

God's Love

Grace: *Ask for the grace to more fully understand and experience the depth of God's love for you.*

Introduction:

Jesus speaks of having a very close relationship with God the Father. He intensely felt God's love for Him and He encourages you to discover God's personal love for you as well. God tends to show His love for you in ACTION. Spend some time reflecting on how it is that God has shown His love for you.

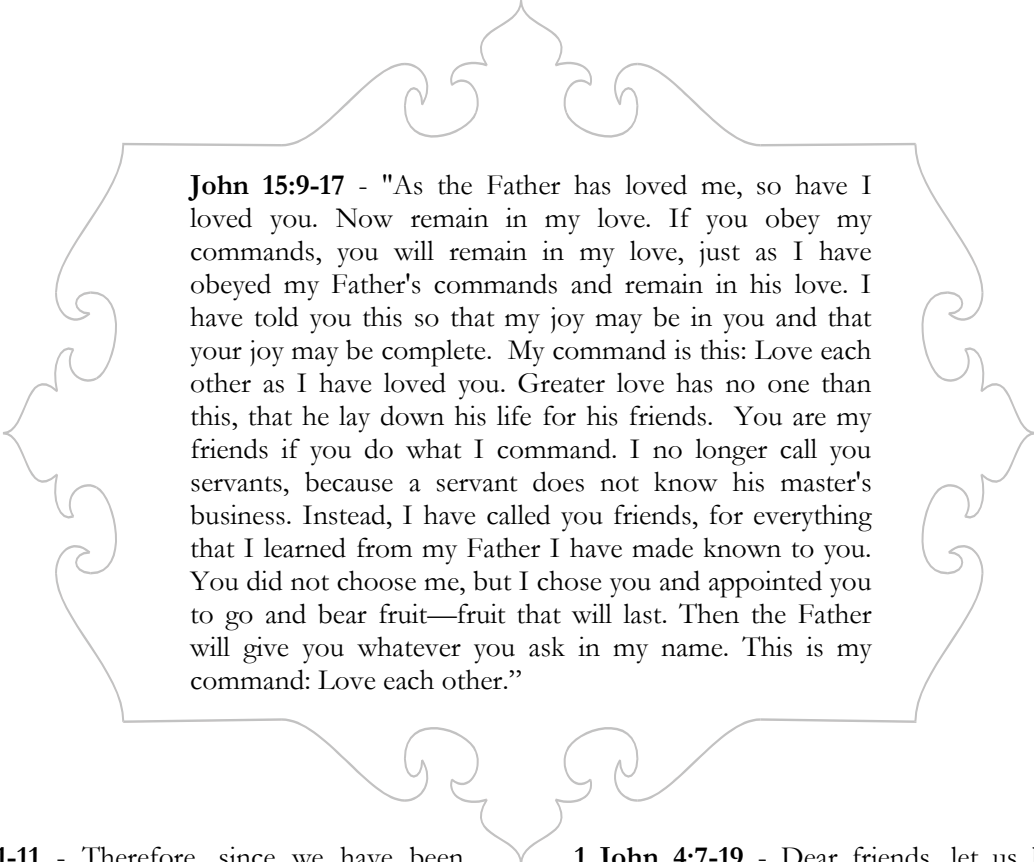
Think of a time when you felt most loved. Who was part of that experience? What happened? Try to go back to that moment and get in touch with how you felt. How does it feel to be loved by someone else? Use your senses and your imagination to see the look in that person's eyes, to hear the sound of that person's voice, to feel what it is like to be in that person's presence. What does God's love look, sound, and feel like to you?

How does it feel to be loved by God? Saint Ignatius says that love expresses itself more in deed rather than word. How do you show God that you appreciate His love? How does God show you that God appreciates your love? Do you recall a time when you felt that you were sharing God's love with someone else? How and to whom are you being called to share God's love? How do your friends reflect God's love of you? Do you allow God's love to fill your heart?

It has been said that it takes a great deal of courage to fully accept God's love because it may cause radical changes in your life. What changes might God's love ask you to make in your life? What fears might you have of the impact God's love might have on your life? Read the Scripture passages and ask God to help you to experience His love by opening your heart to His words.



Prayer is not a stratagem for occasional use, a refuge to resort to now and then. It is rather like an established residence for the innermost self. All things have a home: the bird has a nest, the fox has a hole, the bee has a hive. A soul without prayer is a soul without a home. Weary, sobbing, the soul, after roaming through a world festered with aimlessness, falsehoods and absurdities, seeks a moment in which to gather up its scattered life, in which to divest itself of enforced pretensions and camouflage, in which to simplify complexities, in which to call for help without being a coward. Such home is prayer. Continuity, perseverance, intimacy, authenticity, earnestness are its attributes. For the soul, home is where prayer is. -Abraham Joshua Heschel



John 15:9-17 - "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other."

Romans 5:1-11 - Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

1 John 4:7-19 - Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. 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.

In these or similar words ... After reading Romans 5:1-11, the part that stood out most to me was the line about how we rejoice in our sufferings. When I read this it made me think that when I suffer, I receive more of God's love. Whenever I get hurt, God shows his love to me through my friends and my family. They help me get through hard times and take care of me when I am sick and/or hurt. A specific example of this happening was in the past summer. I was riding inside the bed of a truck, on the edge with my back facing the street, and the drive took a sharp turn and I fell backwards falling onto the pavement and rolling into the grass. The first thing I remember from God's love was being lifted up, carried to the truck to go to wherever they could start fixing me up, in this case, back to the ranch house. The second thing I remember from God's love was being held close to someone, being comforted by a friend. The third example of God's love from that event was my sister. She played a big part in getting me healthy again, which included changing the bandages on the wounds I could not reach on my back, and helping me out with stuff including bringing me things I needed. This event, though I suffered greatly, showed God's everlasting love for me - be it picking me up while I am down, holding me close while I'm in pain, or helping me when unable to do something. I felt like the most loved person on the planet ... a great feeling.

You who have first loved us, O God, alas!
We speak of it in terms of history
as if You have only loved us first
but a single time,
rather than that without ceasing.
You have loved us first
many times
and everyday
and our whole life through.
When we wake up in the morning
and turn our soul toward You—
You are there first—
You have loved us first;
if I rise at dawn
and at the same second
turn my soul toward You in prayer,
You are there ahead of me,
You have loved me first.
When I withdraw
from the distractions of the day
and turn my soul in thought toward you,
You are there first
and thus forever.
And yet we always speak ungratefully
as if You have loved us first
only once.
--Soren Kierkegaard

Practicing What You Preach ... In response to your experience of God's personal love for you, you can choose to share that love by doing something to show the people close to you that you love and appreciate them. If you are bold, you can try doing something special for someone that you find difficult to love and appreciate.

