, restoring mercies, tender, loving, faithful care, yes, the very strokes of His rod—have but unfolded the depths of His love towards His people; this is the love we desire you to be filled with. "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God." Draw largely from this river—why should you deny yourselves? There is enough love in God to overflow the hearts of all His saints through all eternity; then why not be filled? "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God;" stand not upon the brink of the fountain, linger not upon the margin of this river; enter into it—plunge into it; it is for you—poor, worthless, unworthy, vile, as you feel yourself to be, this river of love is yet for you! Seek to be filled with it, that you may know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, and that your heart, in return, may ascend in a flame of love to God.

Deal much and closely with a crucified Savior. Here is the grand secret of a constant ascending of the affections to God. If you do find it difficult to comprehend the love of God towards you, read it in the cross of His dear Son. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Dwell upon this amazing fact; drink into this precious truth; muse upon it, ponder it, search into it, pray over it, until your heart is melted down, and broken, and overwhelmed with God's wondrous love to you, in the gift of Jesus. Oh, how will this rekindle the flame that is ready to die in your bosom! how it will draw you up in a holy and unreserved surrender of body, soul, and spirit! Do not forget, then, to deal much with Jesus. Whenever you detect a waning of love, a reluctance to take up the daily cross, a shrinking from the precept, go immediately to Calvary; go simply and directly to Jesus; get your heart warmed with ardent love by contemplating Him upon the cross, and soon will the frosts that gather round it melt away, the congealed current shall begin to flow, and the "chariots of Amminadab" shall bear your soul away in communion and fellowship with God.

Loved with an Unfailing Love Max Lucado - We love Him because He first loved us.1 JOHN 4:19

God loves you with an unfailing love.

England saw a glimpse of such love in 1878. The second daughter of Queen Victoria was Princess Alice. Her young son was infected with a horrible affliction known as black diphtheria. Doctors quarantined the boy and told the mother to stay away.

But she couldn't. One day she overheard him whisper to the nurse, "Why doesn't my mother kiss me anymore?" The words melted her heart. She ran to her son and smothered him with kisses. Within a few days, she was buried.⁸

What would drive a mother to do such a thing? What would lead God to do something greater? Love. Trace the greatest action of God to the greatest attribute of God—his love. . . .

And, oh, what a love this is. It's "too wonderful to be measured" (Ephesians 3:19 CEV). But though we cannot measure it, may I urge you to trust it? Some of you are so hungry for such love. Those who should have loved you didn't. Those who could have loved you wouldn't. You were left at the hospital.

Left at the altar. Left with an empty bed. Left with a broken heart. Left with your question, "Does anybody love me?"

Please listen to heaven's answer. As you ponder him on the cross, hear God assure, "I do."[—It's Not About Me: Rescue From the Life We Thought Would ... - Page 72](#)

Daily Light on the Daily Path - Draw me after you; let us run.

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you."—I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love.—"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."—"Behold, the Lamb of God!"—"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.—We love because he first loved us.

My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away."

Song 1:4; Jer. 31:3; Hos. 11:4; John 12:32; John 1:36; John 3:14–15; Ps. 73:25; 1 John 4:19; Song 2:10–13

Don Fortner - 'We love him, because he first loved us'

Read 1 John 4:1–21

We may differ on many points. But in this one thing every true child of God is like every other child of God: 'We love him.' We do not

love him as we desire. We do not love him as we know we should. We do not love him as we soon shall. But we do really love him. It is not possible for a man to experience the grace of God in salvation and not love the God of all grace. It is not possible for a man to know the efficacy of Christ's blood in his own soul and not love his gracious Redeemer. It is not possible for a man to have his heart renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit and not love the Spirit of life. In spite of our many weaknesses, sins and failures, we do honestly and sincerely confess, 'Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.'

We know also that we would never have loved him if he had not loved us first. The love of God for us precedes our love for him. 'He first loved us.' He loved us before we had any desire to be loved by him. He loved us before we sought his grace. He loved us before we had any repentance or faith. He loved us before we had any being. He loved us eternally. Does he not say, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I called thee'? He chose us, redeemed us and called us because he loved us.

Not only does God's love for us precede our love for God, but God's love for us is the cause of our love for him. 'We love him, because he first loved us.' This heart of mine was so hard, this will was so stubborn, that I would never have loved the Lord, if he had not intervened to conquer me with his love. In the midst of my sin and corruption, he passed by, and behold it was 'the time of love'. He revealed his great love for me in Christ. As I beheld the crucified Christ, dying in the place of sinners, the love of God conquered this rebel's heart. Trusting Christ as my only Savior, I am compelled to love him, because he first loved me. And now I know that whatever I am, by the grace of God, I am because he loved me. Tell me, my friend, is it not so with you?

Daily Light on the Daily Path - Though you have not seen him, you love him.

For we walk by faith, not by sight.—We love because he first loved us.—So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.—In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.—To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."—Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

1 Pet. 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:7; 1 John 4:19; 1 John 4:16; Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:27; 1 John 4:20; John 20:29; Ps. 2:12

Max Lucado - Gratitude Is Always an Option

We love Him because He first loved us. 1 JOHN 4:19

I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me. PROVERBS 8:17

Always be joyful. Pray continually, and give thanks whatever happens. That is what God wants for you in Christ Jesus.1
THESSALONIANS 5:16–18 NCV

If you look long enough and hard enough, you'll find something to bellyache about. So quit looking! Lift your eyes off the weeds. Major in the grace of God. And . . .

Measure the gifts of God. Collect your blessings. Catalog his kindnesses. Assemble your reasons for gratitude and recite them. "Always be joyful. Pray continually, and give thanks whatever happens. That is what God wants for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 NCV).

Look at the totality of those terms. Always be joyful. Pray continually. Give thanks whatever happens. Learn a lesson from Sidney Connell. When her brand-new bicycle was stolen, she called her dad with the bad news. He expected his daughter to be upset. But Sidney wasn't crying. She was honored. "Dad," she boasted, "out of all the bikes they could have taken, they took mine."

Gratitude is always an option. Matthew Henry made it his. When the famous scholar was accosted by thieves and robbed of his purse, he wrote this in his diary: "Let me be thankful first, because I was never robbed before; second, because, although they took my purse, they did not take my life; third, although they took my all, it was not much; and, fourthly, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed."7

Make gratitude your default emotion, and you'll find yourself giving thanks for the problems of life.[NKJV, Lucado Encouraging Word Bible: Holy Bible. New King...](#)

C H Spurgeon - "We love him because he first loved us." - 1 John 4:19

There is no light in the planet but that which proceedeth from the sun; and there is no true love to Jesus in the heart but that which cometh from the Lord Jesus Himself. From this overflowing fountain of the infinite love of God, all our love to God must spring. This must ever be a great and certain truth, that we love him for no other reason than because he first loved us. Our love to him is the fair offspring of his love to us. Cold admiration, when studying the works of God, anyone may have, but the warmth of love can only be kindled in the heart by God's Spirit. How great the wonder that such as we should ever have been brought to love Jesus at all! How marvellous that when we had rebelled against him, he should, by a display of such amazing love, seek to draw us back. No! never should we have had a grain of love towards God unless it had been sown in us by the sweet seed of his love to us. Love, then, has for its parent the love of God shed abroad in the heart: but after it is thus divinely born, it must be divinely nourished. Love is an exotic; it is not a plant which will flourish naturally in human soil, it must be watered from above. Love to Jesus is a flower of a delicate nature, and if it received no nourishment but that which could be drawn from the rock of our hearts it would soon wither. As love comes from heaven, so it must feed on heavenly bread. It cannot exist in the wilderness unless it be fed by manna from on high. Love must feed on love. The very soul and life of our love to God is his love to us.

I love thee, Lord, but with no love of mine,
For I have none to give;
I love thee, Lord; but all the love is thine,
For by thy love I live.
I am as nothing, and rejoice to be
Emptied, and lost, and swallowed up in thee.

C H Spurgeon - Daily Help

"We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Here is the starting point of love's race. This is the rippling rill which afterwards swells into a river, the torch with which the pile of piety is kindled. The emancipated spirit loves the Savior for the freedom which He has conferred upon it. It beholds the agony with which the priceless gift was purchased, and it adores the bleeding Sufferer for the pains which He so generously endured. On taking a survey of our whole lives, we see that the kindness of God has run all through it like a silver thread.

Warren Wiersbe - The theme of God's love began chapter 3, and here it closes the chapter: "We love, because He first loved us." By nature, we know little about love (Titus 3:3–6); God had to show it to us on the cross (Rom. 5:8) and plant it in our hearts (Rom. 5:5). Note 1 John 4:10. "There is none who seeks after God," says Rom. 3:11 (NKJV), so God came seeking man (Gen. 3:8; Luke 19:10). [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament](#)

J I Packer - We love because he first loved us.1 JOHN 4:19

New Testament Christianity is essentially a response to the revelation of the Creator as a God of love. God is a tripersonal Being who so loves ungodly humans that the Father has given the Son, the Son has given His life, and Father and Son together now give the Spirit to save sinners from unimaginable misery and lead them into unimaginable glory. Believing in and being overwhelmed by this amazing reality of divine love generates and sustains the love to God and neighbor that Christ's two great commandments require. Our love is to express our gratitude for God's gracious love to us, and to be modeled on it. Concise Theology, 181

I love God and my neighbor in response to God's love for me.

