

Happy Valentine's Day!

At this time of year, friends and loved ones exchange cards, flowers, poems, candy, and gifts – all in the name of Valentine. Though the truth behind the Valentine legend is vague, three different Christian martyrs named Valentine have been associated with the date of February 14th. Not much is known about these early men of faith – except that each of them died for the love of Christ. So Valentine's Day is really a Christian holiday...and every day is like Valentine's Day when you're the beloved of God! Do you ever feel unloved or unlovable? Don't worry, God knows all about you – your feelings, your troubles, your needs – and God will always love you because He created you. "For neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons...neither height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). But to understand what true love is, and to truly love others, first we must have a relationship with Him.

What is Love?

The Bible is often referred to as God's "Love Letter" to us. Love is mentioned frequently in the Bible, and many of our modern ideas about love can be traced back to the Scriptures. Agape (ah-gah'-pay) is spiritual, selfless charity for others. Philia (fee'-lee-ah) is friendly, brotherly love. Storge (stor'-jay) is an affectionate family bond. Eros (air'-ross) is romantic love. In your quest to find romance, are you overlooking the One True Love of your life? God's love and care bring the comfort, peace, and joy that this world cannot provide. He offers something you can't get anywhere else – eternal salvation through His Son, Jesus. "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 4:9-10). The only way to really know love is to know the Savior. His love is genuine, unconditional, and never-ending. He won't leave you or let you down. His love is stronger than any human love; His love has the power to transform lives.

God is Love

God is the Creator of all things, and by His very nature He is the source of love. God doesn't give Valentine cards, but he lovingly showered us with an abundance of gifts here on earth: beautiful sunsets, colorful flowers, deliciously sweet fruits, a variety of seasons and weather, awe-inspiring stars and galaxies, a treasure trove of natural resources, amazing creatures great and small, eyes to see, ears to hear, hands to hold, a brain more complex than any computer, and the precious gift of life itself. The very breath you are breathing right now is a gift from Him. The most wonderful thing God did was giving us His Son. Why did Jesus leave his home in heaven to come to this world? Was it simply to do good works, or to set an example for us to follow? Jesus taught many things about life and how to live it, but that wasn't His main goal. Jesus came to deal once and for all with the problem of our sinful rebellious nature, which separates every one of us from God. In the ultimate expression of sacrificial love, "God demonstrated his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). "But I'm not a sinner!" you might say, or "I'm not so bad compared to others." Do you think you're a good person? Are you sure? Listen to your conscience...

Have you ever told a lie? (The Bible warns that the fate of all liars is "the lake of fire.") Did you ever take anything that didn't belong to you regardless of its value? (That's stealing and it makes you a thief.) Do you ever use God's name as a cuss word or take His name in vain? (Like saying "Oh my G--!") Have you ever hated someone? (Jesus said that's the same as murder in your heart.) Do you ever feel jealous or greedy? God tells us NOT to do these things! It's written in the Ten Commandments – ten rules God gave us to live by – and it's for our own good. If you break even just one of His commandments (we've only looked at half of them; see Exodus 20), then you are guilty of sinning against a great and mighty God. No matter how good you think you are, no one can live up to God's standard of righteousness. One day sooner or later God will judge you; your sins cannot be hidden from Him, regardless of how long ago they were. The place of punishment is Hell – and it lasts forever. But that is not God's will. God created you and He loves you so much that He sent Jesus, His only Son, to die on the cross in your place and set you free. This is true love in action! You broke God's Law, and Jesus stepped in to pay the penalty for you. Then Jesus rose from the dead, defeating death forever. If you are truly sorry and repent – have a change of heart and turn from your sins while fully trusting in Jesus – then He will forgive all of your sins and you will have everlasting life with Him in Heaven.

Jesus Loves You

Is Jesus your Savior? The answer is either yes or no. It won't work to say maybe, or even hope so. If you are not sure whether Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, or if you are not convinced that God is real, read the Gospel of John in the New Testament of the Bible with an open mind and let the Holy Spirit reveal the Truth to you. "You will...find Me when you seek Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). Are you ready to be saved? Do you want to accept God's gift of love? Pray to God right now telling Him that you want to place your faith in Jesus today. Say something like: "Jesus, I believe that you are the Son of God and that you died on the cross for my sins. I want to know you and follow you. Please forgive me, come into my heart and help me to live for you. Amen." Then read the Bible and obey what it says. There is no better way to celebrate Valentine's Day than to commit or recommit your life to Jesus!

