



Jesus... the key to setting the captives free! ~ John 8:31-32

God's Love for You

" I was in prison and you came to visit me." ~ Matthew 25:36

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June 18, 2021

God's Love for You

Dear Reader,

I pray this letter finds you safe, healthy, and daily experiencing the love of the Father, the grace of Jesus and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit!

After I got saved in prison in 2009, the two Bible passages I identified with most were the ones concerning Jonah running from God (Jonah 1:1 – 4:11), and about the prodigal son turning his back on his father to live his life on his own terms (Luke 15:11-31). Many of us who have been in prison could probably relate to both of these. Do you?

As a young man I felt God had a call on my life to fulfill His purpose but I wanted to “do my own thing” so I ignored Him. After having been raised in a Christian home and regularly attending the Baptist Church, I turned my back on God when I went to college. In my pride, I foolishly thought I could run my own life and didn’t need God. For most of the next 40 years, I did things my own way, almost never went to church, and I very rarely read the Bible.

After I went to prison at age 56, I finally got past my pride enough to admit to God that apparently I was not doing such a great job of “running my own life”. I told God, “After all, look where I ended up!” Through humility and broken-ness I repented to God and asked Him to forgive me. Though I never heard an audible voice, I felt deep in my spirit that He welcomed me home with wide-open arms. In my heart, I felt His love and forgiveness in a way that seemed to fill the emptiness deep inside that had been haunting me so long.

As I received Jesus as my Savior, and began to understand His finished work at the Cross, including His death, burial and resurrection, I began to understand the demonstration of love that enabled Him to sacrifice Himself willingly for me even while I was still a sinner (Romans 5:8). God loves us so very much that He paid the ultimate price to save us so we could make a free will choice to have an intimate relationship with Him (John 3:16-21).

It is the love, kindness and goodness of God that continually motivates us to be obedient, and to genuinely repent when we are disobedient (Romans 2:4-11). Our Father’s love is unconditional, unlimited, undeserved, and eternal. He accepts us just as we are but He loves us too much to leave us that way! There is nothing we can do to make Him love us any more than He already does; and, thankfully, there is nothing we can do to make Him love us any less! He just wants us to use our free will daily to choose to love Him.

The more we experience and comprehend His great love for us, the easier it becomes to love others. After all, Jesus said all the commandments can be met by loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength; and, loving others as we love ourselves.

I urge you to prayerfully read and study the enclosed articles about God’s love. He will always love you, and He will never leave you or forsake you. Knowing and fully receiving His love motivates us to want to please Him. He is looking for those who have a heart that wants to be obedient (2 Chronicles 16:9a), and is quick to repent when we miss it (2 Peter 3:9).

Remember, Jesus loves you and so do we!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen".

Stephen Canup
President

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The words you are about to read are true.
They will change your life if you let them.
For they come from the heart of God.
He loves you, and He is the Father you have been looking for all
your life ...
This is His love letter to you.

Father's Love Letter

My Child,

You may not know me, but I know everything about you ~**Psalm 139:1**

I know when you sit down and when you rise up ~**Psalm 139:2**

I am familiar with all your ways ~**Psalm 139:3**

Even the hairs on your head are numbered ~**Matthew 10:29-31**

For you were made in my image ~**Genesis 1:27**

In me you live and move and have your being. ~**Acts 17:28**

For you are my offspring ~**Acts 17:28**

I knew you even before you were conceived ~**Jeremiah 1:4-5**

I chose you when I planned creation ~**Ephesians 1:11-12**

You were not a mistake, for all your days are written in my book ~**Psalm 139:15-16**

I determined the exact time of your birth and where you would live. ~**Acts 17:26**

You are fearfully and wonderfully made ~**Psalm 139:14**

I knit you together in your mother's womb ~**Psalm 139:13**

And brought you forth on the day you were born ~**Psalm 71:6**

I have been misrepresented by those who don't know me ~**John 8:41-44**

I am not distant and angry, but am the complete expression of love ~**I John 4:16**

