

LifeWay Bible Studies for Life Series for February 20: God loves like a "grand" Father

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Have you ever loved someone that didn't love you back? How about if that person didn't love you back the way you wanted to be loved? Frustrating isn't it?

Even now, those of you who have experienced this at a very deep level probably are having some old feelings try to come back. Why? Love is a powerful emotion and state of being (there's the understatement for this article).

Now imagine—we can't, but try—how God must feel. Love is who he is; it's not an emotion to him, but intrinsically who he is. And think about all he has done for you and me; all he's given, to the point of offering up the life of his only Son, because of his great love for you. And yet, how do we love him back?

Let me say this is going to be a terrible analogy, but have you ever seen a dog that was just neglected and abused and yet kept going back to its owner, tail wagging, desperately longing and hoping for love and acceptance? It blows our minds, doesn't it? Why doesn't the dog just run away? I mean, it could easily find a better home, right?

Sure, because we live in such an "I'm a victim" society, we'd like to believe we are the dog and God is the owner, but the exact opposite is true. God is the one who gives himself totally and completely to us even though many times we have nothing but neglect for him. And yet he continues to stay. Why? Because unconditional love is who God is, he simply won't leave you,

he loves you too much.

Remember the understatement about love? It's about to get even crazier. It's one thing to pour out love for another person, the chance for your love to be reciprocated is certainly there and that hope is what keeps us hanging on sometimes. But what if that love isn't for someone, but for something. What if that same kind of driven love isn't even focused on a person but on an inanimate object that doesn't even have—nor ever will—have the ability to respond to or give back that love? Would that not be the height of lunacy?

And yet, how many times do we find ourselves pouring ourselves into things that will never give back to us? Homes, cars, clothes, electronics. All those things have the capacity to draw your love out of you and to keep you from directing it where it should be going, to God, your family and others.

What will your funeral look like? We're all going to have one. What are they going to say about how you loved? Sure, no one is going to have someone stand up at their funeral and say, "Ol' Tom, here loved golf more than anything on earth, including God and his family." Or, "Laura here loved clothes and shoes more than her Savior or her children."

But people will know what or who you loved and how you loved them. God help us all to have someone stand at our funeral and say, "Tom/Laura here was loved by God and he/she loved God with all that they had." And then have all in attendance nod their heads in agreement because they know beyond the shadow of a doubt that it's true.

One of the glaring questions for us as Christians is, "What do you and I need to get rid of to help us love God more completely?" Let me say this, it will be a dangerous question to ask God because he will show you what that is, and he will expect you to do the right thing.

Think about it, because we love in degrees, our love is negotiable or

conditional but not with God. His love is 100 percent all the time. He will never love you more or less than he does at this very moment. What an amazing Father we have. Maybe it's time to take a moment or two and be thankful of that.

Hosea 11:4 is a beautiful picture of how God leads us. Sometimes when we think about being slaves and servants, we get the image of chains and shackles. And quite honestly, if you are enslaved to the world, then that's exactly what you have.

However, Hosea gives us a much different picture. God "enslaves" his people with kindness and love, then goes a step further and lifts the burden from off our necks and feeds us when we're hungry. I don't know about you, but sign me up for that kind of slavery.

And continuing on with our theme of lunacy, how utterly crazy is it when we walk away from God's idea of "slavery" and return to the cold iron shackles and weight around our necks? We would all agree that it's totally nutso. But the changes are so subtle we don't notice it until things get so bad that we notice we're wearing the wrong shackles and carrying a burden we were never meant to carry.

Feeling like the weight of the world is on your shoulders? Maybe it's time to return to your Master who will love you enough to trade your shackles for kindness and love, because that's the kind of Father he is.