

God Loves You: The Three Most Powerful Words

BY DAVID JEREMIAH

Let me tell you about a boy whose love for his mother changed history. This fellow grew up dreaming of joining the British Navy. His brother was a Navy man who often brought fellow sailors home for supper, and their tales and exploits enthralled young George around the dinner table. The lad began dreaming of a career on the high seas. As George grew older his brother encouraged him to sign up; and as soon as he was of age he did so. George's widowed mother opposed the idea, but she reluctantly gave her consent; and with great enthusiasm George joined the Navy as midshipman.

But when the day came for goodbye, it was too much for his mother. Seeing him in his dashing uniform, with his belongings on the ship and his vessel ready to sail, she sobbed. She had endured much heartache in life and couldn't bear losing her son. She begged him to renounce his plans and to assist her with her burdens in life.

After a long silence, George spoke. His dream had been years in the making and he could hardly give it up. He told her he very much wanted a naval career, yet not if it meant breaking her heart. Though deeply disappointed, he returned his uniform and ordered his belongings to shore. Because of his love for his mother, the direction of the boy's life was forever changed. He never pursued a naval career, never went to sea, never ascended the ranks of the British fleet. Instead he found another pathway in life, and history was transformed because George Washington put his mother first.

If a boy's love for his mother can change history, think of the power of God's love toward us. If human love is so formidable, think of the inexhaustible love of God. Think of the transformation it wields over all it touches. Think of its electrifying effect on a human life like yours. "God Loves You" are the three most powerful words in the vocabularies of heaven and earth, for they summarize the redemptive, sacrificial heart of Almighty God toward our deepest hurts and needs.

Just as J. I. Packer says in his book *Knowing God*: "To know God's love is indeed heaven on earth."¹ According to Packer, God's love is the exercise of His goodness toward individual sinners as He identifies Himself with our welfare and expresses His love by the gift of His Son as our Savior, allowing us to know and enjoy Him in a covenant relationship.² No wonder Paul prayed that we would more fully comprehend the width, length, depth, and height of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge (Ephesians 3:18-19).

Rejoice in Its Power

When our lives are touched by the love of Jesus, we're wonderfully transformed. And when enough people experience the same love, our society is changed. We rejoice in the power of God's love and in the testimonies of its transformational reach.

The *Mutiny on the Bounty* illustrates this. The whole thing began in 1787 when the English ship *Bounty*, commanded by Lieutenant William Bligh, sailed to the South Pacific to collect plants and agricultural samples. Viewing it as a voyage to paradise, sailors signed up with excitement. Bligh appointed Fletcher Christian as second-in-command, and the *Bounty* stayed in Tahiti six months while the sailors enjoyed paradise to the full. When time came for departure, some of the men wanted to stay behind with their island girls. Three men, trying to desert, were flogged. The mood on ship darkened, and Fletcher Christian staged the most famous mutiny in history. Bligh and his supporters were set adrift in an overloaded lifeboat.

The mutineers on the *Bounty* immediately began quarreling about what to do next. Christian returned to Tahiti where he kidnapped some women, took some slaves, and with the remaining crew traveled a thousand miles to uninhabited Pitcairn Island. There the little group unraveled. As they distilled whiskey from a native plant, drunkenness and fighting broke out. Disease and murder eventually took the lives of all the men except one, Alexander Smith, who found himself the only man on the island, surrounded by an assortment of women and children.

Then an amazing change occurred. Smith found the *Bounty's* neglected Bible and its message of the love of God. Reading it, he realized that true paradise is the discovery of God's love revealed through Christ, and he began so instructing his little community. The message of Christ so transformed their lives that twenty years later, in 1808, when the *Topaz* landed on the island, it found a happy society of Christians living in prosperity and peace, free from crime, disease, murder and mutiny.³ The love of God through Jesus Christ had touched and transformed every soul.

As Christians we can relate to that story, for our own testimonies are similar. Like Charles Wesley, we can sing: "Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night; Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; my chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee. Amazing love, how can it be, that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?"

Revel in Its Simplicity

While rejoicing in its power, we can also revel in its simplicity. The love of God is strong enough to change society, yet simple enough to touch our most tender hurts. Occasionally something happens to remind us that the simplest things are best. Think of the benefits of a single aspirin, the uplift

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of a simple song, the power of a simple word, the comfort of a simple touch, and the encouragement of a simple act. Now think of the simplicity of God's love. According to the verse I quoted earlier in Ephesians 3, God's love is like a cube. We're to comprehend its height, width, depth, and length. God's love is the simplest building block in life, one on which we can construct a happy and loving personality. In Christ, we're "boxed in" by His love.

Many of us struggle with an array of issues, including anxiety and low self-esteem, just because we don't comprehend the simplicity of the love He lavishes on us. Devotional writer Frances Havergal addressed this in one of her little books. "Perhaps we have the dreary idea, 'Nobody wants me,'" she wrote. "We never need grope in that gloom again, when the King Himself desires us! This desire is love active, love in glow, love going forth, love delighting and longing. It is the strongest representation of the love of Jesus—something far beyond the love of pity or compassion; it is taking pleasure in His people, delighting in them, willing that they should be with Him where He is, with Him now, with Him always."⁴

God not only loves you, He *loves* to love you. His love is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell; it goes beyond the highest star and reaches to the lowest hell.⁵

It's not off the mark to say that growth in the Christian life is a matter of experiencing the simplicity and practicality of God's love in ever-expanding ways. As you realize He loves you enough to constantly care for you, your faith grows and your worries subside. As you realize He loves you enough to control everything that touches your life, your contentment grows and your frustrations recede. As you realize He loves you enough to bring disciplines to bear, your obedience increases. As you realize He loves you enough to forgive you, you become more merciful toward others. As we realize the eternal ramifications of His love, we can't help sharing the Gospel with others. His love changes everything and everyone.

The great Puritan John Owen wrote, "The greatest sorrow and burden you can lay upon the Father, the greatest unkindness you can do to Him is not to believe that He loves you."⁶ God's love should be transforming you every day, for His love changes everything and everyone. That's why the most powerful words you'll ever say are: "God Loves You!"



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¹ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, Intervarsity, 1973), 106.

² J. I. Packer, chapter 12.

³ Adapted from Robert J. Morgan, *Real Stories for the Soul* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 78-80.

⁴ Frances Ridley Havergal, *My King* (NY: Anson D.F. Randolph & Co., n.d.), 50-51.

⁵ See the hymn, "The Love of God" by Frederick M. Lehman, written in 1917.

⁶ Grace Quotes at <http://thegracetabernacle.org/quotes/God-Love.htm>.