And it is my desire to lavish my love on you ~**I John 3:1**

Simply because you are my child and I am your Father ~**I John 3:1**

I offer you more than your earthly father ever could ~**Matthew 7:11**

For I am the perfect Father ~**Matthew 5:48**

Every good gift that you receive comes from my hand ~**James 1:17**

For I am your provider and I meet all your needs ~**Matthew 6:31-33**

My plan for your future has always been filled with hope ~**Jeremiah 29:11**

Because I love you with an everlasting love ~**Jeremiah 31:3**

My thoughts towards you are countless as the sand on the seashore ~**Psalm 139:17-18**

And I rejoice over you with singing ~**Zephaniah 3:17**

I will never stop doing good to you ~**Jeremiah 32:40**

For you are my treasured possession ~**Exodus 19:5**

I desire to establish you with all my heart and all my soul ~**Jeremiah 32:41**

And I want to show you great and marvelous things ~**Jeremiah 33:3**

If you seek me with all your heart, you will find me ~**Deuteronomy 4:29**

Delight in me and I will give you the desire of your heart ~**Psalms 37:4**

For it is I who gave you those desires ~**Philippians 2:13**

I am able to do more for you than you could possibly imagine ~**Ephesians 3:20**

For I am your greatest encourager ~**2 Thessalonians 2:16-17**

I am also the Father who comforts you in all your troubles ~**2 Corinthians 1:3-4**

When you are brokenhearted, I am close to you ~**Psalms 34:18**

As a shepherd carries a lamb, I have carried you close to my heart ~**Isaiah 40:11**

One day I will wipe every tear from your eyes ~**Revelation 21:3-4**

And I'll take away all the pain you have suffered on this earth ~**Revelation 21:3-4**

I am your Father, and I love you even as I love my Son, Jesus ~**John 17:23**

For in Jesus, my love for you is revealed ~**John 17:26**

He is the exact representation of my being ~**Hebrews 1:3**

He came to demonstrate that I am for you, not against you ~**Romans 8:31**

And to tell you that I am not counting your sins ~**2 Corinthians 5:18-19**

Jesus died so that you and I could be reconciled ~**2 Corinthians 5:18-19**

His death was the ultimate expression of my love for you ~**1 John 4:10**

I gave up everything I loved that I might gain your love ~**Romans 8:31-32**

If you receive the gift of my Son, Jesus, you receive me ~**1 John 2:23**

And nothing will ever separate my love from you again ~**Romans 8:38-39**

Come home and I'll throw the biggest party that heaven has ever seen ~**Luke 15:7**

I have always been Father and I will always be Father ~**Ephesians 3:14-15**

My question is...will you be my child? ~**John 1:12-13**

I am waiting for you ~**Luke 15:11-32**

Love, Your Dad, Almighty God

A Father's Love

By: Michael T. Powers, Janesville, WS
(as published in God Allows U-Turns by Allison Gappa Bottke)

His name was Brian. He was a special education student at the small school I attended. He was constantly searching for love and attention. It usually came for the wrong reasons, from students who wanted to have some "fun". He was the joke of the school and was "entertainment" for those who watched. Brian, who was looking for acceptance, didn't realize that they were laughing at him, not with him.

One day, I couldn't take it anymore. I had enough of their game and told them to knock it off. "Aw, come on, Mike! We are just having fun. Who do you think you are anyway!" The teasing didn't stop for long, but Brian latched onto me that day of my sophomore year. I had stuck up for him, and now he was my buddy. Thoughts of *What will people think of you if you are friends with Brian?* Swirled in my head, but I forced them away as I realized that God wanted me to treat this young man as I would want to be treated.

Later that week, I invited him over to my house after school to play video games. We sat there playing Intellivision (this was the 80's) and drinking Tang. Pretty soon, he started asking me questions like, "Hey, Mike, where do you go to church?" I would politely answer his questions, then turn my concentration back to the video games. He kept asking me questions about God and why I was different from some of the kids at school.

