

A Can God's love be measured?

❖ Beyond what is expected.

- Read out of context, some Bible verses can give us the impression that God's love is capricious, that He loves only when He feels like doing so (Ex. 33:19).
- But let's look at the whole story. God has brought Israel out of Egypt with great miracles. He has spoken to them personally from Sinai and asked them to make Him their only God. A few days later they build themselves a golden calf and say, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt!" (Ex. 32:8 NIV). God tells Moses what the people deserve: death (Ex. 32:9-10).
- Moses pleads for mercy that the people do not deserve (Ex. 32:11-13, 30-33). In this context, God assures Moses that he "desires" to have mercy on Israel (Ex. 33:19). God's love does not follow the logic of cause and effect. His love is immeasurable; it is constant and inexhaustible. He freely bestows grace, mercy, and compassion even on those who are unworthy of it.

❖ A complete surrender.

- On the Cross – the ultimate demonstration of God's love – we see that Christ gave himself for us of his own free will and initiative. No one took his life, but he offered it voluntarily, following the Plan of Redemption agreed upon in Heaven before the foundation of the world (Jn. 10:17-18; 1P. 1:18-20).
- How far can our love go? To the point of giving our life for someone we love, and ardently wish to keep living? Would we do it for a complete stranger, or for someone who hates us?
- God loved us when we wanted nothing to do with Him, and He still loves those who hate Him (Rom. 5:6-8).

B Does God need to show and receive love?

❖ God loves freely.

- The story of Hosea shows us what God's love is like. Despite his wife's infidelity, Hosea forgave her time and time again, and continued to love her.
- Hosea represents God, and his unfaithful wife represents God's people. Despite our continued sin and estrangement from God, He continues to love us "freely" (Hos. 14:4). What does that expression mean?
- The Hebrew word, *nedabah*, describes that which is offered voluntarily (such as voluntary offerings).
- God bestows his love, even though he receives nothing in return. What a contrast to our selfish nature! What will be your response to this voluntary and selfless love?

❖ To love without expecting a response.

- Did God need to create this world to be loved, honored and worshiped?
- God needs nothing from us (Acts 17:25; Ps. 50:11-12). In fact, how many of us even recognize that everything we have, including our very lives, is a gift from God? How many of us today praise and thank Him for it?
- Divine love existed eternally before the creation of the universe (John 17:24). Consequently, the creation of the world was not a necessity for the existence of God's love. On the contrary, Creation was a voluntary divine activity that resulted from the freedom of His eternal and overflowing love.
- God is love, and He loves without expecting a response. He loves those who respond to His love, and those who reject it. He loves so much that He has done everything possible so that His Creation, His children, can share with Him a life of eternal happiness.

C Can we reject God's love?

❖ Our choice.

- A king prepares his son's wedding, but the guests reject the invitation. Others are invited and accept, but even among these there are those who do not follow protocol and are expelled (Mt. 22:1-13).
- Jesus' application of this parable has led some to believe that God chooses in advance who will be saved and who will not (Mt. 22:14). This would imply that God bestows his love on some, but withholds it from others.
- The original text emphasizes the invitation and not the election: "Many are **INVITED**, and few **ACCEPT THE INVITATION**."
- God has chosen all of us because He loves us all (Jn. 3:16). It is not God's choice, but our response to His invitation, that determines our destiny.