We may say of the silvered sea that it shines because the moon sheds upon it its silvery light. We may say of the full-orbed moon that she shines in soft beauty because she reflects the glory of the far-absent sun. But of the sun we can only say that it shines because it shines. We know of no eternal sources from which it draws its glory. So it is with the great heart of God. He loves, because He loves. "He first loved us."

C H Spurgeon -1 John 4:19 "We love him, because he first loved us." Think how much he must have loved you when you were going on in sin. You used to call his ministers hypocrites, his people fools. His Sabbaths were idle days with you. His precious book was unread. You never sought his grace. Perhaps you used to curse him, perhaps persecute him in his children, and yet he loved you. And when his Spirit came after you, you tried to quench him. You would not attend the place where the arrow had first stuck in your conscience. You went to the theater. You tried to quench the Spirit, but his love would not be mastered by you. He had

J. H. Newman, Parochial and Plain Sermons, i. 303. - In heaven, love will absorb fear; but in this world, fear and love must go together. No one can love God aright without fearing Him; though many fear Him, and yet do not love Him. Self-confident men, who do not know their own hearts, or the reasons they have for being dissatisfied with themselves, do not fear God, and they think this bold freedom is to love Him. Deliberate sinners fear but cannot love Him. But devotion to Him consists in love and fear, as we may understand from our ordinary attachment to each other. No one really loves another, who does not feel a certain reverence towards him. When friends transgress this sobriety of affection, they may indeed continue associates for a time, but they have broken the bond of union. It is a mutual respect that makes friendship lasting. So again, in the feelings of inferiors towards superiors. Fear must go before love. Till he who has authority shows he has it and can use it, his forbearance will not be valued duly; his kindness will look like weakness. We learn to contemn what we do not fear; and we cannot love what we contemn. So in religion also. We cannot understand Christ's mercies till we understand His power, His glory, His unspeakable holiness, and our demerits; that is, until we first fear Him. Not that fear comes first, and then love; for the most part they will proceed together. Fear is allayed by the love of Him, and our love is sobered by our fear of Him.¹

WOUNDED FOR ME - Charles Edwards

We love him, because he first loved us.¹ JOHN 4:19

COULD YOU AND I PASS this day through these heavens, and see what is now going on in the sanctuary above. . .could you see the Lord with the scars of His five deep wounds in the very midst of the throne. . .all singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," and were one of these angels to tell you, "This is He that undertook the cause of lost sinners: He undertook to be the second Adam - the man in their stead; and lo! there He is upon the throne of heaven; consider Him - look long and earnestly upon His wounds - upon His glory, and tell me, do you think it would be safe to trust Him? Do you think His sufferings and obedience will have been enough? Yes, yes, every soul exclaims, Lord it is enough!

[Jesus sought me when a stranger.](#)

Wandering from the fold of God;
He to rescue me from danger,
Interposed with precious blood.

Oh, to grace how great a debtor;
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace now, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.

ROBERT MURRAY MCCHEYNE

The only cure for a cold heart is to look at the heart of Jesus.—ROBERT MCCHEYNE

LOVE YOUR WORLD James Bryan Smith

We love because he first loved us.¹ JOHN 4:19

When we grasp the magnitude of God's love for us, we will begin to feel it flow out of our hands and feet and mouths and into the lives of others. God has given us his Spirit, a Spirit of love that will drive us to care for one another.

God provides for us the example of how to care for one another. How does God care for us? God cares for our spiritual life, God cares for the health of our soul, and God provides for our physical needs. God is available, God listens, and God never abandons us. This is how we are to care for one another.

Jesus also left us a clear picture of how to care for one another. He never discouraged people, he spoke the truth in love, and he gave of his time and energy to meet the needs of those around him. He received the poor and the sinful in the same manner as he welcomed the rich and the righteous. He loved all people and wept for their pain. We are given the model of how we are to treat one another in the example of Jesus.

We follow God's lead when we care for the world around us in tangible ways and treat others as Jesus treats us.

Lord, empower me to follow your lead and love my world well. Amen.

R E Neighbour - "We love Him, because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19.)

With melody within my heart,

I sing of Christ the Lord;
I sing of Him who loved me so,
And magnify His Word;
He is my God, my Lord, my all.
And I His son would be,
To sing and sound His praises here,
And in eternity.

With heart aglow, and tongue aflame,
I worship at His feet,
I sound aloud His worthy praise
And His dear name repeat;
He is the lover of my soul,
And I His son would be
To love Him here, and love Him there
Throughout eternity.

To know Jesus Christ is to believe Him. However, faith does not dwell alone. We cannot believe Him, and believe all that He is and does, without loving Him.

A life which is foreign to faith will be loveless; and a life that is foreign to love will be faithless. "We love Him BECAUSE He first loved us." The reason for our love is His love.

Herein is seen the depravity of the human heart, the heart that rejects Christ Jesus. Such a heart sins not only against light, but against love. How can we help but love Him?

O love of God, rule in my heart
With power divine;
I would be Thine, in all Thou art,
And be Thou mine;
Let love my being sweetly fill,
Let love my every fiber thrill,
My life entwine.

O love of God, within me dwell
And dwell supreme;
A deep, upflowing, living well
A heav'nly stream:
A love that never more shall cease,
A love of boundless joy and peace,
A blest daydream.

Phillip Brooks - We love Him because He first loved us.—1 John 4:19.

John the Disciple had learned from Jesus, his Master, the truth of the priority of God—the truth that before everything is God.... It is as when up the morning sky, all coldly beautiful with ordered ranks of cloud on cloud, is poured the glow of sunrise, and every least cloud, still the same in place and shape, burns with the transfiguring splendor of the sun. So is it when the priority of existence is seen to rest in a Person, and the background of life is God. Then every new arrival instantly reports itself to Him, and is described in terms of its relationship to Him. Every activity of ours answers to some previous activity of His. Do we hope? It is because we have caught the sound of some promise of His. Do we fear? It is because we have had some glimpse of the dreadfulness of getting out of harmony with Him. Are we curious and inquiring? It is that we may learn some of His truth. Do we resist evil? We are fighting His enemies. Do we help need? We are relieving His children. Do we love Him? It is an answer of gratitude for His love to us. Do we live? It is a projection and extension of His being. Do we die? It is the going home of our immortal souls to Him. Oh, the wonderful richness of life when it is all thus backed with the priority of God! It is the great illumination of all living.

Jerry Bridges - **GROWING IN LOVE** [Holiness Day by Day: Transformational Thoughts](#)

The LORD is on my side.(PSALM 118:6)

How can we develop our love for God so that our obedience is prompted by love instead of some lesser motive? The Scripture gives

us our first clue, or beginning point, when it says, "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Our love to God can only be a response to His love for us. If I don't believe God loves me, I cannot love Him. To love God, I must believe that He is for me, not against me (Romans 8:31) and that He accepts me as a son or a daughter, not a slave (Galatians 4:7).

What would keep us from believing God loves us? The answer is a sense of guilt and condemnation because of our sin. The same tender conscience that enables us to become aware of sins that lie deep beneath the level of external actions can also load us down with guilt. When we're under that burden and sense of condemnation, it is difficult to love God or believe that He loves us.

We cannot love God if we think we're under His judgment and condemnation. James Fraser said, "But whilst the conscience retains the charge of guilt, condemnation, and wrath, there cannot be purity, or sincerity of heart toward God, or sincerity of the love of God. Human nature is so formed, that it cannot love any object that is adverse and terrible to it."¹⁷

This means we must continually take those sins that our consciences accuse us of to the cross and plead the cleansing blood of Jesus. Only the blood of Christ cleanses our consciences so that we may no longer feel guilty (Hebrews 9:14; 10:2).

Joni Eareckson Tada - The Lover of Your Soul [More Precious Than Silver: 366 Daily Devotional Readings - Page 13](#)

We love because he first loved us.—1 John 4:19

When my husband, Ken, and I were dating, one word marked the expression of his love for me: excessive. I received more candies, stuffed animals, sweetheart cards, and vases of fresh yellow roses than I care to remember. I pleaded with him to lighten up, but I learned that not only is love blind; it's deaf. The next day I would receive pink roses instead of yellow ones. There were more solid evidences of Ken's love I could point to, but it was the excesses that delighted me.

We never need doubt the love of Christ. We have plenty of solid evidence. But there may be times when we might wonder just how much Jesus delights himself in us. It is true that bearing the Father's wrath on the cross was the ultimate test of how immense Christ's love is, but our soul wants to know more. I want to know how passionately, how intensely, he feels about me. Did Jesus desire to come to earth? Or was it a matter of fulfilling divine duty?

The question is answered in blood. There is a word that marks the love of Christ, and that is excessive. His love for you overflows all reason, all expectations, all your hopes and dreams. For Christ to lay down his life for you tells you that his covenant is no schoolboy pledge or head-of-state agreement or legal contract. Christ's love is riddled with powerful emotion. For him to die for you is for him to be delighted in you.

Let Christ's passion for you stir the depths of your yearnings for him. Let yourself be drawn to him today, not only because of his sacrifice for your sin but because of his desire for your soul.

Lord Jesus, I am moved deeply by the extravagant, excessive display of your love for me. I am gripped by the intensity of your desire and emotion for my soul. You take delight in me...and my heart rises to take delight in you.

A W Tozer - Learn to Love God for Himself Alone [The Pursuit of the Divine: A. W. Tozer Collection](#)

We love him, because he first loved us. 1 John 4:19

The phrase, "the love of God," when used by Christians almost always refers to God's love for us. We must remember that it can also mean our love for God!

