

The truth about love/romance: according to kids.

How Does a Person Decide Who to Marry?

"You flip a nickel, and heads means you stay with him and tails means you try the next one." Kally, age 9

"You got to find somebody who likes the same stuff. Like if you like sports, she should like it that you like sports, and she should keep the chips and dip coming." Allan, age 10

"No person really decides before they grow up who they're going to marry. God decides it all way before, and you got to find out later who you're stuck with." Kirsten, age 10

Concerning the Proper Age to Get Married

"Twenty-three is the best age because you know the person FOREVER by then!" Cam, age 10

"No age is good to get married at.... You got to be a fool to get married!" Freddie, age 6

How Can a Stranger Tell if Two People are Married?

"Married people usually look happy to talk to other people." Eddie, age 6

"You might have to guess based on whether they seem to be yelling at the same kids." Derrick, age 8

What Do You Think Your Mom and Dad Have in Common?

"Both don't want no more kids." Lori, age 8

The Great Debate: Is It Better to Be Single or Married?

"It's better for girls to be single but not for boys. Boys need somebody to clean up after them!" Anita, age 9

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Today we are talking about a much deeper love than the love found between a man and a woman.

Scatched on the walls of one of the Nazi prison camps were the words, "I believe in the sun even when it does not shine. I believe in love even when it is not expressed. And I believe in God even when He is silent." Sometimes we may mistake God's silence for a lack of His love for us. You can believe in the sun when it doesn't shine and you can for sure believe in God's love when you can't feel it.

You know when we looked at the goodness of God that was pretty encouraging and even the justice of God was encouraging at least when it comes to wrapping up our time on this earth but nothing will change your life like coming to understand the love of God.

God Reveals His Love to Us Through . . .

Creation: He made you for Himself

It's almost overwhelming to think about, but the fact is God made us for Himself. Look at Genesis 1:26-27:

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."

²⁷ *So God created human beings in His own image. In the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.* Gen. 1:26-27 NLT

*Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation,¹⁶ for through Him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. **Everything was created through Him and for Him.*** Colossians 1:15-16 NLT

The fact is according to the Bible, that God made us and in fact everything for Himself. What God has made and created matters to Him. It's no different than when we make something or somebody messes with our personal property it matters to us. So it is with God, because He created us for Himself we really are important to Him and that is a part of understanding the depth of His love.

It's kind of like the poor kid that spends several hours building an incredible sand castle only to have someone come and knock it down. You know the type of person.

The fact is that when God sees His creation ruined by mankind He is jealous and disgusted by it. When He sees men and women wrecked by the effects of sin He is devastated and is not happy about it. His love for us is seen in the fact that He created us for Himself.

Providence: He shows His kindness to all.

But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!⁴⁵ In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For He gives His sunlight to both the evil and the good, and He sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. Matthew 5:44-45

This is really important to believe because sometimes professing Christians can be a little testy and even smug when they realize that God loves everyone just the same. I think sometimes we believe that God owes us because we are sacrificing so much for Him to serve Him and be a Christian. If you think that, then maybe you should change your attitude and give up on the “us four and no more” club. God loves everyone!

“He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since He is Lord of heaven and earth, He doesn’t live in man-made temples,²⁵ and human hands can’t serve His needs—for He has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and He satisfies every need.²⁶ From one man He created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and He determined their boundaries.

²⁷ *“His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward Him and find Him—though He is not far from any one of us. Acts 17:24-27*

I would just remind you that the evidence of God’s love is that He shows His kindness to all people. He loves not just those who are righteous, He loves the unrighteous, He loves the evil. Why? Because He’s longing and creating and giving at the same time.

Non-Christians have great weddings, non-Christians have cute babies, non-Christians fall in love, non-Christians have great promotions, non-Christians develop new patents, they’re scientists, they’re artists, they have this creative DNA given by God and they experience the joys of life. It’s all intended so they might wake up one day and say, “Oh, who gives this all to me?” That they might reach out and touch Him and find Him. Why? Because they matter, because He loves them.

Corrie Ten Boom wrote: “Often I have heard people say, “How good God is! We prayed that it would not rain for our church picnic and look at the lovely weather!” Yes, God is good when He sends good weather. But God was also good when He allowed my sister, Betsy, to starve to death before my eyes in a German concentration camp. I remember one occasion when I was very discouraged there. Everything around us was dark, and there was darkness in my heart. I remember telling Betsy that I thought God had forgotten us. “No, Corrie,” said Betsy, “He has not forgotten us. Remember His Word *“For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him.”* Corrie concludes, “There is an ocean of God’s love available—there is plenty for everyone. May God grant you never to doubt that victorious love—whatever the circumstances.”

Incarnation: He is proactively pursuing you.

For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.” Luke 19:10

These words were spoken by Jesus as He was about to change the life of a tax collector named Lazarus and change it forever. This is like Jesus’ personal mission statement.

He pursued a messed up woman at a well and cleaned up her life and transformed her. He pursued some brothers that were fishing and made them disciples that turned the world upside down. He pursued others and in fact He pursued you and me.

You know in that story of the woman at the well that I just mentioned it's always been interesting to me that He reveals the heart of God to her.

