

He Just Loves You

"Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God." 1 John 4:7

Well, it's that time of the year. Hearts and candy, roses and cards, jewelry and romance, and of course...LOVE. So, love, what is it really? According to bards, muses, and lyricists old and new, it's all we need. It makes the world go 'round. It can be a rocky road, it's blind, it's sunshine, and it's thicker than water. How can it be all of that? And we LOVE so many things, don't we? Pizza, summer, Grandma, sushi, our new sneakers, Diet Coke, that car, Taylor Swift...okay, maybe not TSwift, but we throw that word "love" around a lot. An awful lot considering many people go through life feeling unloved.

A 2023 study revealed that among individuals aged 18-25, 43% reported experiencing feelings of being 'unloved,' while another study suggested that as many as 60% of people globally have felt the same. Could that be you? Do you have moments when you see the Target Valentine's Day section and secretly hope the whole thing disintegrates before your very eyes? I get it! I do. We live in a very "Love=The Bachelor" society. It's here, it's there, it's gone. It's a feeling, not an action. A moment, not a monument. So how do we fix it? How do we help Foreigner when they ask, "I Wanna Know What Love Is" (circa 1999)? We do what we do when we need answers to every other question? We go to the source. And in this case, we go to Love Himself.

In 1 John 4, we're told that love comes from God, but John goes a step further when in verse 8 he says, God IS love and He is the only way we can even know what love is. The love John speaks of here is Agape love--unconditional love. It's volitional--an action. Agape love is sacrificial, unrestrained. "Agape does not describe a feeling, and certainly not a mushy feeling. Instead, it describes a natural force that is felt in some way or form by every entity in the universe from atoms up to entire societies."* That force is the God of the universe! He is the force that is Agape love and He loves us!

Okay, so God loves us. How does that help on lonely nights or when all our pals are showing off their engagement rings, new babies, or tickets to Bermuda with their besties? Well, let me tell you: That agape love is a devotion to us so strong that God seeks to be with us--it's all Him--literally nothing we do attracts Him to us. Mind-boggling, isn't it? In a rose-earning, swipe-right world, we can't imagine being wanted just because, but we are! However, God knew there had to be a sacrifice for there to be a relationship, so He gave Jesus, His Son, and Jesus gave himself! That sacrifice allowed us to accept the agape love which, if we allow it to, will fill us, complete us, and end our search for more.

Does that mean we don't need other kinds of love? Of course not! God created romantic love and friendship love for our pleasure! But, if we're feeling unloved, it may be because we are searching to be filled by the kind of love that cannot fill us and cannot complete us. Romantic love (eros) and friendship love (phileo), though both wonderful, are based on feelings--sometimes on circumstances, often on our own perceptions and backgrounds. They ebb and flow, and too often, have no evidence of agape in them, at which point, they hurt...never agape love. It can't hurt because it is perfect. Perfect love, from a perfect God.

So this month, I'm encouraging you to love. Love your friends and your family. Love your enemies. Celebrate love! Read 1 John 4. More than anything, let it sink in how much God agapes you. Not because of anything you are or do or say or act, but because He just LOVES you.

-Joy Wilkes

*"Why love (agape) makes the world go round- Lessons in love from modern physics"-Abarim Publications"