

THIS IS
Love

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Illustrations by Wayne Combee

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DEDICATION

We dedicate this book to our daughter, Suzanne. Month after month, she patiently worked with our text to perfect the grammar and vocabulary so that it communicates God's message of love. Without her tireless effort, we would still be stuck in the mire of punctuation. We love you lots.

Mom and Dad

INTRODUCTION

When my mother asked me to write the introduction to this book, it was at the end of a long day and I was more than a little burnt out. All I could remember about love was a funny ditty my grandfather used to say:

Love is a funny thing shaped like a lizard.

Goes all around your heart and gobbles at your gizzard.

Now in my family, this poem has always provided a good laugh, especially the time my father chose to quote it to my mother in front of her friends. However, I am aware it has little to do with the message of the book, so I left that day and began meditating on the love of God.

Today, I find myself overwhelmed. How wide, how high, and how deep is the love of God! In our earthly lives, epitaphs and statues are erected to honor love. We dedicate palaces and gardens to our love. We spend thousands of dollars and expend hours of labor to express love. Yet in comparison to what God did, these all seem to pale.

Because He loved us SO MUCH, God gave us His HIGHEST and BEST gift.



LOVE IS FUNNY

Jesus came as the ultimate sacrifice of love. His death and resurrection are the fullest expression of God's desire. Jesus laid down his life for even the worst person in the annals of history. That is IMMENSE love! And He came to restore the closeness, fellowship, and intimacy, man had

with God in the garden. He came so that we could call, and God would answer.

God's GREAT love crosses all barriers of time, race, religion, or denomination to offer eternal life, abundance, and joy to any who will believe.

It touches us no matter who we are, how smart we've become, or how much we have failed. God's love in us is SO FULL that it cannot but overflow from our lives into the lives of those around us. We now love because He loved first.

I pray in reading this book that you will realize the true grandeur of God's amazing love. For the principles of the Word placed here have the capacity to change your life forever, if you will let them, if you will practice them. God's love in your life will revolutionize the way you think and alter the way you act. You will truly never be the same.

Suzanne D. Williams

1

GOD'S LOVE IS SO BIG!

*For God **so loved** the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).*

“God so loved the world!” ¹ What a powerful declaration by our Lord Jesus Christ! What glorious words of comfort! God loved us! We were His enemies, ungodly and weak, yet He loved us. He loved us even when we were sinners, and through His great love, we have been rescued from sin. This dramatic rescue is for every man, every woman, and every child. **Jesus' sacrifice has opened the door of salvation to all the world.** Today, no man or spirit being can shut that door. It is guarded by our resurrected and ascended Lord. It is the door of eternal life.

The magnitude of God's love for every man is voiced by one word from John 3:16 – “God **SO** loved the world.” With the small word “SO” we see the expanse of God's love, its “breadth, and length, and depth, and height.” ²

¹ Jn 3:16

² Eph 3:18

Isn't that amazing? The extent of God's love declared in one word! Yet no other word can more adequately express the dimensions of His love.

*The love of God for man is simply **SO** big!*

The limitless magnitude of God's love reminds me of the many times my husband, Wayne, and I traveled across the Atlantic Ocean. Without a doubt, it is SO big. On one trip from Russia, through Scotland, and home to the United States, I became acutely aware of the size of this *great* ocean. Three hours from the border of the United States, I was ready to get out of the plane.

I teased our son, who was with us, saying, "I'm tired. I have to get out now." The ocean went on and on and on and on. It seemed to grow bigger and bigger. It was SO big. Yet **its grand size cannot be compared to the endless horizons of God's love.**

This SO love of God is also reminiscent of the great animals of God's creation. On a visit to the zoo, we watched an elephant giving rides. It didn't matter if the rider was a child or an adult. Compared to the elephant they were SO small, and he was SO big.

That same day, the elephant used a water hose to take a drink. I am still amazed because he drank continually for a very long time. This giant of God's creation had enormous capacity. However, his vast thirst does not challenge the bounty of God's love.

ETERNAL LIFE

God's immeasurable love came to earth through Jesus Christ. We recognize this love because Jesus, His only Son “laid down His life for us.”³

Jesus' loving sacrifice unveiled the Father's love, love SO grand that Jesus came down from heaven to hang on an “old rugged cross.”⁴ He left heaven's glory to walk earth's dusty roads and die on Golgotha's hill. In death, He bore our sin, defeated our enemy, Satan, and secured our freedom. Through Him we have eternal life.

