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Born to Be Loved

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Born to Be Loved

Day 18

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us. (1 John 4:10)

We love Him because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

We are born to be loved. The soul of each and every one of us carries this foundational need. If we dig down deep enough past the temporary satisfactions that come from worldly pleasures, we will find it. If we let ourselves feel the need we try to cover up through addictions and busyness, we will find it.

We all need love: God preprogrammed us this way. We can't be the people He intends without knowing we are treasured, valued, and accepted. It is as if God made us with holes in our hearts that can only be filled in loving relationship.

It isn't enough to supply a child with food and shelter. Babies need to be cuddled and cherished. From birth, we are made to be cooed at and fussed over, held close and carried about. We are meant to know from early on that we are special and adored.

Research has shown this to be true over and over again. Children reared in understaffed orphanages or by inattentive caregivers struggle throughout life. Newborns who do not receive nurturing care grow up to be socially and emotionally distant. Relating to others—even caring others—is difficult. Rather than feeling connected and secure, they feel anxious and uneasy. These same infants often grow up to be poor parents themselves. They can't give what they haven't received.

God created us to be loved ... and so, "He first loved us."

Think of a good father with his newborn. He holds the baby close to his chest. He strokes her tiny head with his fingers. When the little one opens her eyes the father smiles and coos. He rocks the baby and sings to her. What joy the father experiences in just being with his child.

Through spit-ups, dirty diapers, and crying in the night, the good father treasures and adores his baby. Nothing can shake that love.

Think about it. The father doesn't demand that the baby love him. The father doesn't hold the little one at arm's length and say, "Love me, baby. Love me with everything in you. Love me with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love me and I will love you in return. Just be good and I will love you." No. The father doesn't do that.

And neither does God. How could God's love for us be any less than a good father's love for his child?

Yet somehow we often act like it is. It is easy to fall into the trap of trying to love God or others without first really knowing (not just intellectually, but experientially) that our Father loves us. The impossible demands of the Old Covenant law ring in our ears. "You shall love the LORD your God.... You shall love your neighbor...." (Matthew 22:37, 39).

But without first knowing we are loved, it is impossible to follow these commands. Just like children raised in understaffed orphanages, we can't give what we haven't first received.

Jesus came to earth to make a new way—to forge a New Covenant. God as a baby in a manger— God as a man nailed to the cross—is the source and supply of the love we all so desperately need.

God loves you first. You are valuable and precious. You don't need to do anything to earn it. You don't need to hold a certain set of beliefs. You don't need to be anything different than you are right now. Every bit of God loves every bit of you. He is for you in every way. God loves you despite.... He treasures you always.... He cherishes you just because.... Jesus came to fill the holes in your heart—the holes designed to be filled with love.

Ponder for a Moment

How do you explain the source of your desire to belong and be accepted, to be appreciated and valued?

In what ways might early life experiences have made it difficult for you to receive care and affection from others? from God?