

Responding to God's Love

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.

(1 John 4:16-19)

The emotional warmth of the holiday season is beginning to ebb and the cold, hard reality of “normal life” is staring us in the face. Do you think our bosses will appreciate the sacrifice we will make by returning to work?

For me (Randy), Christmas changed when grandchildren came into my life. I'm sure there was a time when I looked forward to receiving gifts, but I really can't remember it. These days, the only thing I want for Christmas is for my family to be happy. It's a thrill to see delight in the eyes of the people you love the most, and to realize that you had something to do with putting it there.

The apostle John lived for three years in closest proximity with Jesus. In fact, he proudly claimed to be “the disciple Jesus loved” (John 13:23). At the end of his life, though, John revised his perspective. Perhaps it was the empowerment of Pentecost or the seasoning of persecution, but John came to understand that the **ONLY** reason we love God is because we have been loved by God. In and of ourselves, we have only the sinful capacity for self-love. Before we can love God, we must allow Him to do a transforming work in our lives.

And He is eager to do it. As grandparents are delighted by the delight of their grandchildren on Christmas morning, the Lord is keen to see His love reflected in the faces of His children. To that end, He generously lavishes His love upon us by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).

As we pursue a closer relationship with Jesus over the next few weeks, let's acknowledge that nothing is gained by effort. Like a benevolent grandparent, He is fulfilled when we are fulfilled. He does not seek, nor does He need us to generate love for Him. We love because He first loved us.

Pray

Father, we long to be reflections of your perfect love. As we seek you, let us become so filled with your love for us that we are seen—by You and by others—as being like Jesus. Amen.

RECURRING NEEDS

Revival
Repentance
Wisdom
Marriages
Families
Sick/Grieving
Depression/Mental illness
City Church
Church leaders
Children
Youth
Singles
Senior citizens
Volunteers
Teachers and support staff
Emergency personnel
Business community
Elected officials
Missionaries
Worldwide church
The lost

REFLECTIONS
