

iii) A Love for you

'forget not all his benefits ... who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion' *Ps 103:2,4*

"When he came to his senses, he said 'How many of my father's hired servants... I will set out and go back to my father ...' *Lk 15:17,18*

'his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning' *Lam 3:22-23*



This love needs to be responded to.

A friend once said that God's only frustration with an unbeliever is that they don't allow Him the opportunity to lavish His love on them.

Forget not that He 'crowns you with love and compassion' - what a crown!

The father always loved the prodigal son, but the son had run as far away as he could. He needed to 'come to his senses' and return.

He was desperate in his own need, hoping only to be taken back as a servant. The son didn't understand the depth of his father's love for him.

As he started back with his 'sorry speech' in his mouth, the father ran to him, embraced him, and rejoiced over him 'For **this son of mine** ...' *Lk 15:24*.

God can never tire of loving us, 'His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning'. Take time to remember that as you pour the cereal!

Let's not waste this amazing love.

Pause for Personal Prayer



He 'crowns you with love and compassion' - pause to picture yourself.

Discuss



- His mercies never come to an end, new every morning. Discuss.
- What helps you to believe that this love is for you and what hinders?

Taking it Further

- Each morning thank Him that His mercies for you are new, replenished!
- During the day pause to remember God's goodness and mercy following you.



2. The Love of God

As I write I sense God saying 'believe in My love'.

Believe in a love that's higher than you are.

That's bigger than your past and your mistakes.

Believe in a love that's forever, that's for you.

Most of us struggle to believe in the enormity of God's love for us because our experiences of human love have been flawed and we've been hurt.

How can we believe in a love that's truly unconditional?

Surely at some point it will walk away?

Surely it depends on what I do or don't do?

Surely I must need to play my part to be loved?

God invites us to know and to believe in His love for us.

A radical, one sided, never-ending, 'sticking to us forever' divine love.

We can try to put as many conditions to it as we want to but at the end of the day God is free to love us as He wants to – and we can't stop Him!

Whether you're reading as an individual or as a group, pray to believe!

Sue

i) A Love that runs

The prodigal son: 'But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.' *Lk 15:20*

'He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.' *Zeph 3:17*

'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son' *Jn 3:16*

God's love isn't hesitant or resentful of what we've done – it runs!

It runs to embrace, to reinstate, to celebrate (*Lk 15:20-24*).

It's a lavish, 'over-giving', celebrating love (*Jn1:16, Eph 1:3, 1Jn 3:1*)

It's a love that delights in us (*Zeph 3:17*), cherishes us (*Eph 5:29 KJV*)

Believe it or not, it's still true and it's for you!

There is a sovereign, one sided commitment in the heart of God that He will love us unconditionally - independently of all that we are and do.

We can't stop Him!

His love is for the world - that means for you, for the people you love and for the people you struggle with.

This lavish, exuberant love makes sense of the Cross.

Believe it or not - it's true. Let's not waste it.



ii) A love that sticks

'Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life' *Ps 23:6*

'How can I give you up, Ephraim? ... My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. I will not carry out my fierce anger ... For I am God, and not a man - the Holy One among you.' *Hos 11:8-9*

'I will heal their waywardness and love them freely' *Hos 14:4*

I love this picture of God's goodness and love following us all the days of our life – almost like a 'divine stalking'! Whenever we turn around they're there.

We can't shake God's love off, He is committed to loving us.

The Old Testament book of Hosea is a beautiful story of God's love in stark contrast to the continued unfaithfulness of God's people Israel.

Even at the height of Israel's unfaithfulness comes this wonderful cry from the heart of God; 'How can I give you up? ... all my compassion is aroused. I will not carry out my fierce anger ... For I am God and not man.' *Hos 11:8-9*.

With all the failures that we've seen in our own love and in the love of others, this love is different, this love is sovereign, this love is divine.

This love is from the heart of our Almighty God, not from our weak hearts.

Listen to the cry of God for your own life ... 'I am God, and not a man - the Holy One among you ... I will heal love you freely'.

Do you believe it for yourself?

Do you believe it for those you struggle to love?



Pause for Personal Prayer



Read *Zeph 3:17* above again. Do you believe it?

Discuss



- Try to find your own words to describe the love of God for you.
- What helps you to know His love?
- What hinders you?

Pause for Personal Prayer



'I will love you freely' - do you believe it?

Discuss



- Discuss the picture of goodness & mercy following us – even act it out!
- What helps you to believe that God loves you freely and what hinders?
- How does this effect how you see those you struggle with?