God's promise of everlasting, or eternal, life through Jesus' death is often voiced in the Scripture. In a conversation with Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, Jesus said:

*Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.*⁵

He repeated this to the Jews who plotted His death. We read His words in John 5:24.

³ 1Jn 3:16

⁴ “The Old Rugged Cross,” Words and Music: George Bennard, 1913, <www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/o/r/oruggedc.htm>, Accessed 17 May 2011.

⁵ Jn 3:15

He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life. ⁶

Jesus also spoke of it to the woman at the well in Samaria, inviting her to drink from a well of water "springing up into everlasting life." ⁷

Over and over again, our Lord Jesus Christ heralds God's eternal provision. The inspired writers of the gospels also testified of eternal life after Jesus' death and Resurrection.

In 1 John 5:11, the apostle John declares:

God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

He states it again in a following passage. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." ⁸

The apostle Paul adds his witness, saying:

The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. ⁹

⁶ Jn 5:24

⁷ Jn 4:14

⁸ Jn 3:36

⁹ Ro 6:23

What glorious proclamations of truth!

What is "eternal life?" When teaching Bible classes, I often ask this question and the usual answer is, "to live forever." But, as I tell the students, a sinner lives forever, yet he does not have eternal life. Surely, eternal life is more than length of life! Our relationship with God must be bigger than an endless expanse of time.

The apostle John gives light on eternal life, saying:

For the life was manifested, and we have seen it. ¹⁰

I love the word "manifested." It reminds me of the tantalizing smell of food Mother would cook, particularly on Sunday. When you opened the front door of our house after church, the aroma of food simmering on the stove sent good news to your senses. Lunch was going to be delicious! Yet only after you dashed to the stove and lifted the lid on the saucepan did you see what awaited you.

This is the testimony of the apostle John. "Lifting the lid" on eternal life, he declares, "He who gives life was shown to us." ¹¹ Certainly, he was introducing us to Jesus, "the way, the truth, and the life." ¹²

When we acknowledge the Resurrection of Jesus and confess Him as Lord, we receive His life. The apostle Peter explains further that at that moment we share the divine nature.

¹⁰ 1 Jn 1:2

¹¹ 1Jn 1:2, NCV

¹² Jn 14:6



GOOD NEWS IS MANIFESTED

The *Contemporary English Version* translates Peter's words:

God made great and marvelous promises, so that his nature would become part of us. ¹³

This is magnificent news! God's nature, the life of God, now dwells in us. Or we can say it this way: *The SO love of*

¹³ 2Pe 1:4

God has given us the life of the Eternal One.

ABUNDANT LIFE

Eternal life is ABUNDANT life! Jesus shared this truth when He said:

I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. ¹⁴

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible describes abundant life as "beyond measure, exceeding abundantly above, superfluous or excessive." ¹⁵ **It is life superior in quantity and quality.**

At a child's birthday party, we must often decide between quantity and quality. When choosing \$20.00 of party favors, we can purchase 20 items at \$1.00 each or 10 items at \$2.00 each. The one-dollar gift is cheaper, and we will have plenty. The two-dollar favor is better quality, but we can purchase only ten.

Do we need quantity or quality? We must decide. **I am so glad eternal life is measured by God's SO love in both quantity AND quality. We don't have to choose!**

The word "abundance" reminds me of eating Thanksgiving dinner with the Combee family. On this special occasion, our large family gathered to eat and thank the Lord for His blessings. My husband's parents, now

¹⁴ Jn 10:10

¹⁵ G4053 *Strong's*

gloriously in heaven, were farmers, so each meal included bountiful “fruit” from the garden. I certainly can’t name every dish, but you can be sure there was more than enough. From chicken and dumplings, chicken and dressing, baked ham, green beans, steamed okra, creamed corn, sliced tomatoes, collard greens, and black-eyed peas to coconut cake, pound cake with strawberries, fruitcake, and chocolate pie, the meal was “exceeding abundantly above all that [you] ask or think.”¹⁶ It was beyond measure. It was wonderful.

