

Title: Renewing Our Love  
Date: October 3, 2021  
Subject: We need to received God's love each new day and give it back to him and others.  
Scripture: Selected

There are 83 days until Christmas. For some it means they have 82 1/2 days before they need to start shopping. For others it means they're running out of time in their quest to figure out what to buy for the person who has everything. We hear that a lot, don't we? What do you get for the person who has everything?

Some suggestions I came across - virtual assistant, gift cards – kind of standard. There was also bacon of the month club, motorized cooler or certificate showing you own land on the moon. A little more intriguing.

Elena Garcia and Allison Jiang compiled a list of “34 gifts for people who have everything” ([buzzfeed.com/elenamgarcia/gifts-for-the-person-who-has-everything](https://www.buzzfeed.com/elenamgarcia/gifts-for-the-person-who-has-everything)). Among the suggestions: “A pair of ultra-plush and fluffy slippers to keep you looking glam and feeling cozy while you run around your house” Really? Slippers? Another is something they claim will make the commute to work more entertaining - a complete head to toe costume made of bubble wrap. There's also a book “1000 Foods to Eat Before You Die” with foods like Dan Dan noodles, blue trout, cloudberries, lamb vindaloo, dine at L'ami Louis (an eating establishment in Paris that's been called the “world's most famous bistro” and “the worst restaurant in the world”... and frozen Milky Way. I'll just take 1000 frozen Milky Ways, thank you. Another site had a personal 5 by 4 inch miniature indoor fireplace, suitable for roasting marshmallows (\$90 from [bespoke.com](https://www.bespoke.com)).

What do we give to someone who truly has everything? “He owns the cattle on 1000 hills and the wealth in every mine. He owns the rivers and the rocks and rills, the sun stars that shine.” What do we get God? I think there's only one thing God has ever wanted, and that's love from the people he created.

In our RENEW series we've seen we need to be renewed in spirit and purpose. This morning's focus is to be renewed in love. Before we talk about the love we show, we need to address the love that's been shown to us. It gives us the reason to love.

1. Each new day is an opportunity to receive God's love.

He's always been in the business of loving people. He specifically designed and created people so he'd have someone upon whom to shower his love. People can find all they need in a love relationship with him. Too often people, including followers of Jesus Christ, look for satisfaction in other places. They seek validation at work. They search for significance through activities. They hope to find love -- meaning, fulfillment and value -- through sports, relationships, their pets. Only God can satisfy our souls.

The supreme demonstration of God's love comes in Jesus Christ. Many Scriptures plainly spell it out. The first one that jumps to my mind is: “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). I won't ask you to turn there but to the book of 1 John. 1 John 4:9. READ. In case we're hard of hearing, God repeats the sentiment in the next verse. READ 1 John 4:10.

The sentiment, emotion, feeling, expression, action of love began with God. It didn't start with humans. God's love has always been demonstrated. Both verses in speak about God showing his love by sending his one and only Son. God the Father is the creator and originator of the plan of love. The Son of God is the fulfiller as he is the visible expression of love. The chief expression of love is the cross where Jesus willingly gave his life.

Sidewalk Prophets have an intriguing song called "You Love Me Anyway." It begins with an admission of sinning by telling a lie and it continues to trouble them. Then the song shares about doubts and difficulties. There's always the underlying reminder "Yes you love me anyway. Oh Lord, how you love me." This is where the song takes an unusual turn and expresses God's love in ways I don't think I'd thought of before this song: "I am the thorn in your crown. But You love me anyway. I am the sweat from Your brow. But You love me anyway. I am the nail in Your wrist. But You love me anyway. I am Judas' kiss. But You love me anyway. See now I am the man who yelled out from the crowd, For Your blood to be spilled on this earth-shaking ground. Yes, then I turned away with a smile on my face, With this sin in my heart, tried to bury Your grace.... And then alone in the night I still call out for You. So ashamed of my life, my life, my life. But You love me anyway. Oh God, how You love me. Yes, You love me anyway. It's like nothing in life, That I've ever known. Yes, You love me anyway. Oh Lord, how You love me. You love me. You love me. You love me. You love me. How You love me. How You love me. How You love me."