The first and great commandment is that we should love God with all the power of our total personality. Though all love originates in God and is for that reason God's own love, yet we are permitted to catch and reflect back that love in such manner that it becomes our love indeed!

The Christian's love for God has by some religious thinkers been divided into two kinds, the love of gratitude and the love of excellence. But we must carry our love to God further than love of gratitude and love of excellence.

There is a place in the religious experience where we love God for Himself alone, with never a thought of His benefits. There is, in the higher type of love, a supra-rational element that cannot and does not attempt to give reasons for its existence—it only whispers, "I love!"

In the perfection of love, the heart does not reason from admiration to affection, but quickly rises to the height of blind adoration where reason is suspended and the heart worships in unreasoning blessedness. It can only exclaim, "Holy, holy, holy," while scarcely knowing what it means.

If this should all seem too mystical, too unreal, we offer no proof. But some will read and recognize the description of the sunlit peaks

where they have been for at least brief periods and to which they long often to return. And such will need no proof!

Robert Morgan - Jesus Loves Even Me [A Song in My Heart: 366 Devotions from Our Best-Loved Hymns](#)

After the railroad disaster that claimed the life of hymnist Philip Bliss, his writings were compiled and published. Included was a letter to his mother, dated February 7, 1874: "Dear Mother . . . It seems to us your spirit grows sweeter and your life more even and calm. It is not surprising that it should be so; for haven't you and your friends prayed for it? If we are in Christ may we not all expect to grow more and more like Him? . . . You may be sure we shall pray for you, and I can never forget that you prayed for me and watched over me many years before I could pray for myself." Just as Bliss expressed appreciation to his mother by letter, he did so to his heavenly Father in this hymn, published in 1870.

FEBRUARY 7

I am so glad that our Father in Heav'n
Tells of His love in the Book He has giv'n;
Wonderful things in the Bible I see,
This is the dearest, that Jesus loves me.

Though I forget Him, and wander away,
Still He doth love me wherever I stray;
Back to His dear loving arms would I flee,
When I remember that Jesus loves me.

Oh, if there's only one song I can sing,
When in His beauty I see the great King,
This shall my song through eternity be,
"Oh, what a wonder that Jesus loves me!"

I am so glad that Jesus loves me,
Jesus loves me, Jesus loves me.
I am so glad that Jesus loves me,
Jesus loves even me.

We love Him because He first loved us. – 1 John 4:19

A W Tozer - Yes, God Loves Us

We love him, because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

If we are to have any satisfying and lasting understanding of life, it must be divinely given. It begins with the confession that it is indeed the God who has revealed Himself to us who is the central pillar bearing up the universe. Believing that, we then go on to acknowledge that we have discovered His great eternal purpose for men and women made in His own image.

I heard a brilliant Canadian author being interviewed on the radio concerning world conditions, and he said: "I confess that our biggest mistake is the fond belief that we humans are special pets of Almighty God and that God has a special fondness for us as people."

We have a good answer: man as he was originally created is God's beloved. Man in that sense is the beloved of the universe. God said, "I have made man in My image and man is to be above all other creatures. Redeemed man is to be even above the angels in the heavens. He is to enter into My presence pardoned and unashamed, to worship me and to look on My face while the ages roll on!" No wonder we believe that God is the only certain foundation! [Mornings with Tozer: Daily Devotional Readings - Page 6](#)

Love's Motivation - Steve McVey

We love, because He first loved us. 1 JOHN 4:19

Have you ever prayed for God to help you love Him more? If so, this verse is the answer to your prayer. Every good thing that comes out of your life is the result of His work in you. His response to your desire to love Him more is to cause you to understand better how much He loves you.

None of us can give what we don't know we have. To love others you must know how much you are loved. As you grow in your understanding of the greatness of your Father's love for you, that same love will begin to overflow your life and spill out to Him and

to others. There is no love apart from God's love—and as His love fills your consciousness you won't be able to contain it!

The way to love God more or love others more is the same. It's to understand the depth of His love. Open your heart today and receive His love in a fresh and meaningful way. It is the one who knows he or she is deeply loved who loves most. [Grace Walk Moments: A Devotional](#)

GOD'S NEVER-ENDING LOVE - Charles Stanley

We love Him because He first loved us. 1 JOHN 4:19

God's love is flowing toward each one of us as a deep, wide, beautiful, and never-ending river. It is up to us to jump in.

God's love is also unconditional. It is not based upon what we do, what we have, or what we achieve. His love is given to us because of who we are, His creation. It is not grounded on any other premise or motivation.

You can't earn unconditional love. You can't merit it in any way. You can't deserve it. God says you are worthy of His love solely because it is His desire to love you. There is nothing you can do to win more of God's love.

Charles Swindoll - EVERYBODY "ACT MEDIUM"

We love each other because he loved us first. 1 JOHN 4:19

The children worked long and hard on their little cardboard shack. It was to be a special spot—a clubhouse, where they could meet together, play, and have fun. Since a clubhouse has to have rules, they came up with three:

- Nobody act big.
- Nobody act small.
- Everybody act medium.

Not bad theology!

In different words, God says the very same thing: "Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3).

Just "act medium." Believable. Honest, human, thoughtful, and down-to-earth.

Day by Day with Charles Swindoll

In a world that says bigger is better, how do you maintain a humble, "medium" attitude? [Your Response Here]

Puritan Daily Readings - Evidence of His Love

We love him, because he first loved us. 1 John 4:19

Let us be thankful to God for a crucified Redeemer. There is nothing in heaven or earth which is such an amazing wonder as this; nothing can vie with it for excellence. All love and thankfulness is due to God, who has given us His Son, not only to live, but to die for us a death so shameful, a death so accursed, a death so sharp, that we might be repossessed of the happiness we had lost. All love and thankfulness is due to Christ, who did not only pay a small sum for us as our surety, but bowed His soul to death, to raise us to life, was numbered among transgressors, that we might have a room among the blessed. Our crimes merited our sufferings, but His own mercy made Him a sufferer for us; for us He sweat those drops of blood, for us He trod the

wine-press alone, for us He assuaged the rigor of divine justice, for us, who were not only miserable, but offending creatures, and overwhelmed with more sins to be hated, than with misery to be pitied. He was crucified for us by His love, who deserved to die by His power, and laid the highest obligation upon us, who had laid the highest offenses upon Him. This death is the ground of all our good; whatever we have, is a fruit that grew upon the cross... Nothing is such an evidence of His love as His cross; the miracles He wrought, and the cures He performed in the time of His life, were nothing to the kindness of His death, wherein He was willing to be accounted worse than a murderer in His punishment, that He might thereby effect our deliverance.

Deuteronomy 10:12 Fear and Love

Someone shared with me her observation about two bosses. One is loved but not feared by his subordinates. Because they love their boss but don't respect his authority, they don't follow his guidelines. The other boss is both feared and loved by those who serve under him, and their good behavior shows it.

The Lord desires that His people both fear and love Him too. Today's Bible passage, Deuteronomy 10, says that keeping God's guidelines involves both. In verse 12, we are told "to fear the Lord your God" and "to love Him."

To "fear" the Lord God is to give Him the highest respect. For the believer, it is not a matter of feeling intimidated by Him or His

character. But out of respect for His person and authority, we walk in all His ways and keep His commandments. Out of "love," we serve Him with all our heart and with all our soul—rather than merely out of duty (v.12).

Love flows out of our deep gratitude for His love for us, rather than out of our likes and dislikes. "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Our fear and love for God enable us to walk willingly in obedience to God's law. — by Albert Lee (Our Daily Bread)

Lord, You are holy and Your thoughts are much higher than mine. I bow before You. Thank You for salvation in Jesus. I love You and want to obey You with all of my heart, soul, mind, and strength. Amen.

If we fear and love God, we will obey Him.

The Constraint of Christ - Vance Havner

We love him, because he first loved us. 1 John 4:19.

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. 2 Corinthians 8:9.

Christ is the true motivation of Christian conduct. We do not love Him because we ought but because love begets love. He loved us and our hearts respond. We love others because His love constrains us, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

Likewise, we give, not because we ought and not because of the need primarily, but because He gave. "Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe." Freely we have received, freely we give. Not grudgingly or of necessity, but cheer-fully. Witness a drive for church funds, a pitiful plea on Sunday to wangle a few dollars of "church dues" and you will perceive how far we have left the New Testament way. The stunts, picnics, bazaars, the moth-eaten jokes, the high-pressure—"Who'll give ten dollars?" God forgive us! God will never accept such money wrung from church misers. It is the gift without the giver, a vain oblation

Adrian Rogers - 1 John 4:19

Salvation is the work of God. It is not "do-it-yourself." Do you think you were convicted of sin by yourself? The Bible says, "There is no one who seeks God" (Rom. 3:11). God Himself is the One who ran you down and convicted you of your sin. If He couldn't run faster than you could, you would never have been saved.

Not only is He the Convictor, He is also the Converter. He is the One who opened your understanding. That's the reason I pray about this before I preach, because anything I can talk you into, someone else can talk you out of. But anything the Holy Spirit gives you is yours.

WHY BELIEVERS SHOULD LOVE ONE ANOTHER. - James Smith

1 John 4:19.

I. Because He First Loved Us (4:19, R.V.).

In the R.V. it reads: "We love because He first loved us." This dropped word means that we love not only God, but also one another.

II. Because He Still Loves Us (4:11).

III. Because He Commands Us (3:23).

IV. Because He has Come to Dwell Within Us (4:12).

V. Because We have Passed from Death to Life (3:14).

VI. Because We are no Longer Children of the Devil as Formerly (3:10).

LOVE AS THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT. Galatians 5:22.