God's unlimited, eternal life is wonderful, surpassing our greatest expectations. Its overwhelming magnitude prompts us to ask why. Why did God offer this abundant, eternal life to man? In Ephesians 2:4-5, the apostle Paul gives the answer:

[God's] great love ... hath quickened us together with Christ.

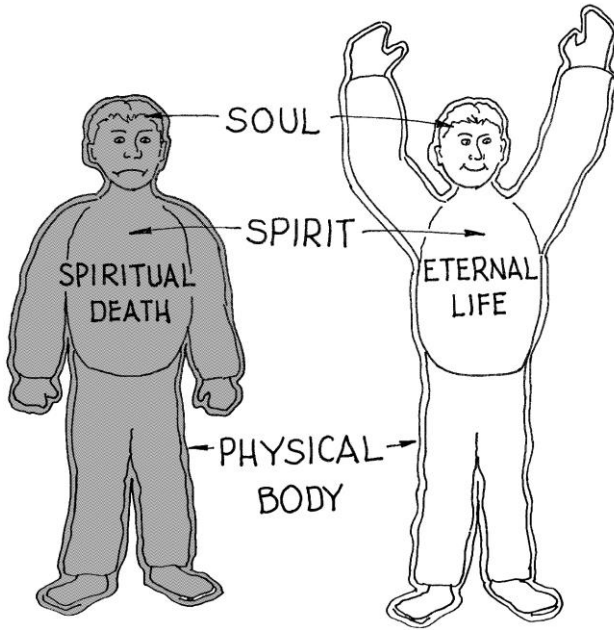
The word “quickened” means “to make one alive together.”¹⁷ We are quickened, or made alive, because of God's great love.

Abundant, eternal life springs from God's SO love.

¹⁶ Eph 3:20

¹⁷ G4806 *Thayers'*

YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN



SPIRIT, SOUL, AND BODY

Eternal life changes man. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:23, man is a unity of three parts: spirit, soul, and body. He is a spirit being who possesses a soul and lives in a physical body.

When we confess Jesus as Savior and Lord, our spirit is recreated, or born again.

Jesus taught this truth in John 3:6-7 when he contrasted the physical birth of man with his spiritual birth.

He stated:

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.

These words describe the recreation of man's spirit by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I have seen Jesus' words, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," visually portrayed in my own life. Anyone who knew my mother instantly recognizes me because I look so much like her. Frequently I hear someone say, "You must be Juanita's daughter." My fleshly resemblance to her is obvious. My resemblance to God should be as apparent.

Through Jesus Christ, I have God's nature. I am a spirit being, born again, changed and new. My life now reflects His life.

The apostle Paul acknowledges this in 2 Corinthians 5:17. He says:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

Although we would not use the word "creature" in reference to people, we understand that he means we are new in spirit. *The Message* translation of this verse states it this way:

Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons!

What a glorious declaration from the Word of God!

This truth from God's Word became real to me when I was nine years old. We had a guest speaker on Sunday, a friend of my parents. As he taught God's Word, I became more and more aware that I was a sinner, that I did not have God's life. That day, fearfully, I walked to the front of our church and declared Jesus my Lord and Savior. At that moment, I was born again. I was changed!

Every man accepts God's offer of salvation for himself. With the words of his mouth, he recognizes Jesus as the resurrected Savior and proclaims Him as his Lord. This heart-felt commitment establishes him as a new creation with eternal life.

The Holy Spirit speaks this truth in Romans 10:9.

If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁸

This declaration of salvation is absolute. You WILL be saved!

¹⁸ NKJV

It is not a half-hearted, maybe so, hope-so, or could-be offer.

Jesus is the Lamb of God crucified for sinners. When He arose from death, sin was conquered, and Satan was defeated. This victory over death is for everyone who will confess Jesus as Lord.

Every man can have eternal life TODAY. TODAY is the day of salvation! TODAY, we confess Jesus as Lord and we are born again.

The proclamation of 2 Corinthians 6:2 gloriously declares:

Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Oh, how amazing it is to be saved NOW! How wonderful it is to have eternal life NOW! What a lavish provision!¹⁹ TODAY, through God's wondrous love, we are born again!

¹⁹ 1Jn 3:1 NIV

Scriptures for Meditation:

(John 5:24) Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

(John 10:10) The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

(2 Corinthians 5:17) Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

