

God's LOVE makes the difference.

■ by Mel Jonkman, MDiv, Executive Director

*God's love offers freedom.
Are you living free?*

I enjoy reading the comic strip "Calvin and Hobbes." In one of the comics, Calvin's mom is lying in bed. It's dark and obviously the middle of the night. "Mom! Wake up. Come quick." It's Calvin calling for her. She sits up and kind of mumbles. "What is wrong, what is the matter?" "Come here." In the next scene his mother is standing in the bedroom with a wide eyed Calvin and he asks, "Do you think love is nothing but a biochemical reaction designed to make sure our genes get passed on?"

His mom looks at him and says, "Whatever it is, it's the only thing that is keeping me from killing you right now."

The last box shows Calvin safely tucked back in bed, saying, "Mom's midnight reassurances are never very reassuring."

A different kind of love

I think that all of us who are parents are grateful that Calvin is not one of our children. However, he often makes me think. He does so again in this comic strip by raising an interesting question. What is love?

How would you answer that question? Is it simply a noun or is it a verb? Is it something that you can fall into and out of? Does it mean the same when you say "I love pizza" and when you say "I love my wife"? Is love selfish or selfless? Is it about what you get or about what you give?

I think that most of us realize that love should be selfless, but we also know that selfless love isn't easy. From the time we are very young we look to have our needs met. We grab things from those around us; we holler

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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 4:10

“Mine!” when someone touches our things and we cry when we don’t get our way. It doesn’t change much as we grow into adulthood. The objects of our affection change, but the root is still the same: we want our needs to be met. There are needs that should be met and asking our partner or friends to help meet those needs is legitimate. However, when we are primarily concerned about our own needs at the expense of needs of those around us, we are no longer functioning in a healthy manner.

How can we give up that strong desire to pull things toward us and replace it with a strong desire to encourage, build up and serve others? I believe that the only way we can do that is to experience God’s love and to live out of that love. The Bible in 1 John 4:10 says; This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. God’s love is selfless, it is sacrificial and it transforms us when we experience it.

Are you living free?

God’s love is transformative because it offers freedom. We are freed from our guilt. All of the wrong things we have done won’t be held against us. We are freed from our shame. We are no longer defined by our actions or inactions. We are freed from the need to fill a void in our lives with drugs, alcohol, sex or things. God fills that void with his love and acceptance of us. Because God loves us unconditionally even though we don’t deserve it, we are free to love others unconditionally and model God’s love to them.

God’s love makes a difference because it lifts us up as we recognize that the creator of the universe loves each one of us as we are. God’s love makes a difference because it shows us what true love really is. God’s love makes a difference because it allows us the freedom to love others sacrificially even as we have been loved sacrificially.

Chicago Christian Counseling exists to provide Professional Christian Counseling to all who come to us for help. Our aim is for you to receive the best care as you interact with highly trained men and women. Our hope is that in the process you experience the wonderful love and acceptance of God through the care that you receive, because God’s love does make a difference. ■



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