

# MARK JENKINS MINISTRIES

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October 2015  
God's Love To You

Dear Friend,

Debbie and I are blessed to have two beautiful grandsons, Griffin and Davis. Griffin is the oldest at almost three years old and Davis will be a year old in November. Since they live in Indiana, we visit with them by video calls over the Internet. It is wonderful to be able to see their little faces and interact with them as if we were there in person. Griffin's first question to Grandma Debbie is, "Where's Papa?" Don't you know how wonderful it is to hear him asking for me?

I'm learning so much from these two precious babies, especially Griffin. Griffin is very interested in Papa watching him and seeing what he is doing. At times, Griffin will look very involved with whatever he has in his hands when suddenly I see him peeking out of the corner of his eye to make sure we are paying attention to him.

With the addition of Davis, Griffin has had to learn to share the spotlight, which seems to be a hard lesson for him. If the camera is on Davis, Griffin wants it turned back towards him. Griffin is no different than any other child; he wants and loves to be the center of attention.

In a child's mind the world revolves around them. They have no understanding of what it means to be an adult with adult responsibilities. They cannot appreciate all the effort their parents exert in their professions to be able to provide food and clothing and shelter for them. Children's thoughts are centered on themselves with very little appreciation for anyone or anything else.

Say for example the President walked into Griffin's room; Griffin would have no concept of the important office of the President. He would expect the President to give him all his attention. The President would be expected to look at all of Griffin's little cars, his train set, and anything else Griffin pulled out of his toy chest. Even if a worldwide problem arose during his visit forcing the President to leave, I can assure you that if Griffin wanted to show the President one more toy the world would have to wait.

Children have no concept of their tiny place in the world. They are the center of their universe, which is okay so long as they eventually grow up and realize that the world doesn't revolve around them. Sadly, many never do and consequently their life is all about themselves and making sure they acquire all the same toys as their neighbors.

Christians are often no different when it comes to being focused on themselves. We focus our attention **on our love** for God thinking it's **our love** for Him that will cause Him to move on our behalf. This is very subtle and most never recognize doing it. The fact is that it was **God's love to us first** that sent Jesus to deliver us, not our love for Him. By continuing to focus on our love for God we miss God's true motivation.

Speaking from experience, when we as believers think that the reason God is doing something for us is because of our love for Him we are wrong. I found myself in this predicament, believing my love for God was what motivated Him to answer my prayer. I finally realized that it's His love to me that I really need to be focused on. Take my word for it; this slight adjustment will make all the difference in the world.

My love for God is only possible because **He first loved me**. Of course He loves to hear me tell Him that I love Him, just like I love to hear Griffin say that he loves me. But, I'm realizing that my self-centeredness had caused me to be more focused on my love for God and miss the important fact that He first loved me. (I John 4:19)

***“We love Him (God) because He first loved us.”***

As a result, I have failed to appreciate the love that God **has to me**. “Don't you mean ‘for me’ and not ‘to me’, Mark”? Look at I John 4:16.

***“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us...”***

The Apostle John wrote that we “have known and believed the love”, however, I can tell you for myself that this began as a faith statement and not a reality, because I didn't “know and believe the love”. It wasn't until I spent time focusing on God's love “to me” that I began to “know and believe the love”. The distinction between His love being “to me” instead of “for me” leads me to conclude that God's love is continuously coming from Him to me directionally. He doesn't have love for me from a distance, His love is constantly flowing to me. Praise God!

My lack of “knowing and believing the love that God has to me” hindered me from enjoying the fullness of what Jesus paid for on my behalf. **It was the lack of “knowing and believing” the depth of His love to me that kept me busy trying to earn what was already mine.** This was the same problem the elder brother had in the parable of the prodigal son.

