

Consider  
the  
Lilies

"This book is exceptional  
in every way."  
—JOHN MACARTHUR



Finding  
Perfect Peace  
in the  
Character  
of God

Jonny  
Ardavanis

# Consider the Lilies

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## Chapter 10: *Lavish Love*

## The Sovereignty of God:

- God's supremacy, authority, and absolute rule over all things

*"[God's love may] be the hardest truth to believe when we experience pain and are afflicted by anxiety. Many people would sooner doubt God's love than they would His control. It's not hard for me to believe that God rules and reigns over everything He has made. It is much more difficult, however, to believe in God's love for me when I am in great pain. And yet the Bible details that God's love is the source of great hope and sure comfort for those who are worn down by worry and despair." (pgs. 143-144)*

*"When we are examining one attribute of God, we cannot demarcate one attribute from another or separate the part from the whole. Remember, God's attributes are not like slices of a pie. He is, in theological terms, 'simple' – not simplistic, but simple in the sense that He is not composed of parts." (pg. 144)*

## What is Love?

*“Perhaps no word in the English language has been stripped and starved of its meaning more than the word ‘love.’ We say ‘I love you’ to our family and say ‘I loved it’ about our meal at Taco Bell. This variance in meaning and application has not only affected our modern vernacular but has contributed to the way we view God’s love for His children. God’s love, which is His most well-known attribute, is likely the least understood in our world and in the contemporary church today.” (pg. 143)*

What is Love? *“God is love.”* (1 John 4:16) → *“Love is god.”* (the world)

## 1. God’s Holy Love

### Isaiah 6:3

*“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory.”*

### Revelation 4:8

*“HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME.”*

*“In an attempt to elevate the love of God, our contemporary church culture has, for all practical purposes, denied the truth of His holiness. In doing so, they understand neither.”* (pg. 145)

# What is Love? *“God is love.”* (1 John 4:16)

## 1. God’s Holy Love

*“You cannot understand God’s love until you understand what he hates – God hates sin. Right views of God’s holiness always precede right views of His love.”  
(pg. 145)*

### God Hates Sin for 2 Reasons:

1. It is an affront to Him
2. It is deadly to us

### John 3:16

*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

# What is Love? *“God is love.”* (1 John 4:16)

## 1. God’s Holy Love

*“[God’s] love is only ‘amazing’ to those who don’t think they deserve it – and the only way you will come to grips with your unworthiness of God’s love is when you begin to comprehend His holiness... The more we understand who He is as a holy king, the more we can, even remotely, begin to fathom His love.”* (pg. 145)

*“People often forget (or were never taught) that they were not born children of God but born children of wrath (Ephesians 2). We were not born friends of God, we were born His enemies (Romans 5:8-10). We were not born citizens of heaven but citizens of the domain of darkness (Colossians 1:13-14). When we lose sight of this, we will inevitably lose sight of and comfort in God’s love... Sentimental, seeker-sensitive, and shallow teaching on the love of God has rendered it powerless in the real battle we wage against the adversary of our souls and the afflictions we face in our lives.”* (pg. 146)

What is Love? “*God is love.*” (1 John 4:16)

## 2. God’s Forgiving Love

### Psalm 103:

- *Who crowns you with lovingkindness (verse 4)*
- *...is abounding in lovingkindness (verse 8)*
- *For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness (verse 11)*
- *...the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting. (verse 17)*

What is Love? “*God is love.*” (1 John 4:16)

## 2. God’s Forgiving Love

**Psalm 103:3**

*Who pardons all your iniquities.*

**Psalm 103:10**

*He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*

**Psalm 103:12**

*As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

What is Love? *“God is love.”* (1 John 4:16)

## 2. God’s Forgiving Love

*“Doubts that God has forgiven us of our sin will inevitably lead to anxiety. After all, how could we have the peace of God if we aren’t at peace with God? Our confidence in this area of God’s love is the surest catalyst to peace – regardless of life’s circumstances! If God has already met our greatest need in life by forgiving our sin, won’t He richly supply all our other needs in Christ Jesus? If He did not spare His only Son, will He not also give us all things (Romans 8:32)? There is no more for heaven to give! (pg. 147)*

What is Love? “*God is love.*” (1 John 4:16)

### 3. God’s Satisfying Love

**Psalm 103:5**

*Who satisfies your years with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle.*

*“In Scripture, God’s love is not merely an objective fact that needs to be notionally affirmed but a marvelous truth that must be subjectively experienced... John Piper said, ‘Every true Christian knows the love of God not just as an argument, but as an experience.’ Similarly, David did not say to ‘believe and affirm that God is good,’ he said to ‘taste and see’ (Psalm 34:8)... Experiencing God’s love cannot be done by proxy. It must be experienced personally.” (pg. 148)*

