

LIFE AFFIRMATION – Unconditional Love

1. I am loved by God always. I am loved without condition.

What is love? We all long for something we call love. We've looked for love from parents and siblings, from classmates, members of the opposite sex, people we've lived with, sponsors and mentors, pastors and leaders and other people we admire. We are sure that when we find it we will finally be satisfied.

We say the words and sometimes hear them said in return, "I love you because you make me feel good." "I love you because you are beautiful." "I love you because you take away my loneliness." "I love you because we have fun together." "I love you because you complete me." "I love you because" Is this love unconditional? Is this a love that will go on forever? What happens when the person is no longer beautiful, when they make a mistake that wounds us, when they are more demanding of help from us and less willing to help us when we need it. When conditions or personalities change, does love continue?

Traditional marriage vows describe love well as the bride and groom commit themselves to each other: "I take you ... to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part." Sadly, this kind of commitment seems more and more a challenge to people today. We're don't want to place our lives into someone else's hands in case they aren't there for us in hard times, don't care for us as we think they should, don't provide for us what we think we need. We want to be able to move on and find what we need elsewhere. We are much more concerned about ourselves than our partner. Frankly, we are using the other person for what we can get out of them and that is not love. That's lust.

God's description of love is quite different. God expresses His love towards those who are not lovely at all. When we were still God's enemies, still sinners, God sent Jesus to die for us. God didn't wait until we did something nice for Him. He didn't even wait until we realized we ought serve Him. When we were still thoughtless, angry, conceited, self-centered individuals, God said, "I love you and I will do anything it takes to pour that love out on you." There is no requirement we must meet; no condition to fulfill. This love is not dependent on certain qualities we may possess. It is completely unconditional.

God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. (Romans 5:8 NLT)

The promises God makes to us to love us always are even deeper and more powerful than what a couple promise each other on their wedding day. God is well aware that difficult circumstances will come into our lives. He's aware that there are all kinds of forces out there seeking to destroy our loving

relationship with Him. God makes a promise that lasts forever. This is unconditional love at its finest.

"Nothing can separate us from His (God's) love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels can't and the demons can't. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away. . Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

You'd think that once we'd recognized and accepted this amazing love from God that we'd live in that love but we don't. We disappoint God again and again. God demonstrates that His love goes beyond even our worst mistakes when He promises to forgive us every single time we fail. All we have to do is confess it to Him. ***But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.*** (1 John 1:9 NLT)

While God may not like all of our actions and behaviour, His love is not an emotion that will change with circumstances. We never have to worry if we are good enough for God. He has already loved us at our worst. His love is constant because God is Love. When He looks at us, He sees us through the eyes of love. He sees us as we can be and as we will be if we let Him work in our lives. We may not always be able to understand why God does certain things or allows certain circumstances, but we can always trust His heart.

This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. (1 John 4:10 NLT)

God wants us to live in His unconditional love so, when we invite Him, He comes to live in us. He fills us with love that satisfies and fulfills us more deeply than any other person could. He fills us with a love that is meant to be given away. If we begin to put conditions on how we treat other people, we limit God's ability to express unconditional love towards us. We put conditions on His love. He commands us now to love others as He has loved us. Our first response to anyone is to love them, not wait for them to love us. That's God's unconditional love alive in us. ***I command you to love each other in the same way that I love you*** (John 15:12 NLT)

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What have I been searching for - love or lust?
2. Have I accepted God's unconditional love for me or am I still putting guilt and shame and worthiness conditions in place?
3. What do I need to change in order to love others and not limit God's unconditional love flowing through me?