

Unconditional Love

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Audience: Young Adult Christian (18-25 years old)

Love with no conditions—a simple definition of unconditional love. The main question is how to understand it. In a world where everything has conditions, how do we learn to do life any other way?

Our society functions with conditions...

You can borrow money if...

You can be on the team if...

You can come to this college if...

You can have this job if...

We then take these conditions into our relationships.

I will be your friend if...

I will marry you if...

I will love you if...

If...if...if...

For such a small word, *if* sure carries a large meaning. *If* creates doubt, uncertainty, and fear, but God has an answer for the questions that *if* creates. Proverbs 3:5-6 says to “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight.” The word *if* means we are relying on our own understanding of God’s love, which leads to the fear of never being enough for God. However, we know from 2 Timothy 1:7 that “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and a sound judgment.”

Not only does God, through His word, give us the answers for our doubt and fear, but He also shows us that he does not love us *conditionally*. There is nothing we need to do for Him. There is nothing we can do to lose it. God is going to love us anyway. God is going to love us “just because.” We can know this for certain because Romans 5:8 says very clearly that “God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Logically, the next place our minds go is how...How is this possible? How can our perfect God love us despite our humanness, our weakness, our sin?

We know this is possible “because the Bible tells us so” ...over and over again. It is filled cover to cover with people turning their back on God, living life their own way, realizing their mistakes, and running back to God. It is the story of the prodigal son. He left his home and his father. He squandered his inheritance. He became so low, so poor, so broken that he was living with pigs in the mud and eating their food. He wanted to go home.

He started walking that dirt road to his home. He was contemplating the conditions he would live under to gain his father’s love again. He would be a servant instead of a son. He had expectations of what would happen when he made it home. His father would discipline him, hold a forever grudge, and remind him daily about his mistake and what he needed to do to stay in his good graces.

Wrong! That is how we, as humans, love each other. But this dad...this dad changed the story. The father ran to his son with open arms. He wrapped him up in a bear hug. He dressed him in fine clothes and threw him a welcome home party. The father never rebuked him just forgave him. The father never laid out conditions for him to follow just loved him anyway.

What about us? God picks us up out of our mess. He puts us back on our feet. He cleans our hands, our faces, our hearts. He asks no questions because He knows. He forgives us. He forgets it. He never reminds us about it again.

No questions. No conditions.

Just forgiveness. Just unconditional love.

I had an earthly example of this kind of love for twenty years before she passed. My mama lived her life showing unconditional love.

There was a young guy named Steven who had never been introduced to Jesus. He was not raised in the church. In fact, he was not a Christian—he was a heathen. But then one day, he met Jesus in a little, white, country church. Oh, how he loved Jesus, but he could not understand Jesus.

You see, he grew up in a home where love was given out conditionally. The fewer mess-ups and mistakes, the more love was shown. *I will love you if...*

So, he could not understand God's unconditional love. He had messed up a lot and felt he needed to prove himself to God. How could God love him despite...everything? How could he earn God's love? God knew that he needed an earthly example so he would have tangible evidence of this unconditional love. So, God gave him my mama.

He loved God, but he still loved the world. He was in a battle, and Satan wanted him back. He would mess up and fall on his face. Sometimes worse than other times. And every time, my mama would sit with him at the table while he cried and confessed. She would hold his hand and tell him that it was okay. He was okay. She reminded him of who he was despite his mistakes. She affirmed that he was somebody—a child of God. She confirmed God had plans for him. She encouraged him to “fight the good fight of the faith” with words from I Timothy 6:12.

Nowhere in the conversation did she list conditions for her love to return to him. She just loved him anyway.

Mama was the first person to love him like that, to love him unconditionally. Because of her, Steven can now understand God's unconditional love for him.

He doesn't have to prove himself.

We don't have to prove ourselves.

We can't mess up too much for God's grace.

We can't do anything to lose God's love.

No questions asked. No conditions apply.

God will love us...anyway.