Finally, my wonderfully perceptive girlfriend, Kristi, pulled me aside and said, "Michael, he needs to talk. How about you go down to your room where you can talk privately?" She had picked up on the cues better than I had.

As soon as we arrived in my room, Brian repeated, "Hey, Mike, how come you're not like some of the other kids at school?" I knew I needed to share with him the difference that God had made in my life. I got out my Bible and shared John 3:16 and some verses in Romans with him. I explained to him that God loved him just the way he was and that he sent Jesus down to earth to die on a cross for him. All the while, I did not know if he was comprehending anything I was telling him. When we were done, I asked Brian if he wanted to pray with me. He said he would like that.

We prayed together: "God, I know I am a sinner, and that even if I were the only person on earth, You still would have sent Your Son down to die on a cross for me and take my place. I accept the gift of salvation that You offer, and I ask that You come into my heart and take control. Thank You, Lord. Amen."

I looked at him and said, "Brian, if you meant those words you just prayed, where is Jesus right now?"

He pointed to his heart and said, "He is in here now."

Then he did something I will never forget, as long as I live. Brian hugged the Bible to his chest, lay down on the bed, and the tears flowed down his face. Brian was unearthly silent as the faucet behind his eyes let loose. Then he said to me, "Mike, the love that God has for me must be like the love of a husband has for his wife," I was floored.

Here was someone who had trouble comprehending things in school, but who now understood one of eternity's great truths. I knew that he understood what I had shared with him.

About a week later, everything came into perspective for me. It was then that Brian really opened up to me. He explained that his dad had left him and his mom when he was five years old. Brian was standing on the porch the day his dad told him he was leaving. He told Brian he couldn't deal with having a son like him anymore, then he walked out of Brian's life and was never seen again. Brian told me that he had been looking for his dad ever since.

Now I knew why the tears kept flowing that day in my bedroom. His search was over. He found what he had been looking for since he was five years old. A Father's love.

He would never again be alone.

Our Intentional God
10 Ways God Shows His Intentional Love For You

By: Dr. Randy Carlson

1. God Made You For a Purpose

For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this? (Esther 4:14)

2. God Loves You

And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8)

3. God Values You

Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? (Matthew 6:26)

4. God Chose You

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. (John 15:16)

5. God Redeemed You

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree". (Galatians 3:13)

6. God is Preparing a Place for You

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:3)

7. God Will Provide for You

And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." (Genesis 22:8)

8. God Will Renew You Daily

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

9. God Knows You Personally

And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." (Luke 16:15)

10. God Will Reward You

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

GOD LOVES YOU UNCONDITIONALLY

by Joyce Meyer

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39

Love--knowing you're loved--is what every person wants. Every person wants to feel valuable. Every person wants to feel that he or she matters.

Guess what? God loves you unconditionally. He doesn't love you because of anything you do or don't do; God just loves you. There's nothing you can do about it. You can't buy His love. You can't get rid of His love. Nothing can separate you from the love of God.

You are created by the hand of God, on purpose, and you are an unrepeatable miracle. There is nobody else exactly like you. There never will be anybody else exactly like you. And God has an amazingly wonderful plan for your life.

POWER THOUGHT: God loves me unconditionally, and nothing can separate me from His love.

God's Perfect Love

By Charles Stanley

Read | 1 John 4:7-9

We were created to be members of God's family and recipients of His perfect love. In fact, through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus, He demonstrated just how much He loves us.

When we receive Christ as our Savior, we become children of God and experience His unconditional love. Divine affection for us does not vary in quality or quantity. It will never end or even diminish. No circumstance can cause the Lord to stop loving us. Several stories in the New Testament exemplify this:

- Consider the Roman centurion who asked Jesus to heal his servant. Was the soldier's request ignored because he wasn't one of God's chosen people—the Jews? No. Seeing the man's genuine faith, the Lord granted his request out of love for him (Luke 7:2-10).

- Jesus extended forgiveness to the thief on the cross, who placed his faith in Christ (23:39-43).