What is Love? *“God is love.”* (1 John 4:16)

#### 4. God's Loyal Love

*“Man's love is fickle. It is often unfaithful. But God's love is loyal, His lovingkindness never ceases, and His compassions never fail.”* (pg. 150)

# What is Love? “*God is love.*” (1 John 4:16)

## 4. God’s Loyal Love

### Deuteronomy 7:9

*Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation.*

### Psalm 36:5

*Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens, Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.*

### Isaiah 49:15-16

*<sup>15</sup> “Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. <sup>16</sup> Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands.”*

# What is Love? “*God is love.*” (1 John 4:16)

## 4. God’s Loyal Love

### Romans 8:38-39

*<sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

*“Christian, are you anxious about forfeiting the love of God? You can’t. God’s love is loyal, it is faithful, His compassions never fail, and neither does His love.”  
(pg. 150)*

# What is Love? “*God is love.*” (1 John 4:16)

## 5. God’s Fatherly Love

### Psalm 103:13

*Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.*

### Ephesians 2:1-3

*<sup>1</sup> And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.*

*<sup>3</sup> Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*

What is Love? “*God is love.*” (1 John 4:16)

## 5. God’s Fatherly Love

### Galatians 4:4-5

*<sup>4</sup> But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, <sup>5</sup> so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*

### 1 John 3:1

*See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God.*

## What is Love? *“God is love.”* (1 John 4:16)

### 5. God’s Fatherly Love

*“Our adoption is based not on our worthiness but on our Father’s kindness. It’s amazing, yet nonetheless true – your heavenly Father truly does love you. Therefore, worry is an insult both to God’s sovereignty and to His love. When we worry, we say, ‘Father, You do not really love me, and You are not really in control’... A failure to meditate on God’s love will starve you of peace, but not only that – failure to abide in God’s love is a sin. Have you ever thought about that? Jesus said, ‘Abide in my love’ (John 15:9) – that’s not a suggestion, that’s a commandment that we are privileged to obey. In considering our Father’s love, we can say with Scripture, ‘Perfect love casts out fear’ (1 John 4:18).”* (pg. 152)

# What is Love? “*God is love.*” (1 John 4:16)

## 6. God’s Everlasting Love

### Psalm 103:15-17

*<sup>15</sup> As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.*

*<sup>16</sup> When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, and its place acknowledges it no longer. <sup>17</sup> But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him.*

### Psalm 136

All 26 verses end with the words: “*For His lovingkindness is everlasting.*”

*“If His love for His children is from everlasting to everlasting, then you can be sure that His love is not dependent on human performance. He loved you before time began, and He will love you when time is over.” (pg. 153)*

What is Love? *“God is love.”* (1 John 4:16)

## 7. God’s Love Is Demonstrated in Christ

*“God’s love is not a hypothetical or theoretical abstract idea, it is a historical, objective, and demonstratable reality. God tells His people plainly in Scripture that He loves them. Jeremiah 31:3 reads, ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love.’ But God does more than declare His love; He demonstrates His love towards us in the person and work of Jesus Christ.”* (pg. 153)

### Romans 5:8

*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

What is Love? *“God is love.”* (1 John 4:16)

## 7. God’s Love Is Demonstrated in Christ

*“God declared Jesus legally guilty of every sin ever committed by everyone who would ever believe – and then He poured out the full cup of His wrath on Jesus, who drank it for us ‘down to the dregs’ (Psalm 75:8)... There is not a drop left in the cup of God’s wrath towards you because you are in Christ Jesus – and Jesus paid it all.”* (pg. 155)

What is Love? “*God is love.*” (1 John 4:16)

8. God’s Transforming Love ≠ “Unconditional”

*“I’d like to propose that God’s love is much different and better than unconditional. Unconditional love, as most of us understand it, begins and ends with **sympathy** and **empathy**, with **blanket acceptance**. It accepts you as you are with no expectations. You in turn can take it or leave it.” (Powlison, pg. 3)*

What is Love? *“God is love.”* (1 John 4:16)

8. God's Transforming Love  $\neq$  “Unconditional”

*“God's love is active. He decided to love you when He could have justly condemned you. He's involved. He's merciful, not simply tolerant. He hates sin, yet pursues sinners by name... God's love actively does you good. His love is full of blood, sweat, and tears. He fights for you... He's jealous, not detached... He will discipline you to prove He loves you... God's love has hate in it too: hatred for evil, whether done to you or by you. God's love demands that you respond to it: by believing, trusting, obeying, [and] giving thanks with a joyful heart.”*  
(Powlison, pgs. 5-6)

