

EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE

“You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you.” —PSALM 86:5

To love and be loved is a wonderful thing, but how do we come to personally experience God's love?

Psalm 33 speaks of God's 'unfailing' love", Jeremiah 31 of His 'everlasting' love, and Psalm 86 of His 'abounding' love. Perhaps the most profound statement of all is found in 1 John 4:8 and 4:16, which says, "God is love." It isn't one of His functioning attributes, such as His omnipotence (all powerful) or His omniscience (all knowing) is, but is His moral nature.

God's eternal being is always outward looking and outward giving. He IS love. For many people, that may seem a distant reality, but to personally experience God's love can only be done in relationship with Him. Love, by definition, is relational, and can only be meaningful when it is reciprocated. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love because he first loved us." And Deuteronomy 6:5 says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." What this means is that in everything we do, everything our affection is placed on, everything our energy is engaged in, and in every ambition we hold, will in some way say, "I love God."

Personally experiencing God's love is also within the context of our obedience to Him. In John 14:15, Jesus said, "If you love me, you'll obey what I command." Later in John 14:21, He says, "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves

me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.” That’s experiential.... “I will show myself.”

We enjoy the emotional dimensions of love, but love is essentially an issue of the will. In choosing God, and sharing an intimate relationship with Him, our love for Him will inevitably flow out in our love for others. That’s why John writes, “Whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4:21).

To know God is to love Him, and we need to know God, not in propositional statements, not as a tidy set of doctrines, not as a First Cause, but as the lover of our souls, and the one whose love is so real we inevitably love Him back. We personally experience God’s love in a committed relationship with Him, and that is the essential substance of our Christian lives.

PRAYER: Precious Lord, thank you for loving me, and I pray that in every way my life will say, “I love You, God.”

TO REFLECT UPON: Is my love for Christ reflected in my relationship with others?