I. The Author of It. "The Spirit."

1. He begets it by revealing the work of Christ.

2. He sustains it by applying the Word of Christ.

II. The Character of It. "Love."

1. It is of the nature of God (1 John 4:8).

2. It is to dwell in us (1 John 4:16).

III. The Outcome of It. "Fruit."

1. Fruit is the evidence of life (1 John 4:19).

2. Fruit is the proof of a healthy condition (2 Cor. 5:14)

Joseph Stowell - LOVING GOD

WE LOVE BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US.—1 John 4:19

When we fall in love, we learn quickly how to express it. Whether it is flowers, little surprises, sweet notes, a wink across a crowded room, a mid-morning phone call, a listening ear, or a word of encouragement, nothing is too good or too much.

Love is the most precious thing we give in a relationship. We give it to our friends, our marriage partners, our children, our coworkers, and even our cats and dogs. So it should come as no surprise that love is the central issue in our relationship with God (Matthew 22:34–40).

Loving God starts by understanding the profound truth that God loves us. As God's Word states, "we love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Not only is it true that He is love (1 John 4:8, 16), it is transformingly true that He is busy loving you as you read this. And if you doubt that you are loved by Him, think of the overwhelming proof expressed in Jesus' death for you.

God is the initiator; He simply asks us to reciprocate. He wants our responses to His love to be natural, spontaneous, and free—not forced.

Early in our ministry, our mode of transportation was marginal, to say the least. At the close of one Thanksgiving Eve service, the members of our church, much to our surprise, gave us a set of keys to a new car they had leased for us. I drove away that night with a deep gratefulness toward the flock that had been so sensitive and generous toward us. I had always sought to be faithful in shepherding them, but their love for our family stimulated me to seek new ways to express how much I loved them in return.

We have been and are loved by God in far deeper and more enduring ways than anyone else has ever loved us. When we get a grip on this, our lives will search for ways to love and please Him as a thankful response rather than a grudging responsibility. Acts of loyalty, obedience, sacrifice, and service to others all say, "I love You, God," in clear and compelling ways.

How does He know that you love Him

HE FIRST LOVED US

We love him, because he first loved us. 1 John 4:19

It's easy to be fond of nice people. It's natural to see virtue in one's own flesh and blood. However, to love an outsider who is rebellious and obnoxious is neither easy nor natural. The ability to possess genuine, unselfish regard for completely unlovely people is rare in this world. In fact, it is an impossibility apart from the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the light of this, God's love for mankind is certainly amazing beyond degree. Knowing exactly how wicked human beings would become — how they would lie, steal, be immoral, and manifest hateful and unkind attitudes—He still loved us so much He gave His only Son for our salvation. He loved us from before the foundation of the world, and He loves us still — even though there is nothing in us to draw forth His favor.

Let me tell you a story which made a deep impression upon me when I first heard it in my boyhood days. A mother was sewing while her little girl was busily occupied with her dolls and toys. After some time the little lass came to her busy parent and wanted to be loved and caressed. "Why do you want me to hold you?" asked the mother. The little girl lisped, "'cause I love you." "What about your dolls and your toys, don't you love them too?" said her mother teasingly. The little girl gave this amazing reply, "Yes, but I love you more. I guess it's 'cause you loved me when I was too small to love you back!" Tears welled up in the mother's eyes as she contemplated God's great compassion for us, His children. The apostle John summarized this truth in that brief but wonderful sentence: "We love him, because he first loved us!" Yes, if God had not taken the initiative, we would have had no inclination to seek Him, and so would have perished eternally. Let each one of us who knows the Lord, meditate on that thought with heartfelt gratitude. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew,
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Savior true;
No, I was found of Thee!
—Anon.

God "repented" that He had made man, but He never repented that He redeemed him!

James Smith - ONE WHO HAS LOVE TO CHRIST (1 John 4:19). Love is the first evidence of a regenerated heart. When the love

of God is shed abroad in the heart it will rise up in all its strength and fulness to Him from whence it came. It is a love that now believes and rejoices with joy unspeakable (1 Peter 1:8).

We love [God] because he first loved us. 1 John 4:19

One evening my friend showed me one of the three decorative plaques that would be part of a wall arrangement in her living room. "See, I've already got Love," she said, holding up the plaque with the word written on it. "Faith and Hope are on order."

So Love comes first, I thought. Faith and Hope soon follow!

Love did come first. In fact, it originated with God. First John 4:19 reminds us that "We love [God] because he first loved us." God's love, described in 1 Corinthians 13 (known as the "love chapter"), explains a characteristic of real love when it says, "Love never fails" (v. 8).

Faith and hope are essential to the believer. It is only because we are justified by faith that "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). And hope is described in Hebrews 6 as "an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (v. 19).

One day we will have no need of faith and hope. Faith will become sight and our hope will be realized when we see our Savior face to face. But love is eternal, for love is of God and God is love (1 John 4:7-8). "Now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love"—it's first and last (1 Cor. 13:13).

Thank You, Lord, for Your faithful love and for the love of family and friends. Please help me find ways to show Your love to others today.

We love because God first loved us.

J C Philpot - The soul melts at the sight!

"We love Him, because He first loved us." 1 John 4:19

Our affections never flow unto Jesus, until we have had some divine discovery of Him to our heart and conscience. We may try to love Him—we may think it our duty to do so—we may be secretly ashamed of our miserable coldness, and may lament our barrenness in love to Jesus. But no power of our own can raise up true love to Jesus. We cannot love the Lord until we know that the Lord loves us—nor can we love Him with all our heart and soul, until He tells us that He loves us with all His. When He says "I have loved you with an everlasting love," and sheds abroad His love in the soul—this gives power to love Him. When, too, He sets Himself before our eyes in His divine beauty and blessedness—this makes us fall in love with Him. For beauty kindles love. It is so often in natural love—and always so in divine love. Jesus has but to touch the heart and it softens. He has but to appear—and the soul melts at the sight!

1 JOHN 4:19

Nansen, the Norwegian explorer, tried to measure an extremely deep part of the Arctic ocean. The first day, he used his longest measuring line but couldn't reach bottom. He wrote in his log book, "The ocean is deeper than that!"

The next day, he added more line but still could not measure the depth, and so again in his record book he wrote, "Deeper than that!" After several days of adding more and more pieces of rope and cord to his line, he had to leave that part of the ocean without learning its actual depth. All he knew was that it was beyond his ability to measure.

So too, we cannot plumb the depths of God's love. Our human measuring line is too short. God will take all eternity to show us the fullness of His love. Both now and forever, as we try to comprehend God's love, we may well exclaim, "It's deeper—much deeper than that!" —H. G. B. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

GOD'S LOVE KNOWS NO BOUNDS.

Joseph Stowell - LOVING GOD

WE LOVE BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US. —1 John 4:19

When a Pharisee asked Jesus what the most important commandment was, Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment" (Matthew 22:37-38). Loving God is

priority number one. But what does that mean?

First, loving God means more than feeling good about Him. This is welcome news. There are times in our lives when we don't feel good about much of anything. New Testament love, agape love, means choosing to yield to God. We express our love when we yield ourselves—the totality of our being—to Him. And self is important in the process. God never intended that we think badly about self or relegate self to the lowest rung of our existence. Self is only degraded when we spend self on self. Self is intended to be a treasure we give completely to our Lord as an expression of love. Love means giving the gift of “me” . . . willingly and gratefully. Love is total surrender.

The second piece of good news about loving God is that while it is a responsibility, it is more than just that. It is a response to His matchless love for us. It's not a matter of “bucking up” and loving Him but rather of getting a grip on how much He loved us. Once we realize that we are among the “forgiven much” we will desire to love Him much.

We all know this dynamic. When someone performs a loving act in your behalf, your first instinct is to repay that with an act of love in return. And just in case you don't think He has done much for you lately, think again. If He never does anything else but save us, indwell us, protect and preserve us and prepare a place for us, He has already done more than we deserve. Enough to keep us looking for ways to express our love in return for the rest of our earthside lives.

God wonderfully loves us far beyond what we deserve. We should be honored that He desires our love in return.

What one thing can you do today to demonstrate your love for God

Well-Loved -

A friend described his grandmother as one of the greatest influences in his life. Throughout his adult years, he has kept her portrait next to his desk to remind himself of her unconditional love. “I really do believe,” he said, “that she helped me learn how to love.”

Not everyone has had a similar taste of human love, but through Christ each of us can experience being well-loved by God. In 1 John 4, the word love occurs 27 times, and God's love through Christ is cited as the source of our love for God and for others. “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1Jn 4:10+). “We have known and believed the love that God has for us” (1Jn 4:16+). “We love Him because He first loved us” (1Jn 4:19).

God's love is not a slowly dripping faucet or a well we must dig for ourselves. It is a rushing stream that flows from His heart into ours. Whatever our family background or experiences in life—whether we feel well-loved by others or not—we can know love. We can draw from the Lord's inexhaustible source to know His loving care for us, and we can pass it on to others.

In Christ our Savior, we are well-loved. By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Loved with everlasting love,
Led by grace that love to know—
Spirit, breathing from above,
Thou hast taught me it is so!

—Robinson

Nothing is more powerful than God's love.

