

What does it mean to love God?

I have long struggled with this question. The enquiry seems especially pertinent following the celebration of Christ's resurrection. After all that God has done for me in Christ, how can I understand the depth of His love, much less show Him the same love in return?

I certainly do not know the answer to this question. Even if I did know, I suspect that the answer would be ineffable. Lacking a concrete answer, let us look for the next best thing: a pathway to the answer. The key to this puzzle, as with all Christian struggles, comes through God's grace.

Grace is just a fancy word for God's activity in our lives. The basic principle is simple: when I cannot do something, God can. Applying that principle to my struggle of understanding God's love and of loving Him in return, the first step is to realise that I cannot understand; I cannot love.

'God help me!' So says the soul that trusts in God's grace. By speaking this way, we turn to God for an answer; and we know that He hears our prayers and will answer us. Prayer is the gateway to the path which leads us to an understanding of God's love. Through prayer, we may also learn to love God as He first loved us.

But must we wait until the end of the pathway to love God as we ought? Certainly not. The simple act of opening the gate, of crying out to God for help, is the beginning of love. For this reason, Monday's devotion begins with the theme of drawing near to God. Four other ways to love God follow. May God give us grace to meditate upon His love for us, to draw near to him in prayer, and to lay down our lives for Him who is our truly awesome friend.

John 15:12-14: This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.

Elliott Williams

Day 1

James 4:8-10

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Thank you, Lord, that I can always hope in your mercy. Help me to acknowledge my sin, and show me the sins that I have ignored. Please bring my wilful and prideful acts to

nothing and make me humble so that I may love your mercy. May Your Spirit make my brokenness an act of love and service toward You, my friend.

Day 2

John 14:15-17

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

Lord, how wonderful that you, the God of the universe, should care for me. Please give me your Spirit that I may obey your commandments and imitate Christ. May Your Spirit make my obedience an act of love and service toward You, my friend.

Day 3

I John 4:19-21

We love because he first loved us. 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.

Lord, thank you for my Christian brethren. Help me to serve them and to love them as You have loved me. Please show me any remnants of envy or self-seeking or love for my own glory in my behaviour towards others. May Your Spirit make my relationships an act of love and service toward You, my friend.

Day 4

Psalms 119:92-94

If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life. I am yours; save me, for I have sought your precepts.

John 6:67-69

So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

Lord, I acknowledge that all truth comes from You. If I have neglected Your Word or made some other laws my guide, please show me my sin, forgive me, and lead me in the way everlasting. With the Psalmist, may I pant after Your Word and long for it in the night. May Your Spirit make my search for truth an act of love and service toward You, my friend.

Day 5

Psalm 96:1-6

Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth! Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous works among all the peoples! For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens. Splendour and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

To You, O God, I give all my praise. Please forgive me for neglecting the praise of Your name, for not even noticing Your activity in this world and in my life. I give myself to You and ask that You would help me to be more attentive to Your acts of love toward me and to respond with thanks and praise. May Your Spirit make my life a life of worship, an act of love and service toward You, my friend.