



**THE LOVE OF GOD**

*Could we with ink the ocean fill,  
And were the skies of parchment made;  
Were ev'ry stalk on earth a quill,  
And ev'ry man a scribe by trade;  
To write the love of God above  
Would drain the ocean dry;  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole  
Though stretched from sky to sky!  
Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!  
How measureless and strong!  
It shall for evermore endure  
The saints' and angels' song.*

The words above were written by F. M. Lehman in 1917, and what is quoted above is the last verse of the beautiful hymn. Each time I sing it or hear it, I struggle to comprehend just how big God is and how great His love is for mankind. It breaks my heart to know that in today's world, millions of people do not know God—many having never even heard of Him.

Sadly, many who have heard of Him and know at least something about Him deny that He even exists, and most of them think of Him as a figment of imagination. In their own "wisdom," they believe the world came about by happenstance—by a "big bang." They believe that the world as it is today and the inhabitants of it are

continually evolving from some lowly cell to the immense complexity that exists today.

The love of God is so evident in his creation. It is also evident in the hearts and minds of those who obey Him and live to serve Him. Truly, the love of God is so immense that it is impossible to ever fully understand it or describe it. I'm just eternally grateful for it!



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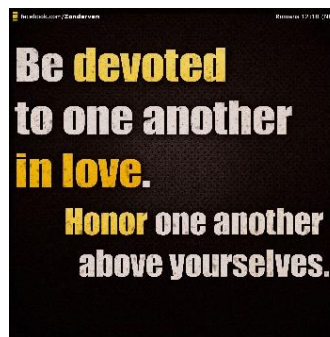


**HONORING ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE**

Something happened at church one Sunday recently during a song service. It unexpectedly caused tears to stream unheeded down my face.

As our song leader began directing us, he sang the proper words but the tune from a different song. Almost immediately, he realized what he'd done and faltered somewhat, but by the fourth or fifth word, the ladies in the congregation had picked up the tune and carried it until he seamlessly rejoined and continued to lead.

As this verse echoed through the auditorium, my throat tightened so that I couldn't sing at all but only stood as goose bumps raised across my arms and neck. I was overwhelmed by a memory from over four decades ago that had happened in this very



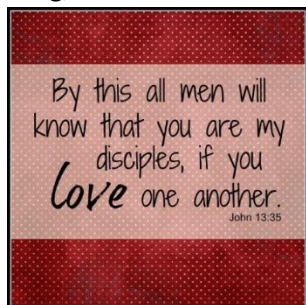
same auditorium when I was only seven or eight years old.

Once a month on Wednesday nights in the 1970's, our young men -- boys really -- used to lead the song service, and sometimes one of them would even give a talk. When my brother's turn came around, I was very excited for him but also knew he was dreading the assignment. He was no singer unless it was in the privacy of the great outdoors around our country home and then, at the top of his lungs in a mocking falsetto, he'd sing his own version of Johnny Cash's "Wreck of the Old '97." Nevertheless, he was assigned the song service that Wednesday night.

Alvin didn't stay down at the communion table to lead his song like many of our boys did. Instead, he went up and hid behind the pulpit. All you could see of my fifteen-year-old brother was a shock of white-blond hair. We church-goers had chuckled softly with kind, good-humor and then, quietly, a hand rose slightly above that hair and a few words were mumbled into the microphone from behind that big pulpit.

The song was my favorite. I'd begged him to lead it: "Trust and Obey." I knew every word by heart. As soon as he'd muttered, "When we walk with the Lord..." the song was picked up by the luminous voices of Mary Lou Long and Clara Gillett and Lou McKune and Tina Eudaly and Shirley Mace and Lovera Baird and Mary Gibson and Laura Crow and Norma Garver and Mary Alexander; and it rose and rose and rose and rose. That night, in our little church, I believe it's likely that the voices of those sheltered together in that auditorium blended with voices in the heavens and God heard it and was so pleased that He also sang with us.