James Smith - WHY BELIEVERS SHOULD LOVE ONE ANOTHER 1 JOHN 4:19

- I. Because He First Loved Us (4:19, R.V.). In the R.V. it reads: “We love because He first loved us.” This dropped word means that we love not only God, but also one another.
 - II. Because He Still Loves Us (4:11).
 - III. Because He Commands Us (3:23).
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 - V. Because We have Passed from Death to Life (3:14).
 - VI. Because We are no Longer Children of the Devil as Formerly (3:10)
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C H Spurgeon - Love (See full sermon [Love](#))

“We love him, because he first loved us.” 1 John 4:19

We have known many Christians who have forgotten much of their love to Christ when they have risen in the world. “Ah!” said a woman, who desired to do much for Christ in poverty, and who had had a great sum left her, “I cannot do as much as I used to do.” “But how is that?” said one. Said she, “When I had a meagre purse I had an overflowing heart, and now I have an overflowing purse I have only a meagre heart.” It is a sad temptation for some men to get rich. They were content to go to the meeting-house and mix with the ignoble congregation, while they had but little; they have grown rich, there is a Turkey carpet in the drawing-room, they have arrangements now too splendid to permit them to invite the poor of the flock, as once they did, and Christ Jesus is not so fashionable as to allow them to introduce any religious topic when they meet with their new friends. Besides this, they say they are now obliged to pay this visit and that visit, and they must spend so much time upon attire, and in maintaining their station and respectability, they cannot find time to pray as they did. The house of God has to be neglected for the party, and Christ has less of their heart than ever he had. “Is this thy kindness to thy friend?” And hast thou risen so high that thou art ashamed of Christ? And art thou grown so rich, that Christ in his poverty is despised? Alas! Poor wealth! Alas! Base wealth! Alas! Vile wealth! It would be well for thee if it should be all swept away, if a descent to poverty should be a restoration to the ardency of thine affection.

C H Spurgeon - Love's Logic (See full sermon [Love's Logic](#))

God loves me—not merely bears with me, thinks of me and feeds me, but loves me. It is a very sweet thing to feel that we have the love of a dear wife or kind husband; and there is much sweetness in the love of a fond child or a tender mother; but to think that God loves me, this is infinitely better! Who is it that loves you? God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Almighty, All in all, does he love me, even he? If all men, all angels and all the living creatures that are before the throne loved me, that would be nothing to this—the Infinite loves me! And who is it that he loves? Me. The text says ‘us.’ ‘We love him, because he first loved us.’ But this is the personal point—he loves me, an insignificant nobody, full of sin, who deserved to be in hell and who loves him so little in return—God loves me. Beloved believer, does this not melt you? Does this not fire your soul? I know it does if it is really believed. It must. And how did he love me? He loved me so that he gave up his only begotten Son for me, to be nailed to the tree and made to bleed and die. And what will come of it? Why, because he loved me and forgave me, I am on the way to heaven and within a few months, perhaps days, I shall see his face and sing his praises. He loved me before I was born; before a star began to shine he loved me and he has never ceased to do so all these years. When I have sinned he has loved me; when I have forgotten him he has loved me; and when in the days of my sin I cursed him, yet still he loved me; and he will love me when my knees tremble and my hair is grey with age; ‘even to hoar hairs’ he will bear and carry his servant; and he will love me when the world is on a blaze, and love me for ever and for ever.

Spurgeon - Love's birth and parentage (See full sermon [Love's Birth and Parentage](#))

‘We love him, because he first loved us.’ 1 John 4:19

It is notable that the older a believer becomes and the more deeply he searches into divine truth, the more inclined he is to give the whole of the praise for his salvation to the grace of God and to believe in those precious truths which magnify, not the free will of man, but the free grace of the Ever Blessed. I want no better statement of my own doctrinal belief than this—‘We love him, because he first loved us.’ I know it has been said that he loved us on the foresight of our faith, love and holiness. Of course the Lord had a clear foresight of all these, but remember that he had also the foresight of our lack of love, our lack of faith, our wanderings and our sins, and surely his foresight in one direction must be supposed to operate as well as his foresight in the other direction. Recollect also that God himself did not foresee that there would be any love to him arising out of ourselves, for there never has been any, and there never will be; he only foresaw that we should believe because he gave us faith; he foresaw that we should repent because his Spirit would work repentance in us; he foresaw that we should love, because he wrought that love within us; and is there anything in the foresight that he means to give us such things that can account for his giving us such things? The case is self-evident—his foresight of what he means to do cannot be his reason for doing it. His own eternal purpose has made the gracious difference between the saved and those who wilfully perish in sin. Let us give all the glory to his holy name, for to him all the glory belongs.

“Daddy, I Found You!”

We love Him because He first loved us. — 1 John 4:19

Today's Scripture : John 20:11-18

In his book *Jesus Among Other Gods*, Ravi Zacharias tells a story about a girl who became hopelessly lost in a dark and dense forest. She called and screamed, but to no avail. Her alarmed parents and a group of volunteers searched frantically for her. When darkness fell, they had to give up for the night.

Early the next morning the girl's father reentered the forest to search for her and spied her fast asleep on a rock. He called her name and ran toward her. Startled awake, she threw her arms out to him. As he picked her up and hugged her, she repeated over and over, "Daddy, I found you!"

Applying this story to Mary Magdalene's search for Jesus in John 20, Zacharias comments: "Mary discovered the most startling truth of all when she came looking for the body of Jesus. She did not realize that the person she had found was the One who was risen, and that He had come looking for her."

We who believe on Jesus sometimes speak of "finding" Him. But why did we seek Him in the first place? Because, like the shepherd who went out into the darkness to find one lost sheep, God seeks us. He is waiting for us to realize our lostness and reach out to Him. He will pick us up, embrace us, and give us His peace. By: Herbert Vander Lugt (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

What is the nature of God's love, and how can we embrace it?

When we find Christ, we discover that we were the ones who were lost.

The Miracle Of Restraint -

We love Him because He first loved us. —1 John 4:19

In Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan Karamazov refers to "the miracle of restraint"—God's choice to curb His own power. The more I get to know Jesus, the more that observation impresses me.

The miracles Satan suggested to Jesus (Luke 4:3,9-11), the signs the Pharisees demanded (Matt. 12:38; 16:1), the final proofs I yearn for offer no obstacle to an omnipotent God. More amazing is His refusal to perform, to overwhelm. God's terrible insistence on human freedom is so absolute that He granted us the power to live as though He does not exist. Jesus must have known this as He faced the tempter in the desert, focusing His power on the energy of restraint.

I believe God insists on such restraint because no pyrotechnic displays of omnipotence will achieve the response He desires. Only love can summon a response of love. "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself," Jesus said (John 12:32). He said this to show the kind of death He would die. God's nature is self-giving.

Why does God content Himself with the slow, mysterious way of making righteousness grow rather than avenging it? That's how love is. Love has its own power—the only power capable of conquering the human heart. By Philip Yancey ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

That leaden night on which He was betrayed,
The One by whom the universe was made
Reclined with friends, took bread and stretched a hand
Of love to him who His demise had planned.

—Gustafson

Revenge restrained is a victory gained.

Does God Love Me? (Read: Romans 5:6-11+)

We love Him because He first loved us. —1 John 4:19

It's not easy to understand the depth of God's love for us. Because of our pride and fear, we fail to grasp how undeserving we are and how free His love is.

At times I struggle with pride, so I tend to believe that I have earned any love I receive. Pride tells me that I am loved only when I am lovable, respectable, and worthy.

At other times I feel the tug of fear. Deep down inside, I know that I don't deserve the love I get. My motives are never pure, and I fear I will be rejected if they are exposed. So even while I am basking in acceptance, I live with the fear of being unmasked, revealing that I am much less than what others think me to be.

When I consider my relationship with God, therefore, I tend to feel that His affection for me is based on my performance. When I do well, He loves me; but if I foul up, then I expect only His scorn.

Yet God does not love us because we deserve it. He loves us in spite of what we are. In 1 John 4:10 we read, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son." Because of what Jesus Christ has done for us, we know we are always loved by God. That simple truth shatters our pride and dispels our fear. By Haddon W. Robinson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Oh, such love, my soul, still ponder—
Love so great, so rich, so free!
Say, while lost in holy wonder,
"Why, O Lord, such love to me?"
—Kent

No one is beyond the reach of God's love.

James Hastings - THE RAY AND THE REFLECTION

We love, because he first loved us.—1 John 4:19.

SOME truths, when we have learned them, are to us like precious jewels which we keep in caskets, hidden most of the time from sight, our great satisfaction regarding them being simply their possession, simply that they are ours. Other truths, when we have learned them, are like new countries into which our lives have entered, and in which they thenceforth constantly live. There is a new sky over our head and a new earth under our feet. They fold themselves about us and touch every thought and action. Everything that we do or think or are is different because of them. Of this second sort is the truth of the priority of God's love.

¶ I think I might say of this sentence what the poet says of prayer: it is "the simplest form of speech that infant lips can try," and yet it is one of the "sublimest strains that reach the majesty on high." Take a little believing child and ask her why she loves the Saviour, and she will reply at once, "Because He loved me and died for me": then ascend to heaven where the saints are perfect in Christ Jesus and put the same question, and with united breath the whole choir of the redeemed will reply, "He hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." When we begin to love Christ we love Him because He first loved us; and when we grow in grace till we are capable of the very highest degree of spiritual understanding and affection, we still have no better reason for loving Him than this, "Because he first loved us."¹

I GOD'S LOVE TO US

1. God is first.—Unless God had been first, we—our whole human race in general and each of us in particular—never would have been at all. We are what we are because He is what He is. Everything that we do God has first made it possible for us to do. Every act of ours, as soon as it is done, is grasped into a great world of activity which comes from Him; and there the influence and effect of our action is determined. Everything that we know is true already before our knowledge of it. Our knowing it is only the opening of our intelligence to receive what is and always has been a part of His being who is the universal truth. Every deed or temper or life is good or bad as it is in harmony or out of harmony with Him. Everywhere God is first; and man, coming afterward, enters into Him and finds in God the setting and the background of his life. If we love, He loved first.