I’m sure you are familiar with the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32. We often identify with the prodigal and his shortcomings, but fail to see that the elder brother had his own shortcomings. The elder brother became angry because his father threw a big party celebrating the return of the prodigal. His lower lip must have popped out as he began to grumble to his dad about how unfair his life was. (Luke 15:28-29)

***“And he was angry and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. (29) And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends.”***

Most Christians are just like this elder brother in the fact that they erroneously believe their blessings from their Father, God, are tied to their actions. The elder brother thought his actions should have earned him the right to have a party with his friends. Instead, the father was killing the fatted calf and throwing a party for the son that had run off with the world. “That’s not fair”!

You see, the elder brother failed to realize that all the father had also belonged to him. Consequently, his idea of earning his way into his father’s good graces never produced the desired results because he was trying to earn what already belonged to him. The elder brother didn’t “believe and know the love the father had to him”. Had he known the father’s love he would have been inside with the rest of the family rejoicing over the return of the prodigal, knowing that he could have a party with his friends anytime he wanted.

Instead, the elder brother was outside having a pity party for himself like a big spoiled baby, oblivious to the love of his father. His actions were no different than a 2 year old throwing a temper tantrum because he has not gotten his way. If you will recall, the words that come out of the mouth of a child during one of their tirades are often; “I don’t love you anymore.” Then, as they get a little older, notice how the wording changes, “You don’t **really** love me.” This is said in an effort to manipulate the adult into giving into the young person’s demands.

My point is that we grow up with some very wrong ideas about love. As a result, I believe we bring those wrong ideas into our relationship with God. We tell our

heavenly Father how much we love Him while hoping our efforts will pay off in some kind of reward for having told Him we love Him. That's like the teenager who wants the keys to the family car so they lavish their love upon Dad in hopes of convincing him to cough up the keys.

Are we as Christians still like that “elder brother” trying to manipulate our Father into doing things for us by telling Him how much we love Him? Are we trying to earn His love and blessings? We need to turn the tables around and begin to appreciate His love to us and stop thinking we have to bribe God with our love. Once we believe and focus on His love to us, and receive a revelation of His love, then we can truly see what motivated Him to send Jesus to die for us. That's when we begin to appreciate that we don't have to talk God into doing for us what Jesus has already accomplished at Calvary.

By having a revelation of God's love to us we can finally stop trying to talk God into fulfilling His word. By receiving a revelation of God's great love to us, it becomes possible to “believe and know” that He has already made provision for us to walk in complete victory in every area of our lives because of His love to us.

Much of our problem stems from the fact that our self-centeredness has had us looking at ourselves too much and realizing that we don't deserve any of what God has done for us. Like the “elder brother, we want to try and earn our Father's blessing. The truth is, in ourselves we don't deserve anything! That's why we must focus on His love to us because **it's His great love that motivated God to do for us what no one else would do.**

As our focus of attention shifts from our love for God to His love to us something else will begin to happen. We will begin to see other people the way our Father sees them. Unfortunately, the tendency of many believers is to be like the elder brother was towards the prodigal son, when it comes to the lost and dying people that surround us. Instead of seeing them through the eyes of love, as our Father does, how often do we look at them with disdain? Yet, our Father loves them the same as He loves us.

I believe you will find, as I have, that the more you focus on God's love to you the more your desire to minister to the lost will increase. We begin to see them as our Father sees them. We begin to love them as He loves them. We begin to feel His love for them in our hearts and it moves us to share Jesus with them. Start out small and watch it grow. I started out with a simple pin to wear on my shirt that says: “Jesus loves you.” Debbie designed a lapel pin and we had a bunch of them made so that I could, in this way, begin to



share God's love with others. I encourage you to allow the Holy Ghost to lead you into sharing Jesus with others.

I believe this is a life-changing message that every Christian needs to hear, but more importantly do. Focus on God's love to you. Thank Him for His love. Realize that our love for Him is only possible because He first loved us. Keep this in the forefront of your thinking and it will change you.

~ Grace be with you

*Mark Jenkins*