



the core

the **central truths** of the faith

John 3.16-17

Perhaps some of the most simple and profound words ever written are, “Jesus loves me! this I know, For the Bible tells me so.” These opening words to the much beloved song *Jesus Loves Me* have been sung countless number of times. I sang them myself over and over again as a child. But I wonder. Did I ever believe them? Did any of us really believe them?

Oh, sure. If you asked me, I would tell you that Jesus loved me, but my life told a different story. I lived in constant fear that I would slip up and make God disappointed with me. When I did slip, and that was often, I would tell Him again and again how sorry I was and that I would try harder next time, that I would make sure there would never be a next time. There always was. I lived as if God’s love was something I had to earn. I danced and performed as if He was a cynical old man who miserly gave His affection, if at all, to those who in some way amused Him. Sure, God loved me, but I had to earn it. I lived for a long time like that. I suppose in many ways I still do. A great number of us do. I suppose in many ways, we each wonder if God really does love us. Such love is the stuff of dreams, the things we hope could be true, but deep down we know really aren’t. We want it to be true because if it was, then we would truly be free. Free to laugh. Free to dance. Free to be who we are. Free to love in return.

However, such freedom eludes us because God’s love eludes us. Actually, that isn’t really the case. I am beginning to think that God’s love isn’t what eludes us. No. I am beginning to think that we are the one’s eluding love. God’s love pursues us, doggedly so. It pursues each of us regardless of who we are or where we are from. It chases after us like a small dog chases a tire on his master’s automobile, never giving up until it wrestles it into submission or is killed in the process. In this case the latter was true. And yet with such demonstrations of unending, never-stopping, never-giving up love before us, we draw back. Why? I am not really sure. Perhaps we fear truly being free. Maybe such love seems too good to be true, the stuff of fairy tales and bedtime stories. But what if it is? What if it really is true that God loves us? What would it do to us if we stepped toward it rather than away? What might such love free us from? What might we be freed for if we but took a step toward this never-stopping, never-giving up, always and forever love?

A fellow traveler,

Blake
Spiritual Formation Pastor

My Next Step

We encourage you to consider doing the following as a way of handing off faith to your family. . .

- **Show love:** We learn love best in the context of family. Very often, love becomes for us what we experienced from our parents and spouse. If our parents or spouse are distant, or if they are conditional with their love, then we begin to view God’s love in the same way. For our families

to understand God's unconditional love, they have to see it in us first. This week consider one way in which you might give unconditional love to your children and spouse. Remember, love is a verb, so it will probably be an action. Engage in this action with gusto this week and see what happens. Plan to do the same next week, only consider adding a second action. Do the same each week until love becomes a way of living with your family rather than single acts interspersed through the week.

We encourage you to consider taking the following next step on your faith journey. . .

- **Consider love:** God loves us with an unconditional, unending, always and forever love. However, we have been taught that such love does not exist. To accept God's love, we have to come to the point that we recognize that such love can and does exist. We have to learn to think differently about love. This week, memorize and meditate on the following passages: John 3.16-17 and Psalm 139.17-18. Let these words roll around in your mind this week as you think about them. Let them come to mind as you stand in line, as you drive to and from work, as you rise and as you prepare for bed. Allow these words to bring about a new way of thinking, a way of thinking that makes room for God's love.