¶ It is as when up the morning sky, all coldly beautiful with ordered ranks of cloud on cloud, is poured the glow of sunrise, and every least cloud, still the same in place and shape, burns with the transfiguring splendour of the sun. So is it when the priority of existence is seen to rest in a Person, and the background of life is God. Then every new arrival instantly reports itself to Him, and is described in terms of its relationship to Him. Every activity of ours answers to some previous activity of His. Do we hope? It is because we have caught the sound of some promise of His. Do we fear? It is because we have had some glimpse of the dreadfulness of getting out of harmony with Him. Are we curious and inquiring? It is that we may learn some of His truth. Do we resist evil? We are fighting His enemies. Do we help need? We are relieving His children. Do we love Him? It is an answer of gratitude for His love to us. Do we live? It is a projection and extension of His being. Do we die? It is the going home of our immortal souls to Him.¹

2. The love of God to us precedes our love to God.—From all eternity the Lord looked upon His people with an eye of love, and as nothing can be before eternity, His love was first. He loved us before we had any being, before we had any desire to be loved, before any repentance on our part was possible. Divine love is its own cause, and does not derive its streams from anything in us whatsoever. It flows spontaneously from the heart of God, finding its deep wellsprings within His own bosom. This is a great comfort

to us, because, being uncreated, it is unchangeable. If it had been set upon us because of some goodness in us, then when the goodness was diminished the love would diminish too. If God had loved us second and not first, or had the cause of the love been in us, that cause might have altered, and the supposed effect, namely, His love, would have altered too; but now, whatever may be the believer's condition to-day, however he may have wandered, and however much he may be groaning under a sense of sin, the Lord declares, "I do earnestly remember him still."

Strictly speaking, the words of the Apostle only declare the priority of the Divine love towards us over ours towards Him. But we may fairly give it a wider meaning, and say—first of all, before creation and time, away back in the abysmal depths of an everlasting and changeless heart, changeless in the sense that its love was eternal, but not changeless in the sense that love could have no place within it—first of all things was God's love; last to be discovered because most ancient of all. The foundation is disclosed last when you come to dig, and the essence is grasped last in the process of analysis. So one of the old psalms, with wondrous depth of truth, traces up everything to this, "For his mercy endureth for ever." Therefore, there was time; therefore, there were creatures—"He made great lights, for his mercy endureth for ever." Therefore, there were judgments—"He smote great kings ... for his mercy endureth for ever." And so we may pass through all the works of the Divine energy, and say, "He first loved us."

¶ We may say of the silvered sea that it shines because the moon sheds upon it its silvery light. We may say of the full-orbed moon that she shines in soft beauty because she reflects the glory of the far-absent sun. But of the sun we can only say that it shines because it shines. We know of no eternal sources from which it draws its glory. So it is with the great heart of God. He loves, because He loves. "He first loved us."¹

¶ If you look on the buds on the trees in the spring-time you will see they are all covered over with a gummy hard case, which keeps them from opening out. Well, there was a little bud like this and its little heart was dark and cold and uncomfortable. But one day the sunshine came streaming upon it, and it felt the hard case melt away from round it, and as the light grew brighter and warmer the case all melted away and the bud opened out into a beautiful blossom, and the fine, rich sunbeam found its way right into the little bud's heart, then, when the bud saw the light it smiled and said, "See! see!—I have made the sun!" "Nay, nay, my child," said a little sunbeam passing by, "you didn't make the sun—it was the sun which made you. It was the sun which nourished you and cherished you, and opened your leaves and touched your heart. You should love the sun because the sun first loved you."¹

3. The love of God begets love in us.—One thing may be first and another second, and yet the first may not be the cause of the second, there may be no actual link between the two: but here we have it unmistakably, "We love, because he first loved us"; which signifies not merely that this is the motive of which we are conscious in our love, but that this is the force, the Divine power, which created love in us.

¶ The meeting-point of God and man is love. Love, in other words, is, for the poet, the supreme principle both of morality and of religion. Love, once for all, solves that contradiction between them which, both in theory and in practice, has embarrassed the world for so many ages. Love is the sublimest conception attainable by man; a life inspired by it is the most perfect form of goodness he can conceive; therefore, love is, at the same moment, man's moral ideal, and the very essence of Godhood. A life actuated by love is Divine, whatever other limitations it may have ... God is Himself the source and fulness of love.

'Tis Thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive:

In the first is the last, in Thy will is my power to believe.

All's one gift.

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst Thou—so wilt Thou!

So shall crown Thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—

And Thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down

One spot for the creature to stand in!²

¶ It is with love exactly as with life. You know that there has been a controversy in the field of science about the origin of life, which has raged for a considerable part of this century, and has only lately been settled. One school said that life was born of itself; the other that life must come from a Life without. One school, to take an illustration that makes it plainer, took an infusion of air, heated it to a very high temperature, put it into a flask, sealed it hermetically, put it aside. A few weeks after the flask was opened; there was life inside it. Now, you see, they claimed this as spontaneous generation. The other side said, "It is not conclusive. You did not apply enough heat." They heated it several degrees higher till there could not possibly have been any existing germs of life within the flask. They opened it after a lapse of time; there was no life. And now they accept this truth,

life alone can propagate life. Life cannot spring into existence, it must be communicated. It is exactly the same thing with regard to love. You cannot make the black coals on your hearth burst into flame until you apply a light. If you want to love, you must wait till love comes from without. There is just one source of love, and that is God. And there can be no love in the human heart till the love of God comes in and creates it there. It must come by a genesis, not by spontaneous generation. We love because God has first loved us.¹

He seeks for ours as we do seek for His;
Nay, O my soul, ours is far more His bliss
Than His is ours; at least it so doth seem,
Both in His own and our esteem.

His earnest love, His infinite desires,
His living, endless, and devouring fires,
Do rage in thirst, and fervently require
A love 'tis strange it should desire.

We cold and careless are, and scarcely think
Upon the glorious spring whereat we drink.
Did He not love us we could be content:
We wretches are indifferent!

'Tis death, my soul, to be indifferent;
Set forth thyself unto thy whole extent,
And all the glory of His passion prize,
Who for thee lives, who for thee dies.²

(1) But in order that the love of God may beget love in us there must be sufficient evidence of His love. What evidence have we? We have evidence enough of God's love—at least for the ordinary experience of life—in the beauty of the world, the beneficence of nature, and all the joy of human intercourse.

¶ Mazzini crossed the St. Gotthard with some danger. "The scene," he wrote back to England, "was sublime, Godlike. No one knows what poetry is, who has not found himself there, at the highest point of the route, on the plateau, surrounded by the peaks of the Alps in the everlasting silence that speaks of God. There is no atheism possible on the Alps."¹

¶ One who went with Dr. McLaren to the Isle of Wight writes: "I saw during our walks on one or two lovely mornings that wonderful light in his eyes, his lips slightly parted, his face almost transfigured, a look of ecstasy as he gazed lovingly (no other word will do) at the minute flowers covering the merest cranny in the moss-grown walls by the roadside. He said no word, but one could see that he was worshipping at the 'Temple's inner shrine.' "²

¶ Wilberforce did not do things by halves. What he did, he did with all his might. His likes and dislikes were strong. He felt strongly, and so he spoke and acted strongly. There were three things for which he evidently had an intense love: the Truth, Nature, Home. And if we were permitted to look for the underlying cause we should probably find it in a perfectly simple belief in the Fatherhood of God as revealed to us by our Lord. The truth was God's truth. The world was God's world. The home was God's home.³

(2) It is only when we come to the dark sad side of life that our faith begins to fail. And here the Incarnation takes up the thread of proof, not by removing the problem of the mystery of sorrow from our minds, but by revealing God Himself as willing to bear it with and for us, and so enabling our hearts to feel it the crowning testimony of His love. The soul that has reached this certitude needs no other motive to ensure its obeying the commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." But there are many who have not attained it, from fearing to make the initial venture of taking up their cross. With all their disbelief in miracles, they still seek after a sign. A sign, they must remember, cannot produce conviction; for conviction comes by obedience, and by that alone. But a sign may arrest attention, and lead to obedience in the end. And there is a sign which outsoars all other miracles, and grows only more wonderful as the ages pass along, and that is the empire of Jesus Christ over human hearts. He claimed it, and history has justified the claim. No other founder of religions, patriot, martyr, king, or saint, has ever claimed it or received it. In all history it is unique. Critics tell us that the sayings of the Sermon on the Mount were not original, and the suffering of Calvary no greater than what other men have borne, and even that the Gospel narratives are in many points inaccurate. But all these things, if granted, only force into stronger relief the wonder of the fact that Jesus Christ, crucified, dead, and buried, more than eighteen centuries ago, has inspired in every age, and among wholly diverse nations, in thousands after thousands of sinful and saintly hearts alike, not merely reverence for His memory, or sympathy for His sufferings, or enthusiasm for His cause, but a personal, passionate, living adoration, passing the love of woman;

and characterized by a finality, a restfulness, a peace, which finite objects of affection never can afford. That this is so is a fact beyond the reach of controversy, and a fact which defies explanation on any other view than that Jesus Christ is God—the Infinite and therefore adequate Object of human love, the desire of all nations, who alone could say, “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.”