*“Unconditional love feels safe, but the problem is that there is no power in it. When we ascribe unconditional love to God, we substitute a teddy bear for the King of the universe.”* (Powlison, pg. 6)

What is Love? *“God is love.”* (1 John 4:16)

8. God’s Transforming Love  $\neq$  “Unconditional”

*1. It’s certainly true that “conditional” love is a bad thing.*

*“People use the term ‘unconditional’ as shorthand to contrast with manipulation, demand, or judgementalism.” (Powlison, pg. 8)*

What is Love? *“God is love.”* (1 John 4:16)

8. God’s Transforming Love  $\neq$  “Unconditional”

*1. It’s certainly true that “conditional” love is a bad thing.*

*2. It’s true that God’s love is patient.*

*“People use ‘unconditional’ as shorthand for hanging in there through the process of change, rather than bailing out when the going gets rough.” (Powlison, pg. 8)*

What is Love? *“God is love.”* (1 John 4:16)

8. God’s Transforming Love  $\neq$  “Unconditional”

- 1. It’s certainly true that “conditional” love is a bad thing.*
- 2. It’s true that God’s love is patient.*
- 3. It’s true that true love is God’s gift.*

*“People use ‘unconditional’ as shorthand for such unearned blessing. They use it to overcome legalism.” (Powlison, pg. 9)*

What is Love? *“God is love.”* (1 John 4:16)

8. God’s Transforming Love  $\neq$  “Unconditional”

*1. It’s certainly true that “conditional” love is a bad thing.*

*2. It’s true that God’s love is patient.*

*3. It’s true that true love is God’s gift.*

*4. It’s true that God receives you just as you are: sinful, suffering, confused.*

*“People use ‘unconditional’ as shorthand for God’s invitation to dirty, broken people.*

What is Love? *“God is love.”* (1 John 4:16)

8. God’s Transforming Love ≠ “Unconditional”

**Reasons to Avoid the Term “Unconditional”:**

- 1. There are more biblical and vivid terms we can use.*
- 2. Unmerited grace is not strictly unconditional.*

*“While it’s true that God’s love does not depend upon what you do... it very much depends on what Jesus Christ did for you. In that sense, it is highly conditional. It cost Jesus His life.” (Powlison, pg. 11)*

What is Love? “*God is love.*” (1 John 4:16)

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**Reasons to Avoid the Term “Unconditional”:**

*1. There are more biblical and vivid terms we can use.*

*2. Unmerited grace is not strictly unconditional.*

*3. God’s grace is intended to change the people who receive it.*

*“The word ‘unconditional’ may be an acceptable way to express God’s welcome, but it fails to communicate its purpose: a comprehensive and lifelong rehabilitation... People often use the word ‘unconditional’ to communicate an affirmation that ‘You’re okay,’ robbing God’s love (and a pastor’s or parent’s love) of its very purpose. You ‘turn’ to receive God’s love. [In contrast] you do nothing to receive blanket acceptance – and it doesn’t take you anywhere.” (Powlison, pg. 12)*

What is Love? *“God is love.”* (1 John 4:16)

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- 4. “Unconditional love” carries a load of cultural baggage.*

*“Unconditional is wedded to words such as ‘tolerance, acceptance, affirmation.’ It is wedded to a philosophy that says love should impose no values, expectations, or beliefs on another... This is a philosophy of life utterly at odds with God’s real love.” (Powlison, pg. 13)*

## What is Love? “*God is love.*” (1 John 4:16)

### 8. God’s Transforming Love ≠ “Unconditional”

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*“If you receive blanket acceptance, you need no repentance. You just accept it. It fills you without humbling you. It relaxes you without upsetting you about yourself – or thrilling you about Christ. It lets you relax without reckoning with the anguish of Jesus on the cross. It’s easy and undemanding. It does not insist on, or work at, changing you. It deceives you about both God and yourself. (Powlison, pg. 14)*

What is Love? “*God is love.*” (1 John 4:16)

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- 4. “Unconditional love” carries a load of cultural baggage.*

*We can do better. God does not accept me just as I am; He loves me despite how I am... This love is much, much, much better than unconditional!... God has blessed me because His Son fulfilled the conditions I could never achieve. Contrary to what I deserve, He loves me. And now I can begin to change – not because I can earn His love, but because I’ve already received it.” (Powlison, pgs. 14-15)*

# What is Love? “*God is love.*” (1 John 4:16)

## God’s Love Is:

1. Holy
2. Forgiving
3. Satisfying
4. Loyal
5. Fatherly
6. Everlasting
7. Demonstrated in Christ
8. Transforming

**Next Sunday:** Easter Service

**Sunday 4/12/26:** Chapter 11

*Our Present Refuge*

