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God Really Is Love

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God Really Is Love

Day 7

God is love. (1 John 4:8, 16)

We had this verse a few days ago, but since it is twice repeated in Scripture, it seemed good to repeat it here as well.

How did I come to write *40 Days of God's Love*? How did I begin to realize God was not like I had grown up thinking that He was?

Let me tell you my story.

I grew up in a Christian home. In Sunday school we sang, "Jesus *loves* me this I know for the Bible tells me so." When I was 16, I accepted Jesus into my heart. I believed "For God so *loved* the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). On some level I knew that God loved me. But I thought He somehow loved me less when I did "bad" things and more when I did "good" things.

So I tried to do more and more "good" things. I earned a Ph. D. in Developmental Psychology with the intent of helping poor, forgotten children. My hope was that my husband (a pediatrician) and I, together with our children, could establish Christian orphanages in developing countries. I wanted to share Jesus with others.

But just after our fourth child was born, at age 32, I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. I couldn't walk in a straight line. My whole body felt weak and tingly. My eyes wouldn't focus. All my plans of helping orphans faded. I couldn't even care for our own children. My sister and her family moved from 2,000 miles away to help us. Day after day I lay on the couch trying to be strong and hide my tears. What was happening to me? "God, You said, 'All things work together for good to those who love you....' God, you promised! But this isn't good!"

This time in my life was horribly difficult, not only because of the physical symptoms, but because of my distorted view of God. I felt deserving of love only as I did good things and I couldn't *do* anything.

Month after month as I lay on the couch, feeling worthless and unloved, there grew in me a desperate longing to know God. I didn't understand the longing. I thought I knew God; I had accepted Christ, gone to church and lived a moral "Christian" life. But the desire grew and grew. Like a person dying of thirst in the desert craves water, I had to *know* God.

Then one night, about three years after the diagnosis, I went to hear a guest speaker at church. After the service, I made my way to the front. "What do you want?" the visiting pastor asked me. And I sobbed out, "I just want God."

"Lift up your hands and say I surrender all," he said. A huge resistance came over me. "What about my family?" I thought. "What about the 'good' I want to do?" But so much had been stripped away already. So I lifted up my hands and said, "I surrender all."

In that moment, from the cross at the front of the church—from the very center where the horizontal and vertical beams meet—pure love cascaded down upon me. It came in drops of liquid light that moved in flowing waves. I couldn't stand up. As I lay on the floor, wave after wave of love poured down directly into my heart. I couldn't speak. I couldn't move.

For hours I lay there. Pure love just kept coming. I wasn't reprimanded for past failings. I wasn't healed from Multiple Sclerosis. I wasn't given direction about something "good" to do. I'd said, "I just want God" and I got love.

That night 25 years ago changed my life in ways too deep for words. "God is love." He doesn't love me because I am a *human doing*; He loves me because I am a *human being*. He loves me when I am sick. He loves me when I can't do anything. He loves me in my partial belief. He love(s) me when I sin.

Ponder for a Moment

In what ways might you be thinking that God's love for you is somehow related to what you do or don't do?

Describe an instance in your life when you knew you were loved.