

## 12. Love Stories (1Q 2012—Glimpses of Our God)

**Biblical material:** Gen. 2:21–25, Exod. 20:5, Isa. 43:4, 62:5, Song of Songs, John 2:1–11; Jer. 31:3.

### Quotes

- Truth to me was dead, God had never lived, life was full of pain, and death was the end of life. As a young Atheist, I sincerely believed that man had created God to fill the gaps in knowledge that would never be spanned by experience, reason, or science. In 1983 the God who pursues those who deny him interrupted my existence, he captured my soul with raw love. Two decades later, God’s tangible friendship still amazes me. To deny his existence I’d have to first deny my own. *Alicia Britt Chole*
- Man goes far away or near but God never goes far-off; he is always standing close at hand, and even if he cannot stay within he goes no further than the door. *Meister Eckhart*
- Seek to cultivate a buoyant, joyous sense of the crowded kindnesses of God in your daily life. *Alexander Maclaren*
- The most important thought that ever occupied my mind is that of my individual responsibility to God. *Daniel Webster*
- ‘God so loved that he gave...’! And the giving, with Calvary at its heart, was not a trickle but a torrent. *Paul S. Rees*

### Questions

What’s love got to do with it? How do we relate our kinds of love to God’s love? Why is God interested in our love stories? Why does the Bible record love stories? How does this reflect on the nature and character of God? What are we meant to learn from all this? How does God use this love imagery to describe himself?

### Bible summary

It was God who was the Author and Instigator of the first love story (Gen. 2:21–25), back there in the Garden of Eden. In the Ten Commandments God explains he is a “jealous God” meaning that he wants an exclusive love relationship with us (Exod. 20:5). God tells us bluntly that he loves us (Isa. 43:4), and he rejoices over us (Isa. 62:5). The whole of the Song of Songs is a love story, exemplifying true love between a man and a woman, and by analogy, the true love between God and us. Jesus’ participation in a wedding has surprised some, but this was the occasion for his first miracle, showing his endorsement of true love (John 2:1–11). God tells us, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.” Jer. 31:3 NIV.

### Comment

Contrary to what some believe, the Bible is *not* against intimacy and physical love, only that they be expressed in the right situations. Read Song of Solomon 1:1–3; 2:3–13. It’s beautiful love poetry, and it is found right there in the Bible. What does that say about God and his attitude to love, rightly expressed?

Also, think of God's intimate involvement in the very beginning: Genesis 2:18-24. God formed the pair; he intended the very rich experience of love and intimacy. As Creator, he made man and woman, and he gave them the ability to experience sublime pleasure in the intimate relationship of husband and wife.

That has not changed. What has happened is that the Devil has tried to pervert this love relationship and turn it into simply the satisfaction of physical drives. The tragedy of our world today is that most cannot truly love as God intended.

So what about love, courtship and marriage? Is there still a place for these in the modern world? Yes, absolutely yes! The evidence is all around us. Broken homes, broken adults, broken children. God's instruction was not given to prevent enjoyment, but to enable it... For the saying is true, "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." Only with God in the marriage can it truly work, because God is its inventor and sustainer. God even uses marriage to describe the *relationship* he wants to have with us. The prophets used it. Jesus spoke of the church as his bride, himself as the husband. Right at the very end, the same image of a marriage is used: the marriage supper of the Lamb, when we are united together with God never to be parted.

Look at Revelation 21:1-4 for the consummation of the perfect love relationship with God. That is God's ideal. And for us, here and now, as we look for life partners, as we deal with all the troubles of living, as we truly give self sacrificing love one to another, remember that this is just a faint reflection of God. God, who loved so much that he came here to us, lived and died to win us back to him, so that we could be with him forever. What a wonderful God!

It is because of God's very nature of love that he came to win us back through the greatest proof of self-sacrifice in the history of the Universe. The Cross is the clearest view we have of the inner heart of God, literally dying to show his love, a love without limits.

Imagine my son is lost in the city. For whatever reason, he has not returned home. I can say that "I love him," but until I go out into the dark city streets, desperately searching for my lost son, then my words are empty and meaningless. God shows his love by His actions. God will not save us without our acceptance. But in all our talk, let us never suggest that we save ourselves. It's God who loves and saves.

### **Ellen White Comments**

God has revealed His character in the goodness, the mercy, compassion, and love manifested to save a race of guilty rebels. What could be done that has not been done in the provisions of the plan of salvation? If the sinner remains indifferent to the manifestation of the goodness of God, if he neglects so great a salvation, . . . what can be done to touch his hard heart? {HP 37}

The one thing essential for us in order that we may receive and impart the forgiving love of God is to know and believe the love that He has to us. 1 John 4:16. Satan is working by every deception he can command, in order that we may not discern that love. {MB 115}

Christ came to manifest the love of God to the world, to draw the hearts of all men to Himself. . . . The first step toward salvation is to respond to the drawing of the love of Christ. . . . It is that men may understand the joy of forgiveness, the peace of God, that Christ draws them through the manifestation of His love. If they respond to His drawing, yielding their hearts to His grace, He will lead them on step by step, to a full knowledge of Himself, and this is life eternal. {AG 99}

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