When Alvin stepped to the front that night to lead that song, I was so nervous for him. I was wiggly with anxiety



and then, of course, it happened. He was bad, bad, bad—just like he'd said he would be. But in a moment, his worship was cheerfully joined and made beautiful by the singing of other hearts. Together, it was holy. It was loving. Kind. Generous. Glorious. Joyful. Honoring to our Father.

Oh, that we could come before the Lord in a consistent way with this same joyful and worshipful attitude in our love for one another. Oh, that we could make it our life's

sacrifice to always be at-the-ready to honor one another in this way, to fill in the gaps for each other and cover over each other's failings without ever skipping a beat. Oh, what a glorious treasure and incense we would be before our Lord. And, oh, how all the heavenly host and our Savior would join us, not only for a song, but for our moment-by-moment journey together.

To follow in such a way as to make our leaders strong even when they falter...to be selfless and worshipful in all situations and circumstances and seasons...to provide an unfailing reinforcement that seeks only good and success for one another...to joyfully and earnestly and beautifully and quietly cover one another in God's Agape...

Thank you, dearest friends, for making my brother shine that night.

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## LIVING LOVE

Throughout life, I've encountered a lot of concern with the minutiae of Christianity. This isn't inherently wrong; understanding the small details of our faith – like the precise meaning of a word in its original Greek or where an ancient city was on the map – can be helpful at times. It can offer evidences to feel more certain in our faith, or simply give us a multifaceted appreciation for the things we believe. However, small details do become problematic when trivialities are used to judge others, or cause rifts between Christians. Unfortunately, I encountered many people who did just that during my younger years.

At the Christian campus ministry I attended in my college years, however, I encountered a new type of Christianity. The life advocated there can be summed up in just one word: love. A love that derives from John 14:15: *If you love me, keep my commandments*. If we love God, then all our actions should stem from that love. This idea transformed my thinking about Christianity. I saw that being a Christian wasn't nearly as complicated as I'd grown up believing. It wasn't based on keeping up with a mile-long checklist of rules, or about believing in a precisely detailed set of doctrines. In fact, it was pretty simple: just let every action, every thought, every waking moment be ruled by love.

That probably sounds a bit simplistic. Maybe you're thinking: well, we all know that God gave us rules in the Bible. We must follow those. God said so! You can't just

go merrily through life saying “I love everyone because God loves everyone” and think your Christian duty is done.

True. Let me explain. When you love God, and you allow that love to rule your entire life, then every aspect of every day will be soaked in love. How does that manifest itself? Love for our Father opens our hearts to love for everyone: friends, family, the disadvantaged, passersby on the street, people who are different from us, even for the natural world. When our hearts are opened like this, it can also open our eyes to opportunities we have missed before, like a widowed neighbor who could use a friendly visit, or a stranger in a parking lot who looks like they could use help carrying their purchases. When you live out God’s love, you might be inspired to carry food packages in your car to give homeless people you encounter, or to deliver a treat to someone who is generally underappreciated: a teacher, an emergency services worker, a janitor.

When you live out God’s love, you’ll begin to see places to show that love all around you. Living our love for God



allows us an infinitesimal glimpse of how all-encompassing His love is for this planet He created and for all its inhabitants. As you can see from above, loving God in

the way we often think of love, as a good feeling, as the warm fuzzies, doesn’t cut it. Love requires action. Living our love for God doesn’t mean just thinking about our good feelings for all creation; it means being His hands and feet. And when you live love like that, you are keeping His commandments without keeping track of any checklists or doctrinal creeds.

The congregation I was part of in the last few years was a wonderful example of this love in action. Individuals there would quietly take care of any need that someone had. People would arrange for monetary assistance in hard times. They loaned a car to a family who didn’t have one for a year. They would find ways to get anything from refrigerators to furniture for those who needed them. They would throw beautiful parties to celebrate important times in others’ lives. They would go out of their way to speak words of encouragement, or would send thoughtful notes at unexpected times. And all of it was done quietly; not for personal glory, but for the glory of God— to show His love. Their example has inspired me to strive to put my love into action every day. It’s a daily struggle, but it seems to get easier over time as I learn more and more to surrender my life to my Father.

