

“MY LOVE IS A GIFT”

“I’ve been waiting for you. You may not know Me, but I have always known you. *You* were in my thoughts before I laid the foundations of the world. At the perfect time, I formed you and fashioned you just as you are. It was Me who planned every day of your life even before you took your first breath. It’s Me who is directing your steps even now. I drew you here today because I desire to show you how much I cherish you. From the beginning, I was willing to give up what I loved most, so that we could be together forever. I did this, not because you loved Me, but because I loved you. There’s no catches or caveats; I don’t expect anything in return. I only want your heart. If only you could understand, *truly understand*, the gift I have for you—if you will accept it—you will never be disappointed again.”

All of mankind has been created with the desire to love and be loved. His heart longs to confidently say, “I am wanted. I am needed. I am loved as I am.” But life has left many believing that they are unwanted, undesirable, and unloved, even by God. Even Christians are seeking significance and fulfillment from human expressions of love rather than embracing the only One who can fulfill the desires of their hearts.

Define love as you know it. How did you come to know love in this way?

Unworthy of the Gift

Thoughts of personal inadequacy or incompetence; failing to meet the world’s standards or the expectations of others, can leave you feeling unlovable. But the One who loved you first, has made you with purpose and intent—just as you are—and He loves you completely.

Let’s begin by reading John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:16-17¹.

What do these verses mean concerning you? _____

Now read Psalm 139:13-17. Who knit you together, forming you as you are—appearance, character, and abilities? (See also Isaiah 64:8.)

What adjectives are used to describe you? God’s workmanship of you? (Psalm 139:14) _____

What knowledge does your Maker possess of your past, present, and future? (v.16) _____

According to verse 17, what does He think of you? _____

¹ The word *consist* in Colossians 1:17, denotes the idea of composition; to put together, unite parts into one whole. (Strong, James: *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order.* electronic ed. Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996, S. G4921)

What does Ephesians 2:10 reveal about God's purpose in making you as you are? _____

Per the above verses, does God make mistakes? Explain. _____

Do you ever compare yourself to others, praising their strengths while condemning your weaknesses? If so, why do think that you do this? _____

In addition, Ephesians 1:4 says, "*Long ago, even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes*" (NLT).

What do you believe God sees when He looks at you? What *does* He see? _____

Earning the Gift

Every day, the world inundates us with shifting definitions of love. But with every ideal and description, God's definition of love is skewed. List the expectations and conditions you must meet to receive the world's distorted love. _____

How has this played into your relationship with God? _____

Have you ever "fallen short" of human love, been condemned or rejected? Describe your experience. _____

Have you ever felt, or do you currently feel that you are in danger of falling short of God's love? Why? _____

Turn to 1 John and read 4:13-19.

According to verse 18, what invokes fear in many individuals? _____

If you do something wrong or fail to do something right, what feelings are created in your relationship with God? Is this an indication that you are working to be accepted by God? Why or why not? _____

Because you may understand love to be something that is earned, it may be difficult to comprehend that God's love is a gift, freely given.

A gift is something freely given by one person to another for his benefit or pleasure.² It is also described as a sacrifice or an offering. When you receive a gift, what does it cost you? What does it cost the giver? Why then, do we so easily fall into the trap of earning God’s love and adoration?

Read Galatians 2:16-3:3. What were the Galatian believers struggling to maintain? _____

Return to 1 John 4. What do you think it means that “*those who fear have not been made perfect in love*” (v. 18)? _____

The relationship with God that is marked by fear of torment, or punishment—“the agonizing kind of fear which robs your soul of joy and confidence before God”³—indicates that you do not *fully* comprehend—are not *perfected*, or mature in—His love.

How can you be sure of His affections according to Romans 5:6-11? (Also reread 1 John 4:15-16.)

Receiving the Gift

As a Samaritan, the woman at the well, worshiped a corrupted version of the Jewish God. Through religious gatherings, rituals, and laws her people sought to please God—the one thing she could never do. Broken relationships had left her impure, empty and unfulfilled, dejected, rejected by men, and it seemed, by God. Until one day she was offered a gift by the only One who knew her fully and loved her completely.

Read John 4:1-18, 28-29.

Describe the woman Christ sought that day. What did He know about her life, character, and choices before they met? _____

How many times had she been rejected, and/or failed in her relationships? (vv.16-18) _____

How might she define love according to her experience? _____

How can you relate to her? _____

²Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus*. Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1988

³ Guzik, David. Blue Letter Bible. 1 John 4:18.

What did Christ offer her? (vv.10, 13, 14). What must she do to receive His gift? (v.10)

Had she done anything worthy of His love? _____

Did Christ's statement in verse 14 mean that she would never struggle or sin again? Explain.

What would Christ's love fulfill in her that man's love could not? _____

"If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask Me, and I would give [it to] you... [and you] will never be thirsty again" (John 4:10, 14, NLT).

How does John 3:16-17, speak of your worth to God? _____

In closing, Romans 8:32 and 10:11 says, *"If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for [you], embracing [your] condition and exposing Himself to the worst by sending His own Son, is there anything else He wouldn't gladly and **freely** do for [you]?" (MSG, emphasis mine). "As the Scriptures tell us, 'Anyone who believes in Him will not be disappointed'" (NLT).*