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Introduction: God's Love

"**God** so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." [John 3:16](#) (Links to Scripture enter a 3rd party's website.)

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." [Romans 5:8](#)

This Scripture describes something so significant that *the recording of time*, our calendar, is based on it! "**BC**" stands for "before Christ." "**AD**" in Latin means *Anno Domini* or "the year of our Lord" based on Christ's birth.

Chapter 1: Love Defined

How empty a life can be when God is only an abstract and the word "love" is known as a "physical attraction!" The word "love" within the Scriptures above refers to an *Agape* or selfless love.

This authentic love *endures* over time:

"**Love is** patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." [1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#)

Knowledge of such love is one thing; yet what good is it if we are not empowered to enact it? Consider keeping [1 Corinthians 13:4-7 available](#) and, once a week, include these verses in a prayer while asking God to teach them to our heart.

In time, we may instantly recognize when we are not living up to them. Whether it be a year or a quarter century, this prayer will bring us to a greater maturity toward "learning the things" that God wants to us to know.

Chapter 2: The term "God" in John 3:16

"God so loved the world" are just pretty words unless we first understand several parts of the Bible.

The Holy Trinity consist of "God the Father," the "Son of God," and the "Holy Spirit."

God the Father is holy. He maintains an environment of righteousness. **God's will is done** in heaven (Lord's prayer)

The Son of God existed as "The Word" since the beginning of time: John 1:1-5. Only when born on earth did The Word of God become known as Jesus Christ. Christ is the one with *authority* to judge the earth: John 5:22-30.

The Holy Spirit, Holy Ghost, or Spirit of Truth is described in John 14:15-26.

Chapter 3: "so loved the world that he gave his one ..."

Genesis 3 speaks of the Garden of Eden. There the Serpent tempted Adam and Eve to choose *their own will* over that of *God's will*. Following Adam and Eve's choice to follow their own will, God also had a choice whether to *live among the sin of man* **or** *separate His direct presence from mankind*.

The theme of the Bible is to *re-unite* man in the direct presence of God the Father who is in heaven.

How might the God of Holiness, who maintains an environment of righteousness, *welcome* mankind into his presence?

☞ God the Father provided His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to teach us the Word of God and as a sacrifice to wipe clean our history of sin, 1 John 1:8-9.

☞ What good is being forgiven if we are just going to sin again? Along with the gift of forgiveness is the gift of grace.

Grace involves growing in righteousness. This can result in self-centeredness having less of a hold upon us. While our mind can learn elements of grace, it requires asking God in prayer to transform such wisdom into our hearts. The mind yields *knowing* it. The heart can yield *living* it. The difference can be between pretending to be spiritually mature and actually growing in Jesus Christ.

☞ In being in God's grace, the student that is beginning this learning process can be loved by The Teacher as much as the student ready to graduate. In the parable in Matthew 20:1-16 (NIV), substitute "salvation" for the words "a denarius" and "during their life" for "the day." Then substitute "the period Jesus Christ has been our Lord and Master" involving any reference to volume of hours worked.

☞ Grace is a gift so no one can boast, Ephesians 2:8-9.

Our responsibility in preparation for heaven requires our willingness to receive whatever degree of lessons God has for us. What *greater importance of prayer* is there than to ask for the things God wants our heart to learn?

Chapter 4: "whoever believes in him" within John 3:16

How many people who struggle with sin become frustrated over their lack of control within their self-will? Some may even give up on praying.

Consider our heart being like a measuring cup. Prior to being “born-again,” our cup was totally filled with *self-will*. Praying to God to stir this mixture in an attempt to overcome sin is likely to produce minimal results.

- † The focus of our prayer needs to ask God to fill *our* cup with His will. Over our lifetime, as the volume of our self-will decreases, sin will lose its importance in our life.
- † God’s priority is our heart, not our habits. Prayer that *yields* our hearts to the Father’s will can achieve this. The danger of sin is not the sin itself. It is forgivable. The danger of unrepentant sin is that it adds to the volume of self-will within our heart.

Repent, for God forgives completely! He wants our sin behind us so that we can regain our focus in learning those lessons in His righteousness which are needed for heaven.

How might we surrender our *self-will* to God in prayer?

Dear Heavenly Father, I have placed a lifetime of selfishness ahead of Your will and wish to turn from my sin. I ask for Your forgiveness. I give to You my **entire** existence, my hopes, my dreams, and my ambitions. Please be my “Lord” so that I may submit to Your desires ahead of my own. Allow Your will to become my motivator for the remainder of my life. Amen

If you have yet to experience spiritual birth, actually praying this prayer in humility may reveal something that you did not know existed. Some experience a physical sensation of the Holy Spirit for the first time.

More important is that this surrender can open one up to a whole new world of spiritual learning. Compare it to an infant opening his eyes for the first time to a new world of learning. Thus, the term, “born-again.”

In addition to 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 being prayed as suggested in Chapter 1. Other Scriptures on love, such as Matthew 22:36-38, can be prayed in the same way:

- † Ask to love God with all of your *mind* promotes “knowing.”
- † Ask to love God with all your *heart* promotes “the willingness or motivation.”
- † Ask to love God with all of your *soul* asks to “love God’s-way.” This can lead to a life that will bring honor to God.

Similar prayers derived from Scripture can grow our love for others; for example, Matthew 22:39-40 and Matthew 6:9-13.

Chapter 5: “shall not perish but have eternal life”



After Jesus performed a miracle, He often told the individual, “go and sin no more.” Matthew 6:20-24 speaks about not being able to serve two masters. The sin on a given day can be minor in comparison to *where it might lead* when ignored. Left unchecked in life, sin may grow to the point that the

question becomes, Who is our master, yourself or God?

- † So, how do we deal with that sin we have prayed about, attempted to overcome using human resources, and yet it remains? Allow it to become the reason for humility in our relationship before God. Luke 18:9-14
- † Rather than justifying sin, or letting it become a source of pride, place it on the table in prayer with *an open offer* for God to remove it according to His timing, whether in this life or the next.
- † This is a concept of having a "repentant heart" and *the willingness* for God to be our master. How much anxiety will leave us if we allow **God to do the work!** 2 Corinthians 5:17 - 1 Corinthians 15:51-52

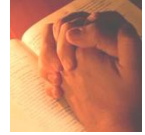
For those who have yet to experience "spiritual birth," consider revisiting the prayer of surrender in Chapter 4. Luke 15 contains three parables of God's love, patience, and joy for those who reach out into this unknown and ask for God to fill their heart.

Conclusion: Grace through Prayer

What can the acceptance of God's love in John 3:16 yield?

Developing a heart that responds to God.

Our mind can quote these things. However, by humbly asking God in prayer, such things are brought to our heart, allowing them to be *lived*.



The "Will of God" is the standard of conduct that the Lord's Prayer says is done in heaven. "The love" through Jesus Christ is the *motivator* for us to ask for this. As we learn to walk in Christ's path, we may come to listen to the guidance that is offered by the Holy Spirit.

Our responsibility is to provide the *willingness to learn*, place ourselves in a *learning environment*, and to *pray* to a God who teaches us love, by first loving us. (1 John 4:19) 1 John 4:7-21

God is worthy of our *growth* and *praise*. Consider a local, Bible teaching church.

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