

# The Love of God

The Character of God—part 12

September 16, 2018

*John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*

## **DAY 1: What saps the love of God from our awareness?**

1. Everyone wants a God of love. Well, you've got one!
2. What is striking to me is how little, "God loves you," resonates in most people's hearts. We typically think, "Oh, that's nice." (Yawn). Why do you think that is?
3. As C. S. Lewis says, the kind of love people want from God is a grandfather's love, that doesn't care much what you do as long as we can say, "a good time was had by all."
4. The kind of love God offers is nothing like what we want. His love is the kind you would see in a strong family that takes in a fifteen-year old juvenile delinquent. If you took in a juvenile delinquent, what would your "love" have to look like? What would it entail?
5. *That* love refuses to let the delinquent continue on his path of destruction. It will involve loss of privileges, grounding, extra chores, etc. To the fifteen-year-old this love looks like "hatred." (However, when that boy grows up to be a man, he will be extraordinarily grateful for all the "tough love" that came his way). The point is: we look for one kind of love. When we don't get it, we wonder if God's love is real.
6. There are three deeper reasons, reasons of the heart that keep us from falling on our knees in wonderment when we hear the words, "God loves you."

### **Reason #1. We're determined to pursue our own self-interest more than God.**

*Jeremiah 2:13 "My people have committed two sins. They have forsaken me, the spring of living water and have dug their own wells, wells that cannot hold water."*

7. As long as we believe we can meet our own needs the love of God will mean little to us.
8. Is the love of God for you your highest value, or is something else a higher value? What comes to mind?

## DAY 2: 2 more reasons that sap the love of God from our awareness

### Reason #2: “I don’t see any reason why God would not bless me.”

1. “Why won’t God answer my prayers? I trust God. He should come through. We’re on good terms, not because of Christ’s righteousness and the cross, but because of my good life. I’m trying hard. I’m sincere.”
2. These are the kinds of thoughts that not only creep into the ears of unbelievers, but also creep into the ear of sincere believers.
3. When we say, “we’re trusting God” we mean “we’re trusting God to give us the good life.”
4. When God’s people in Jeremiah’s time did not receive “the good life” from God, they turned to others that might be able to give them “the good life”:

*Jeremiah 2:27a They say to wood, “You are my father,” and to stone, “You gave me birth.”*

5. You say, “Well, I don’t do that! That’s stupid!” But, we have our own modern versions of the same thing. You expect a certain response from most people in your life: friends, boss, spouse, teens, small group members and pastors. What you’re saying is, “You have the resources within you to walk in the door and make me feel a certain way. That’s your job. That’s what I need.” From God’s point of view here’s what that looks like.

*Jeremiah 2:27b “They have turned their backs to me and not their faces; yet when they are in trouble, they say, ‘Come and save us!’”*

6. People who ‘turn their backs on God’ see no contradiction in depending on their efforts or people to make life work, and relating to God as second fiddle.

### Reason #3. “Our trouble ‘obligates’ God.”

7. We are not a humble people. “God, I’m doing my part. Why aren’t you doing yours?” God asks:

*Jeremiah 2:29 “Why do you bring charges against me? You have all rebelled against me.”*

8. In our minds, trouble obligates God to fix our problems. In God’s mind, the sinfulness of man obligates God to give us a long overdue spanking, or worse. It’s a wonder of his grace that He sent his Son for me! I’m redeemed, and going to heaven.

9. When we turn to anything other than God as our greatest hope, we commit “spiritual” adultery. The adulterous look is the symptom of a self-serving agenda that is more important than God.

*Jeremiah 3:3-5 Therefore the showers have been withheld, and no spring rains have fallen. Yet you have the brazen look of a prostitute; you refuse to blush with shame. Have you not called to me: “My Father, my friend from my youth, will you always be angry? Will your wrath continue forever?” This is how you talk, but you do all the evil you can.*

10. What keeps the people from enjoying the love of God in Jeremiah 3:3-5?

### DAY 3: The story of Hosea

1. The people of God in Hosea's time were similar to the people of God in Jeremiah's time. They claimed to be followers of God. But while they were religious, they lived for the good life as their highest priority.

