

GOD LOVES ME

Thinking like Jesus about self, John 3:16-17

I recently read a short news story about “body-positive models,” about plus-sized fashion models trying to change perceptions of beauty. Those models sit within our culture’s growing emphasis upon positivity that advocates love for self regardless of one’s shape, color, sexuality, or any other identifying features or qualities they may possess.

Loving oneself also holds an important place in the Bible. Consider, for example, Jesus’ second greatest command – “You shall love your neighbor *as yourself*”¹ (*Matthew 7:39, emp. added*). While positivity culture and the Bible may overlap, a key difference separates them – the love our culture advocates is individualized to each person, while the love the Bible discusses focuses on God. We will use this lesson to consider God’s love for us and some of the applications it has within our lives.

God’s love, Jesus, and us

- Love occupies a unique and defining place among the characteristics that combine to form God’s identity (*Exodus 34:5-7; 1 John 4:7-8*).
- The love that defines God focuses on humans and motivates His desire for a relationship with them (*Ephesians 1:3-10; Romans 5:6-11; 1 John 4:9-10; Revelation 21:3*).
- God’s desire for a relationship with humans determined the mission He gave Jesus (*John 3:16-17*).
- Jesus not only accomplished God’s love-commissioned mission, but he did it in ways that illustrate the nature of God’s love (*1 John 3:16; 4:9-10; cf. Matthew 20:20-28; John 13:3-5, 34*).
- The love that defines God and that He makes known to us through Jesus reveals that:

God believes we are worthy of His love.

God desires a relationship with us despite our flawed, broken identities.

God’s love remains faithful to us even though we often act unfaithfully.

¹ All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.



- The reality and nature of God’s love for us ought to solicit a response of love from us. However, our love for God expresses itself in a particular way – *“whoever loves God must love his brother”* (1 John 4:7-11, 19-22; 5:3).
- In addition to revealing God’s love to us, Jesus also models for us the kind of love we should have for one another (John 13:34-35).
- Jesus’ love shows us that:

We should love every person God loves without qualification.

Our love expresses itself by selflessly serving flawed, broken people.

Our love makes us faithful to people regardless of the cost.

The Bible’s message of God’s love offers a blessing of incomparable worth. Because of its value, it demands a response from us. We should, therefore, ask ourselves questions like:

“Do I honor God’s love for me by properly loving myself?”

“Do I honor God’s love for others by properly loving them?”

May God help us cultivate proper love within our lives.