- Before his conversion, Saul of Tarsus was convinced that Jesus was not the promised Messiah and His followers must be stopped. To that end, the future apostle Paul persecuted the Christian Jews and uttered murderous threats against the church. God's love did not even skip over one so violently opposed to His children. On the road to Damascus, the Lord appeared to him with an offer of salvation and gave him a great work to do—evangelizing the Gentile world (Acts 9:15).

The human mind cannot fully comprehend divine love. In Christ, thieves, persecutors, and those who may look like outsiders are all equally loved.

Eternal Love By: David Jeremiah

And we have known and believed the love that God has for us.

1 John 4:16a

The evidence of God's love has existed since the beginning of the world. When God created man, He gave him a beautiful garden, a companion, and a purpose. Instead of withdrawing from the world after its creation, God remained involved. Even after Adam and Eve sinned and were banished from the Garden of Eden, God did not abandon them.

Recommended Reading
[1 John 4:7-19](#)

We are sometimes tempted to believe the lie that God does not love us. Thankfully the Bible is filled with evidence that this is not true. We see God's love illustrated through the prophets. Their inspired message proclaimed God's desire for fellowship and intimacy with His people, despite the people's unfaithfulness. When Jesus came to earth, He loved the unlovable, healed the sick, and gave generously of Himself and His resources. Perhaps the most poignant picture of God's love is the cross. Jesus suffered so that we could have forgiveness, life, and restored fellowship with God.

We have been given the gift of life. The intricacy and wonder of creation reveal a God who cares about details and leaves nothing to chance. He created you. He loves you. When you feel distant from God, remember that He wants to be involved in the details of your life. He is with you.

Love, not anger, brought Jesus to the cross. Golgotha came as a result of God's great desire to forgive, not His reluctance.

Richard J. Foster

Extravagant Love By: David Jeremiah

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.

Isaiah 61:1

God's love for us is like an intricately cut diamond. The longer we examine each facet, the deeper our understanding of it. Jesus uses the father in the story of the prodigal son to describe His heart and affection for the lost. When the prodigal returned home, the father could have cut him off from the family. This was the acceptable course of action against a person who had brought such shame upon his family. It was naive of the son to think he could return home, even as a servant.

Recommended Reading
[Luke 15:11-31](#)

But this father does the unexpected. When he sees his son in the distance, he runs to him, embracing and kissing him. The father is more concerned with having his son return than with hearing why he returned. He is given a robe, a ring, and shoes -- these are visible signs to the community that the son is a part of his family.

We serve a loving God: He searches for us and runs to us. He embraces us and adopts us into His family. When God's love touches our lives, we are inspired to seek and love the lost as Jesus did.

God's mercy and grace give me hope -- for myself, and for our world.

Billy Graham

A Lifetime of Love – Abide in My Love

By: Craig Denison

Overview:

As children of God, we have been given a new home and a new hope. May your heart be set aflame by the joy and purpose of living out God's command to live for heaven this week: *"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."* ~Colossians 3:1-4

Scripture:

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love." John 15:9

Devotional:

We belong to a Kingdom built not by the blood, sweat and tears of servants but the wounds and scars of a loving and sacrificial King. As disciples of Jesus we have been granted access into a lifetime of giving and receiving unconditional love. Our Savior willingly laid down his life that we might know the love of our heavenly Father throughout this life and all eternity. John 15:9-13 says,

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."

To live for heaven is to abide in a lifetime of constant and tangible love from the Father so that we might live healed and able to pour out genuine love to others. This life is all about love. Jesus boiled down all the commandments into loving God and loving people. If we truly desire to live in obedience to God's commands, we must live with a heavenly perspective. 1 John 4:7 says, *"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God."* To live for the world is to maintain an attitude of selfishness and pursue fleeting and insincere affections. To live for heaven is to daily say yes to being born of God and to pursue knowing the Father. To know our Creator is to know love itself. And when we experience the love of our Father, we will be transformed into instruments of his love for all those around us.