¶ Like the skilfully painted portrait which seems to look at each individual in a crowded room, the Saviour on the Cross appears to gaze on me. I listen in the silence, and He, as it were, addresses me, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love,” and as I look I reply in wonder, “He loved me, and gave himself for me!” And this love becomes a double bond, uniting with his Lord and Master the Christian’s heart and life.

Love has a hem to its garment
That touches the very dust,
It can reach the stains of the streets and lanes,
And because it can, it must.

(3) But if the highest manifestation of the love of God is seen in the cross of Christ, then God loves us not because of our deserving but of His grace. In our natural desire to ascertain the cause of things, we can generally give a good reason why we love this person or that. A relationship—husband and wife, parent and child, friend and friend—is quite enough to account for it; or it may be in his nature or conduct that we see what causes our love to go out to another. These reasons may be often inadequate, sometimes even unworthy, but they satisfy our desire to trace the emotion to its originating cause. And when we are asked to believe that God loves us, even us, we are led at once to ask, Why? Why should God love me? And if we know even a little of Him or of ourselves—His greatness and our littleness, His glory and our poor estate, His holiness and our sinfulness—we have ample ground for doubting the fact. We fail entirely to account for it, and so we disbelieve it. If we were good, we say, the good God would love us. If we were holy, the Holy One would love us. Perhaps this is the earliest theology most children learn: “If you are not good God will not love you!” “If you do that God will not love you!” As if sin, the child’s or the man’s, placed the sinner outside the sphere of the love of God. This heresy lies at the root of all false religions, and of all hypocrisies, that we must by our goodness win the love and favour of God; till we are “good” God will have nothing to say to us!

¶ We are amongst savages of the very lowest type, caring for nothing but what satisfies the cravings of their fleshly lusts. Nevertheless, I love them, not because of any virtue in them, but for the sake of Him who died for them, as well as for us. And although it is not my lot to preach, and a thing I cannot do, yet I hope, while working with and among them, that my life and example will help to mould them to the likeness of our Lord and Master.¹

¶ “I love poverty,” says Pascal, “because He loved it. I love goods, because they enable me to succour the needy. I keep faith with all the world, I do not return evil for evil; and I would that those who wish me harm had reached a state like mine beyond the power of men to make or mar. I try to be true and just to all, and I feel peculiar tenderness for those to whom God has more closely bound me. In all my actions, public and private, I keep in view Him who will one day judge them, and to whom they are all offered up beforehand. Such are my feelings. Every day of my life I bless my Redeemer, who has implanted them within me. Out of a mass of weakness and misery, pride, ambition, and ill-will He has made a man freed from all these evils by the power of grace.”²

II OUR LOVE TO GOD

The Revised Version omits “him” in the first clause, and simply says “we love,” without specifying the object. That is to say, for the moment John’s thought is fixed rather on the inward transformation effected, from self-regard to love, than on considering the object on which the love is expended. When the heart is melted, the streams flow wherever there is a channel. The river, as he goes on to show us, parts into two heads, and love to God and love to man are, in their essence and root-principle, one thing.

1. Our love is the heart’s response to God’s love.—We love, because He first loved us. Our love is secondary, His is primary; ours is reflection, His the original beam; ours is echo, His the mother-tone. Heaven must bend to earth before earth can rise to heaven. The skies must open and drop down love, before love can spring in the fruitful fields. And it is only when we look with true trust to that great unveiling of the heart of God which is in Jesus Christ, only when we can say, “Herein is love—that he sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins,” that our hearts are melted, and all their snows are dissolved into sweet waters, which, freed from their icy chains, can flow with music in their ripple, and fruitfulness along their course, through our otherwise silent and barren lives.

As the sun holds our planet in the strong grasp of its attraction, while the earth by its own very weak gravitation is also held in its place, so does the consciousness of God’s great love grasp and sustain my soul and my life; and then my own weak and feeble love to Him (itself the “first-fruits of the Spirit”) serves to “bind my wandering heart” to Him. I apprehend, though with poor and trembling hand, Him by whom I am apprehended with a hold which no other power can destroy. It is to this love that our Lord appeals as the

motive of all obedience. Hence the tender, anxious, repeated inquiry, "Lovest thou me?" This love will account sufficiently for single actions and for whole lives. The perfumes which the woman poured upon the Saviour's feet, and the "spikenard very precious" which the sister of Bethany lavished on her Divine Master, were prompted by a like love. The grandest human life of service and of suffering ever lived on earth is explained and accounted for in the words, "the love of Christ constraineth us." "We love, because he first loved us."

¶ How all reasoning and arguing fails where one word of love softens, and influences, and does the work! and it is, as ever, by dwelling on the good rather than driving out the evil that the right thing is brought about.¹

¶ The Holy Spirit cries in us with a loud voice and without words, "Love the love which loves you everlastingly." His crying is an inward contact with our spirit. This voice is more terrifying than the storm. The flashes which it darts forth open the sky to us and show us the light of eternal truth. The heat of its contact and of its love is so great that it well-nigh consumes us altogether. In its contact with our spirit it cries without interruption, "Pay your debt; love the love which has loved you from all eternity." Hence there arises a great inward impatience and also an unlimited resignation. For the more we love, the more we desire to love; and the more we pay of that which love demands, the greater becomes our debt to love. Love is not silent, but cries continually, "Love thou love." This conflict is unknown to alien senses. To love and to enjoy, that is to labour and to suffer. God lives in us by His grace. He teaches us, He counsels us, He commands us to love. We live in Him above all grace and above our own works, by suffering and enjoying. In us dwell love, knowledge, contemplation, and possession, and, above them, enjoyment. Our work is to love God; our enjoyment is to receive the embrace of love.²

O eyes that strip the souls of men!
There came to me the Magdalen.
Her blue robe with a cord was bound,
Her hair with Lenten lilies crowned.

"Arise," she said, "God calls for thee,
Turned to new paths thy feet must be.
Leave the fever and the feast,
Leave the friend thou lovest best:
For thou must walk in barefoot ways,
To give my dear Lord Jesus praise."

Then answered I—"Sweet Magdalen,
God's servant, once beloved of men,
Why didst thou change old ways for new,
That trailing red for corded blue,
Roses for lilies on thy brow,
Rich splendour for a barren vow?"

Gentle of speech she answered me:—
"Sir, I was sick with revelry.
True, I have scarred the night with sin,
A pale and tawdry heroine;
But once I heard a voice that said
'Who lives in sin is surely dead,
But whoso turns to follow me
Hath joy and immortality.' "

"O Mary, not for this," I cried,
"Didst thou renounce thy scented pride.
Not for a taste of endless years
Or barren joy apart from tears
Didst thou desert the courts of men,
Tell me thy truth, sweet Magdalen!"

She trembled, and her eyes grew dim:—
"For love of Him, for love of Him."¹

2. Our love is the necessary and moral result of our persuasion of God's love to us.—It is a part of the ordinary constitution of our nature that we should love those who, we believe, love us. Sometimes far out at sea the sailor sees the sky grow tremulous and troubled. The cloud seems to be all unable to contain itself; its under surface wavers and stretches downwards toward the ocean. It is as if it yearned and thirsted for the kindred water. A great grasping hand is reached downward and feels after the waves. And then the sailor looks beneath, and lo, the surface of the waves is troubled too; and out from the water comes first a mere tremble and confusion, and then by and by a column of water builds itself, growing steadier and steadier, until at last it grasps the hand out of the cloud, and one strong pillar reaches from the sea into the heavens, from the heavens to the sea, and the heavens and the sea are one. So you must make man know that God loves him, and then look to see man love God.

¶ What will you do if you are sent to carry the Gospel to your friend, your child? Will you stand over him and say, "You must love God; you will suffer for it if you do not"? When was ever love begotten so? "Who is God?" "Why should I love Him?" "How can I love Him?" answers back the poor, bewildered heart, and turns to the things of earth which with their earthly affections seem to love it, and satisfies itself in loving them. Or perhaps it grows defiant, and says, "I will not," flinging back your exhortation as the cold stone flings back the sunlight. But you say to your friend, your child, "God loves you," say it in every language of yours, in every vernacular of his, which you can command, and his love is taken by surprise, and he wakes to the knowledge that he does love God without a resolution that he will.¹

¶ It was early in his career that he happened one day to be alone for a few minutes with a young lady, who afterwards became the wife and active helpmate of a devoted minister of Christ in Edinburgh. In early life she had felt her need of a Saviour, and tried to become a Christian, but failed in finding the sinner's Saviour. She looked too much into her own heart, and sought there, and sought in vain, for that kind and degree of conviction of sin which she thought to be necessary to fit her for coming to Jesus. As a natural result, she was almost reduced to despair. Mr. North, guided by the Spirit, on whose direction he constantly relied, and with that aptitude to understand the exact position of an anxious soul with which he was gifted, asked her if she was saved, and on her replying that she was not, he asked her, Why? and she answered, "Because I do not feel that I love Jesus." He then said simply, "That does not matter, He loves you." No other word was spoken, but this was enough, and was the means of leading her to trust in the Saviour's dying love to sinners. She was enabled henceforth to rest in that love, and to follow Christ, and after a useful and happy life, closed it, in the beginning of 1877, by a very triumphant death.²