2. Their "love" for God was in name only. It was a façade, a "method" of trying to get God to give them the good life. The love of God was more of a way of using a vending machine: Put in the quarters and get your snack.

3. "I'll 'follow' God as long as I get what I want." Is that purpose alive inside you? In what way?

4. In Hosea 2, God compares His people to Gomer, once the town prostitute, and now married to Hosea, though still "running around."

*Hosea 2:13b "...she decked herself with rings and jewelry, and went after her lovers, but me she forgot."*

5. Have you ever had someone turn away from you toward someone else? A boyfriend or girlfriend when you were single? Your spouse, who turned their heart and "affection" to someone else? A business partner that threw you under the bus? A "friend" who turned on you? Describe what you went through.

6. You have experienced something of what God goes through with us! We regularly turn away from Him to put our trust and affections elsewhere.

7. When we do so, we make a grave error. We leave the "narrow road" to life and return to the "broad road" that leads to destruction.

8. God's love will "chase us down," to draw us back to Himself!

9. What strikes you from today's devotional?

#### **DAY 4: The love of God in action**

1. How does God turn a people away from their higher “loves” (their highest priorities, priorities over the love of God), back to God as their first love?

*Hosea 2:7 She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.'*

a. God allows her to chase after her “lovers” (her highest priorities), but that strategy doesn’t work, anymore!

*Hosea 2:9 "Therefore I will take away my grain when it ripens, and my new wine when it is ready. I will take back my wool and my linen, intended to cover her nakedness.*

b. After they saw it was fruitless to chase after other “lovers,” God removes their lovers!

*Hosea 2:14 “Therefore I am going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her. There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she will sing as in the days of her youth.... In that day you will call me ‘my husband’; you will not longer call me ‘my master’.”*

c. God leads the people into the desert, where there is nothing of which they are chasing.

d. Then, when all other loves are removed, He allures her and speaks tenderly to her!

e. He then promises to give her back what she needs to sustain her, and restores her, but with this big difference: she will sing, not because she has her “lovers” back, but because she has her *first* love back—the Lord God!

2. How is the relationship between God and people described in Hosea 2:14?

3. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

## **DAY 5: The love of God is passionately relational**

### **1. Change Begins When an Ugly Soul Meets Pure Love.**

*Hosea 2:14 "Therefore I am going to allure her;"*

- a. God's people had been adulterous toward God. God responds by "alluring" His people. If your love has ever been betrayed, either in dating or in marriage, you are likely flabbergasted by God's response!
- b. The lesson, of course, is that we have been the same as God's people, chasing after other lovers, and yet God allures YOU!

### **2. The Sweetest Songs Are Sung in the Desert.**

*Hosea 2:14 "I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her."*

- a. It's in the desert that you are stripped of all the props, all the false trusts. In the desert you feel parched and weary. Parched and weary is what you should feel when your central, real trusts are anything other than God.
- b. It's in the desert that you see yourself most clearly: "I have nothing of my own to quench my own thirst. I have little to offer you or others. In reality, I have a weight to put on you, to get from you!" He leads you to the desert. You may feel like God is a long way from you because you feel parched and barren. The reality is He *brings* you to the desert.
- c. Much of our life is spent maintaining the illusion that we can get along in life just fine with all the things and people around us. We really don't need God all that much. That makes where I am, right now, a desert.

*Hosea 2:15 "There **I will give** her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There **she will sing** as in the days of her youth...."*

- d. God says to us in the desert, "I'm going to take things that you thought were good, that in fact weren't satisfying your soul; I'm going to take those things away because I want your soul to be enriched with me!"

It's not until Christ is all you've got that you discover he's all you need. He can more than satisfy, if I genuinely come to Him and trust Him *now* for my deepest needs. He promises rivers of living water. Even flowers can bloom in the desert with sufficient water.

*Hosea 2:16 In that day you will call me 'my husband'; you will not longer call me 'my master'."*

### **3. God Calls Us to Be His Bride.**

*Hosea 2:19-20 "I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord."*

→What's your biggest takeaway from today's devotional?