God longs to give us a heavenly perspective today that we might receive the fullness of his love and in return love him and others. 1 John 4:19 says, *"We love because he first loved us."* Living for heaven starts with letting God love us. It starts with carving out space in our daily routine to rest in the knowledge of our Father's love and allow it to transform, redeem and heal us. We all carry wounds that need to be touched by the love of our Father.

It's only after being loved by God that we can truly love others. Without encounters with the heart of the Father, we are incapable of living selflessly. Pride is the natural state of all those who aren't consistently encountering the transformative power of the Holy Spirit. But through God's grace and receiving a heavenly perspective, we can step outside ourselves and the fleshly desires of this world and truly love others with the heart of God.

Take time in guided prayer to let your heavenly Father love you today. Let go of any roots of pride that are keeping you from loving him and others. And ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into a lifestyle of loving others with the love you've been shown in Christ Jesus.

Guided Prayer:

1. Take time receive the love of your heavenly Father. Meditate on Scripture that will fill you with the knowledge of his love. Ask him to reveal his nearness and wait on his calming and peaceful presence.

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

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love." John 15:9

2. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you anything that is keeping you from living a lifestyle of being loved and loving others.

3. How would the Holy Spirit guide you into a lifestyle of loving others today? In what ways have you been loved so that you can turn around and love others? Who needs grace and forgiveness today? Who needs a loving friend or a kind stranger? Who needs to hear the message of reconciliation and hope you've found in Jesus?

"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. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother." 1 John 4:20-21

"Let all that you do be done in love." 1 Corinthians 16:14

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God." 1 John 4:7

For the majority of my relationship with God, I didn't know what it meant to truly experience God's love. I didn't know that God could tangibly affect my emotions, mood, purpose and perspective with his presence. It was only once I began to consistently make time and space to let God love me that my life began to be transformed, healed, and I began to walk in freedom. It was only once I began to consistently encounter God's heart that I was filled with a longing to love others. There is nothing more important or foundational to this life than experiencing the love of your heavenly Father. May you discover the wealth of affections your Father has for you as you carve out space to encounter him throughout your day today.

Extended Reading: [John 15](#)

Contained in www.first15.org devotional for September 6, 2014, by Craig Denison.

Love Me Where You're At

By: Francis Frangipane

I have discovered that, as we seek the Lord, our most difficult periods can be transformed into wonderful breakthroughs into God's love. For me, one such season occurred during the years 1979 to 1981. The association of churches with which I was aligned had fallen under spiritual deception. Not only were its core doctrines increasingly seeded with New Age influences, but immorality crept in, and key leaders began leaving their wives for other women. I could no longer remain silent. As a result, in 1979 I left my congregation in Detroit, Michigan, where I had served as pastor, and traveled to the organization's regional headquarters in Iowa. I came to plead for repentance. However, after meeting with the senior leaders, I was asked to leave the group.

So here we were -- we had left our church, we had no money, and we had four little children; we couldn't even afford basic housing. Desperate for anything, we finally found an old farmhouse in rural Washington, Iowa. The home was over a hundred years old, but it actually looked much older. After negotiating with the landlord, we were given a year of free rent provided I did basic repairs to the house, such as cleaning and painting.

Even so, the house needed more than I could provide. The furnace did not work well, so we installed a wood burner stove in the kitchen. That first winter, it turned out, was one of the coldest in Iowa's history. Frost formed on the inside walls, spreading a foot or two around each window; wind chills dropped to 60 below, and even colder on several occasions.

To keep warm each night, the whole family cuddled tightly on one large mattress on the dining room floor, about 18 feet from the wood burner in the kitchen. A fan behind the stove nudged warm air in our direction. My nightly project, of course, was to build enough heat in the stove to keep us warm until morning.

While I worked the fire, I also would pray and seek God. The wood burner became a kind of altar to me, for each night as I prayed, I offered to God my unfulfilled dreams and the pain of my spiritual isolation. Yes, I knew the Lord was aware of our situation. Though we had virtually nothing, He showed Himself to us in dozens of little ways. I just didn't know what He wanted of me.