I hope that we all avoid the trap of being bogged down in the trivial details of being a “good” Christian. Instead, let’s all work to demonstrate our love for God through love for the world.

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Rolla, Missouri



## SHARING THE LOVE

Valentines’ Day is a time designated to allow us to express our feelings of affections for those who are dear to us. The young children decorate boxes and exchange cards at school. The teacher always gets that “extra special” valentine and maybe a gift to go along with it.

As the kids grow up, the day becomes a time to ask that girl you like at school to a party or to a movie. If you can drive and have a little cash, it can turn into a real date night with dinner and maybe flowers or candy. Once you find and marry that special someone, Valentine’s Day is a good excuse for spending an evening out together. Then the cycle begins all over again watching your children celebrate the day.

What was the best valentine gift you ever got? We got married on January 14, so Valentine’s Day was our one-month anniversary. My husband brought home a potted plant – a miniature rose bush. I remember the feeling of love I had that day – the plant was a symbol of the love we shared. He made me feel special by remembering me in a simple, but loving way. I guess the day on the calendar doesn’t mean as much to me after 39 years of marriage, because we have made a practice of expressing our affection for each other and doing special things for each other all throughout the year.

Maybe Valentine’s Day is a learning tool; to begin teaching children at a very young age to be able to express their feelings of love and affection. I had a wonderful, loving family and felt loved and appreciated – but some children these days are not so fortunate.



Let’s pay attention to those around us who may need a hug, a note of encouragement, or even a smile. It doesn’t have to be a special day on the calendar for us to say “I love you” or “I’m glad you are my friend.”

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## DO YOU?

Do you run to God every morning, open the window, and pour out your heart to him? Do you tell him each day how much you love him? Do you listen and give him an opportunity to share his love for you? Or, do you leave our Lord paused on the side of the road, watching and wishing you were there? Take time to be with God every day. Don't leave him waiting for you. Don't miss out on the joy, peace, and comfort he wants to give you. And don't miss out on the joy you can give him. His hands are waving. Are you ready to wave back?

Submitted by Jennie Heidbreder, St. James, MO  
Via Facebook, November, 2016

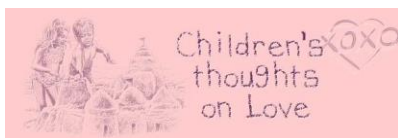
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## WINGS, 2017



The annual WINGS conference at Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas, is a great event of spiritual growth and challenge for Christian women. Please carefully consider attending and participating in WINGS this year. If you are in the Rolla area and would like to attend, please contact the Rolla Church of Christ (573-364-3488) and let us know. Go to <http://www.harding.edu/events/wings> to register on-line

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“Love is what makes you smile when you’re tired.” Terri, Age 4

“Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is okay.” Danny, age 7

“Love is when you kiss all the time. Then when you get tired of kissing, you still want to be together and you talk more. My Mommy and Daddy are like that. They look gross when they kiss.” Emily, age 8

“Love is what’s in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen.” Bobby, age 7

“If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate.” Nikka, age 6

“Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt, then he wears it every day.” Noelle, age 7

“Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends, even after they know each other so well.” Tommy, age 6

“During my piano recital, I was on a stage and I was scared. I looked at all the people watching me and saw my daddy waving and smiling. He was the only one doing that. I wasn’t scared anymore.” Cindy, age 8

“My mommy loves me more than anybody. You don’t see anyone else kissing me to sleep at night.” Clare, age 6

“Love is when Mommy gives Daddy the best piece of chicken.” Elaine, age 5

“Love is when Mommy sees Daddy smelly and sweaty and still says he is handsomer than Robert Redford.” Chris, age 7

“Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day.” Mary Ann, age 4

“When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you.” Karen, age 7

“You really shouldn’t say ‘I love you’ unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget.” Jessica, age 8

Author Unknown

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*Sunrise*  
The Newsletter For Women By Christian Women

*Sunrise* is a monthly newsletter written and/or assembled by members of the Rolla Church of Christ. All previous issues can be accessed by going to <http://www.seekgrowserve.org>. Click on Resources, then on Sunrise Newsletter. You will find the current issue plus all previous issues.

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