3. And our love to God is the best evidence to ourselves that we are passed from death into life.

¶ Robert Hall charmed the most learned by the majesty of his eloquence, but he was as simple as he was great, and he was never happier than when conversing with poor believers upon experimental godliness. He was accustomed to make his journeys on horseback, and having been preaching at Clipstone he was on his way home, when he was stopped by a heavy fall of snow at the little village of Sibbertoft. The good man who kept the "Black Swan," a little village hostelry, came to his door and besought the preacher to take refuge beneath his roof, assuring him that it would give him great joy to welcome him. Mr. Hall knew him to be one of the most sincere Christians in the neighbourhood, and therefore got off his horse and went into the little inn. The good man was delighted to provide for him a bed, and a stool, and a candlestick in the prophet's chamber, for that rustic inn contained such an apartment. After Mr. Hall had rested awhile by the fire the landlord said, "You must needs stop here all night, sir; and if you do not mind I will call in a few of my neighbours, and if you feel that you could give us a sermon in my taproom they will all be glad to hear you." "So let it be, sir," said Mr. Hall, and so it was: the taproom became his cathedral, and the "Black Swan" the sign of the gospel banner. The peasants came together, and the man of God poured out his soul before them wondrously. They would never forget it, for to hear Mr. Hall was an event in any man's life. After all were gone Mr. Hall sat down, and there came over him a fit of depression, out of which he strove to rise by conversation with his host. "Ah, sir," said the great preacher, "I am much burdened, and am led to question my own condition before God. Tell me now what you think is a sure evidence that a man is a child of God." "Well, Mr. Hall," said the plain man, "I am sorry to see you so tried; you doubt yourself, but nobody else has any doubt about you. I hope the Lord will cheer and comfort you, but I am afraid I am not qualified to do it." "Never mind, friend, never mind, tell me what you think the best evidence of a child of God?" "Well, I should say, sir," said he, "if a man loves God he must be one of God's children." "Say you so," said the mighty preacher, "then it is well with me; I do love Him."¹

¶ The opening paragraphs of Wesley's Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion are perhaps the finest epitome of the ruling purpose of the Great Revival. The lifeless, formal religion of the time was a sad contrast to that religion of love which they had found. The love of God and of all mankind "we believe to be the medicine of life, the never-failing remedy for all the evils of a disordered world, for all the miseries and vices of

men. Wherever this is, there are virtue and happiness going hand in hand. There is humbleness of mind, gentleness, long-suffering, the whole image of God, and at the same time a peace that passeth all understanding, and joy unspeakable and full of glory.”²

III OUR LOVE TO MAN

1. Man’s life expands when God’s love possesses it. It becomes as the universe. God is everywhere its occupant, and yet excludes not one particle of His infinite productions. We are not bidden to abstract all affections from the creature when bidden to love God “with all the heart, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and with all the mind.” It is a principle laid down by St. John—“Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.” And therefore the way to increase in that love which alone deserves the name as being anything better than a development of selfishness, is to increase in love to God. Piety will produce charity. The more we love God the more will we love man.

¶ Those thinkers who cannot believe in any gods often assert that the love of humanity would be in itself sufficient for them; and so, perhaps, it would, if they had it.¹

2. We can show our love by loving service. Where the love of the Almighty has been excited, it will become a ruling principle, and manifest itself in every department of conduct. If we love God, it will necessarily follow that we will desire to please Him; that we will delight in contemplating His glories; that the sense of His favour will be our choicest treasure; and that, consequently, obedience to His will, and earnestness in winning others from their enmity, will be evident in our actions.

¶ I think that it was at this time of his life that he used to go down every night of the week to the Grassmarket and convoy a man home past the public-houses.²

¶ But still, the main lesson which her lady-pupils carried away from Walsall was not how to dress wounds or how to bandage, or even how to manage a hospital on the most popular as well as the most economical method, but rather the mighty results which the motive-power of love towards God, and, for His sake, towards mankind, might enable one single woman to effect. Sister Dora said to a friend who was engaging a servant for the hospital, “Tell her this is not an ordinary house, or even hospital; I want her to understand that all who serve here, in whatever capacity, ought to have one rule, love for God, and then I need not say love for their work. I wish we could use, and really mean, the word *Maison-Dieu*.”¹

¶ One night she was sent for by a poor man who was much attached to her, and who was dying of what she called “black-pox,” a violent form of small-pox. She went at once and found him almost in the last extremity. All his relations had fled, and a neighbour alone was with him, doing what she could for him. When Sister Dora found that only one small piece of candle was left in the house, she gave the woman some money, begging her to go and buy some means of light, while she stayed with the man. She sat on by his bed, but the woman, who had probably spent the money at the public-house, never returned; and after some little while the dying man raised himself up in bed with a last effort, saying, “Sister, kiss me before I die.” She took him, all covered as he was with the loathsome disease, into her arms, and kissed him, the candle going out almost as she did so, leaving them in total darkness. He implored her not to leave him while he lived, although he might have known she would never do that. It was then past midnight, and she sat on, for how long she knew not, until he died. Even then she waited, fancying, as she could not see him, that he might be still alive, till in the early dawn she groped her way to the door, and went to find some neighbours.²

3. The more we love others and make our love manifest in our life, the more will we persuade them of the reality of love and therefore of the love of God. Our age is remarkable for triumphs of mercy, and not the least of the blessings which the merciful have rendered to us is that they have shown disinterested virtue to be possible. He who ennobles himself ennobles his race, draws away many a wavering recruit from the seat of the scorner, giving him an ideal and a hope in life. Ask those who have thus elevated their generation whence they drew their inspiration, and they will one and all reply: “We love, because he first loved us.” They will say: If we have taught our soldiers and sailors to keep their bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity; if we have cleansed and clothed the waifs and strays of our modern Babylons and sent them forth as welcome colonists to subdue the virgin lands of our empire; if we have rescued woman from corruption and slavery; if we have carried thrift and peace and purity into the lowest dens of misery—we were but following Him who promised rest to the weary and heavy-laden. If our light shines before men, if they see any good works in us, let them glorify not us, but our Father which is in heaven, the Sun of all our day, from whom every good and perfect gift descends. We are unprofitable servants: we have done but a scantling of our duty. We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves. If He, the Lord and Master, washed our feet, we also ought to wash one another’s feet. It is the part payment of a debt.

¶ To many a man the strongest force for good has come by his finding out that some one loves him and trusts him far more than he has ever deserved. He discovers or slowly realizes that some one better, purer, nobler

than himself cares for him, believes in him, loves him; and the discovery makes him ashamed of his unworthiness and ingratitude: it gives him a new hope, a higher standard for life. He has been content, perhaps, to be no better than the most easy-going, the least particular of his set; and then he finds out that a pure, true heart—his mother's, it may be, or his wife's, or his child's, or his friend's—is pouring out on him its wealth of love and trust, thinking him good, expecting great things of him, ready to wait or toil or suffer for his sake: some special occasion, it may be, or some side-light lets him see how deeply and generously he is cared for; and he begins to say to himself that it's rather a shame to go on as he does. There must be some hope for him, some power or way for him to grow better, if people care for him, believe in him like that; anyhow, it's a shame not to try to be a bit more like what their love makes them think he is. And so he tries; and, because they first loved him, he learns to love; he begins to live a steadier, purer, more unselfish and dutiful life: a life in which love springs up higher, stronger, happier, like a tree growing in the soil that suits it.¹

¶ It was in the fall of 1859 that my future husband, then a young man of about twenty-one years, came to our section to teach school, where he used his talents and influence for the good of all with whom he came in contact. He was an excellent teacher, loved and respected by parents and pupils alike. He soon found his way to my father's and mother's home, for the former teachers had not been strangers there. He said afterwards that when he saw me for the first time that day in my own home, he determined that I should be his. The task proved to be not as easy as may have seemed; but he had made up his mind, and, as in after-years in more important matters, when he won in spite of difficulties, so it was then. He poured forth his wealth of love and affection and compelled me to love him in return as I had never loved before. Of course we had to wait, but the time did not seem long. It was unalloyed bliss. Three years of school, of walks and talks, and when he left for college there were the letters, the visits, the hopes and aspirations and preparations, and with all at times a tinge of sadness lest I was not quite worthy of it all.¹

¶ So they began to show him every possible kindness, and one after another helped him in his daily tasks, embracing every opportunity of pleading with him to yield to Jesus and take the new path of life. At first he repelled them, and sullenly held aloof. But their prayers never ceased, and their patient affections continued to grow. At last, after long waiting, Nasi broke down, and cried to one of the Teachers,—“I can oppose your Jesus no longer. If He can make you treat me like that, I yield myself to Him and to you. I want Him to change me too. I want a heart like that of Jesus.”²

¶ There was one case of awful despair in a poor dying woman who refused to listen to any words of the mercy of God, saying only “too late, too late.” To her, Mr. Marriott devoted much care and many prayers. It seemed as though no impression could be made upon her. The cry went on—“too late, too late, too late for me.” But Mr. Marriott's tender fervour to bring her to faith and trust in her Saviour prevailed at last. He said,—“But you do believe in the love of those around you, now that Jesus sends it to you?” With what seemed the last effort of life, she raised herself,—clasped her arms round the neck of the sister who was attending to her,—and kissing her answered,—“Yes, it is love.” The last struggle followed almost immediately and we heard her say, “Jesus, save me,”—the words he had entreated her to use. So his prayers had been heard. She died in hope and faith.³

Upon the marsh mud, dank and foul,
A golden sunbeam softly fell,
And from the noisome depths arose
A lily miracle.

Upon a dark, bemired life
A gleam of human love was flung,
And lo, from that ungenial soil
A noble deed upsprung.¹

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