As the seasons came and went, another child was born, and then we fostered a young girl from Vietnam, giving us six children. Still, as the family grew, the little area around the wood burner became a hallowed place to me. Even in the summer, I would sit on the chair next to the stove and pray and worship.

I would like to say I found the joy of the Lord during this time, but in truth, though I gradually adjusted to my situation, I felt an abiding misery in my soul. Our deep poverty was an issue (I barely made \$6,000 a year), but more than that, I felt like I had missed the Lord. My continual prayer was, "Lord, what do You want of me?"

Three years of seeking God passed, and I still carried an emptiness inside. What was God's will for me? I had started a couple Bible studies and spoken a few times in churches, but I so identified with being a pastor that, until I was engaged again in full-time ministry, I feared I had lost touch with God's call on my life.

In spite of this inner emptiness concerning ministry, I actually was growing spiritually, especially in areas that were previously untilled. I went through the Gospels, hungry to study and obey the words of Christ. Previously, I had unconsciously defined a successful ministry as something born of my performance. During this time, however, the Lord reduced me to simply being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, a number of things I thought were biblical I discovered were really just religious traditions. The Lord desired that I take inventory of my heart and examine those few truths for which I would be willing to die. He said the truths for which I would die, for these I should live.

Frankly, things like the timing of the rapture or nuances about worship style or spiritual gifts dropped in their priority, though I still considered them important. Rising to the top of my focus was a passion to be a true follower of Jesus Christ - to obey His teachings and approach life not merely as a critic but more as an encourager. I also found myself increasingly free to enjoy and learn from Christians from other streams and perspectives.

Yet these changes, though deep and lasting, occurred slowly, almost imperceptibly. They were happening quietly in my heart, and only in hindsight did I see what the Lord had done. Throughout this time, I was preoccupied with feelings of detachment from God's will. My prayer to know the Lord's plan for me continued daily.

The Breakthrough

One day, as I stood in the kitchen pantry, I repeated again my abiding prayer: "Lord, what do You want of me?" In a sudden flash of illumination, the Lord answered. Speaking directly to my heart, He said, "Love Me where you're at."

In this time and season, remember, I was not a pastor or minister. I was a television repairman doing odd jobs on the side to provide for my family. I hated what I was doing. In my previous church I taught against TV, and now I was "laying hands" on television sets and raising them from the dead! The Lord's answer cut straight to my heart. I was awed at its simplicity! I asked, "Love You where I am at? Lord, is that all You want of me?" To this He responded, "This is all I will ever require of you."

In that eternal moment, peace flooded my soul and I was released from the false expectation of ministry-driven service. God was not looking at what I did for Him, but who I became to Him in love. The issue in His heart was not whether I pastored but whether I loved Him. To love the Lord in whatever station I found myself -- even as a television repairman -- this I could do!

A deep and remarkable transformation occurred in me. My identity was no longer in being a pastor but rather in becoming a true lover of God. Having settled my priorities, amazingly, just a couple days later I was invited to pastor a church in Marion, Iowa. In spite of all my previous anxiety about returning to ministry, I did not jump at the opportunity. For I had found what the Lord truly desired of me. Though I eventually accepted this call, my focus was not merely on leading a church but on loving God.

What God Seeks

More than one's ministry, God seeks our love. His great commandment is that we love Him, ultimately, with all our mind, all our heart, and all our soul and strength. If we love Him, we will fulfill all He requires of us (John 14:15). And it is as we love Him that He orchestrates all things to work together for our good (Rom. 8:28).

Beloved, loving God is not hard. We can fulfill any assignment -- auto mechanic or housewife, doctor or college student -- and still give great pleasure to our heavenly Father. We do not need ministry titles to love the Lord. Indeed, God measures the value of our lives by the depth of our love. This is what He requires of all true God-seekers: to love Him where we are at.

Lord Jesus, the revelation of Your love has swept me off my feet. Lord, You have drawn me and I run after You. Master, even in the mundane things of life, I shall express my love for You. Consume me in Your love.