*But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. **The Father is looking** for those who will worship Him that way. ²⁴ For God is Spirit, so those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.*”
John 4:23-24 NLT

What's God like? How's He think? How does He treat people that are desperate? How does He treat people that have been so wicked, so perverted, so sinful as this woman? (Especially when she had five husbands and was living with someone?) What would God think of someone like that? He would think, “I would love to give you some Living Water. I'd love to forgive you. See, what I know is you were looking for love in all the wrong places. You were looking to fill the hole in your heart with men and you've found that five couldn't do it and probably the guy you have isn't doing it now. You were looking for significance and you were looking for security and you were looking to be whole. What you didn't know is that you were looking for Me but you just couldn't see Me and you didn't know about Me and I want you to know I have a free gift for you that's available now. It's My gift to you.”

God is pursuing you. . . He knows where you are and what you do to try to satisfy the unfulfilled areas of your life.

Discipline: He chastises us to protect us from self-destructive behavior.

For the LORD disciplines those He loves, and He punishes each one He accepts as His child. Hebrews 12:6 NLT

None of us like the thought of this very much but in reality God's “punishment” is something we should desire and appreciate. Why? It's not punitive punishment but corrections given to help us do better with our lives and in serving God. There is a purpose for God's discipline and it is rooted in His love.

Research studies have been done on the effective role and responsibility of a father in the family especially in the realm of family discipline. There are studies on juvenile delinquents. They do an interviewing process and they find out, “What made you feel loved growing up?”

You know what number one or two was in a number of the studies? “I knew my parents loved me when they disciplined me.” When you have a mom or dad who says, “Hey, what time do they need to be in?” “I don't care. Just lock the door when you get in, I don't care.” When you talk back to a parent and you do things that are

disrespectful and they just yell back at you and now you have two kids acting like fools toward one another, they don't care. Parents totally blow me away sometimes because they seem to have no capacity to say no to their kids. Someday looking back you will learn that the word no may be in the top five of the most loving words you should have spoken.

God shows His love toward us by caring enough to bring correction when we are headed down the wrong pathway.

His Spirit: He supernaturally pours His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because He has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love. Romans 5:5

God's Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. I would remind you again that the Holy Spirit is not an "it." Jesus had a last talk with His disciples most of which is recorded in John 13-16. Within that conversation He again reminds them that He is sending His Spirit to comfort, guide and lead them.

"If you love Me, obey My commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. ¹⁷ He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive Him, because it isn't looking for Him and doesn't recognize Him. But you know Him, because He lives with you now and later will be in you. John 14:15-17 NLT

God's love provides an Advocate: Lawyer that won't give up on you.
God's love provides a leader that leads us to the truth.

²⁶ "But I will send you the Advocate—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me. John 15:26 NLT

God's love provides an Advocate that will witness in our hearts and reveal who the Father is and what He is like. The Holy Spirit represents God to us and us to God. He speaks on God's behalf and He speaks on our behalf. He is our counselor.

But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—He will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.²⁷ "I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid. John 14:26-27 NLT

The love of God provides us with the gift of His representative who lives in our hearts and minds to remind us of His words; to teach us what God wants us to know.

I realize I'm giving you a lot of scripture but you need this one: Romans 8:26-39 NLT

⁶ *And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.* ²⁷ *And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.* ²⁸ *And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.* ²⁹ *For God knew His people in advance, and He chose them to become like His Son, so that His Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.* ³⁰ *And having chosen them, He called them to come to Him. And having called them, He gave them right standing with Himself. And having given them right standing, He gave them His glory.*

³¹ *What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us?* ³² *Since He did not spare even His own Son but gave Him up for us all, won't He also give us everything else?* ³³ *Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for His own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with Himself.* ³⁴ *Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and He is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.*

³⁵ *Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean He no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?* ³⁶ *(As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.")* ³⁷ *No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.*

³⁸ *And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.* ³⁹ *No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

A young man was getting ready to graduate from college. For many months he had admired a beautiful sports car in a dealer's showroom, and knowing that his father could well afford it, he told him that was all he wanted. As Graduation Day approached, the young man awaited signs that his father had purchased the car. Finally, on the morning of his graduation, his father called him into his private study.

His father told him how proud he was to have such a fine son, and told him how much he loved him. He handed his son a beautiful wrapped gift box. Curious, but somewhat disappointed, the young man opened the box and found a lovely, leather bound Bible, with the young man's name embossed in gold. Angrily, he raised his voice to his father and said, "With all your money you give me a Bible?" and stormed out of the house, leaving the Bible.

Many years passed and the young man was very successful in business. He had a beautiful home and wonderful family, but realized his father was very old and thought perhaps he should go to him. He had not seen him since that graduation day. But before

he could make arrangements, he received a telegram telling him his father had passed away, and willed all of his possessions to his son. He needed to come home immediately and take care of things.

When he arrived at his father's house, sudden sadness and regret filled his heart. He began to search through his father's important papers and saw the still new Bible, just as he had left it years ago. With tears, he opened the Bible and began to turn the pages. His father had carefully underlined a verse, Matthew 7:11, "And if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father which is in heaven, give to those who ask Him?"

As he read those words, a car key dropped from the back of the Bible. It had a tag with the dealer's name, the same dealer who had the sports car he had desired. On the tag was the date of his graduation, and the words....PAID IN FULL.

How many times have we missed God's love because it is not packaged as we expected?

Oh how He loves us. Oh how He loves you. God loves you today and I hope that you are keenly aware of it.