God's love was shown to people throughout Scripture. Jeremiah is known as the "weeping prophet" because he had plenty about which to weep. One source describes the time during which he lived as "a period of storm and stress when the doom of entire nations - including Judah itself - was being sealed" (NIV note in introduction to Jeremiah). He was persecuted, imprisoned, ridiculed, and mistreated by the kings of Judah and the people. His enemies threw him into a muddy well where they hoped he'd die but he was mercifully rescued. He was one of the scarce points of light in darkness. There were many times he felt alone and abandoned, even by God. The prophet would cry out to God over what he faced and, more importantly, over how the people of Judah, his people, had turned away from God. God tasked him with announcing the unhappy prospects of the impending captivity. He's the human author of the book that bears his name and also Lamentations which is a series laments over the condition of the people and the judgment God would exercise. In spite of everything that happened, Jeremiah maintained his confidence in the Lord as epitomized by these words: "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22, 23).

Jeremiah continued to focus and refocus and refocus on God's love. The same is true for us. God loves us. He loved us so much he sent his Son to die to take our punishment for our sin. He loves us so much he allows us to become his children (1 John 3:1). He loves us so much that he's making a home for us in his heaven so we can live with him forever. Until that day comes, each new day we have the opportunity to receive and bask in God's love.

2. Each new day is an opportunity to love God.

The prime verse about loving the Lord our God is spoken by Jesus in response to a man who wanted know “What is the greatest commandment?” Jesus replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30).

Jesus wasn't merely a quick thinker which allowed him to come up with something when he was put on the spot. He was reaching back to the Old Testament and quotes from the infrequently read Deuteronomy. In a book whose title means “repetition of the law,” we'd expect lots of laws and commands. They're present. What a reader might not expect is an emphasis on love, yet it's extremely prominent (Deuteronomy 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1, 13, 22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6, 16, 20).

God spoke through Moses about the things he expected from his people, the people of Israel whom he'd led out of Egypt and was taking them to the promised land. Near the end of Moses' life, he recounted what the Lord had told him to tell the people -- the commands, statutes and ways they were to obey and observe them. It boiled down to this statement, “Here O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:4, 5). The foundation for the command is God's love (Deuteronomy 7:7 – 9). The Lord loved them and promised he would keep his oath he swore to their forefathers. He proclaimed about himself: “the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.”

What God is saying is our love for him is to surpass our love for anyone and anything else. What we love the most is revealed by how we spend our time, where we give our attention and energies, and what we set our affection upon. Sometimes believers have left their first (primary, most important) love and need to come back to loving Jesus. Focus on him. Spend time with him through God's Word and prayer. Think about what he's done for us, how he showed God's love through his death and the way he interacted with people.

The Lord God linked love for him to obeying him. Jesus did this again when he spoke to the disciples on the evening of his betrayal. Several times he said, “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10, 14). Obedience is an indication of loving God and leads to an assurance: “if anyone obeys his word, God's love is made complete in him” (1 John 2:5). Completion is understood as God's love for us reaches the point where it is fully expressed and our love for God is expressed through obedience.

How do we love God? He's an invisible being. We can't reach out and physically touch him. We can touch his heart. Scripture tells us we love God through obedience to his commands. When we're aware of something God says we're to do, we do it. When he says don't do something, we don't do it.

Loving God is also shown by loving people.

Peter is a connecting point between loving God and loving people. The books written by the apostle don't reveal much of his personal life. It's left to other books to supply the events. Some of it isn't very flattering

- like his denial of the Savior. The good news is that incident isn't what defined his life. The same is true of our mistakes, our sins. They aren't what define us.

Please turn to John 21. This is the third appearance of Jesus to a group of disciples (John 21:14). Peter and six other disciples went fishing because Peter decided he was going. They had an unsuccessful night. Didn't catch a thing. Jesus appears on the shore. They didn't understand it was the Lord until after the miracle. He tells them to throw their net on the right side of the boat. They proceed to catch 153 large fish. 153. Not a bunch of fish, but 153. And they were large. Not sure why they counted or why the Lord had them catch so many. That would be a lot of fish for 8 people to eat as Jesus invited them to join him for breakfast. He had prepared some fish but asked the disciples to bring some of their catch. Peter dragged the bulging net to shore. They ate together. This sets the stage for one of the more remarkable episodes of Peter's life.

READ John 21:15 - 17.

Don't you wish we had a little more information as to what Peter was thinking, what he had been thinking after Christ was crucified and then when he had first seen the risen Lord after the resurrection.

The immediate hours in the aftermath of the crucifixion had to be heart-wrenching. The disciples believed Jesus was dead and gone. He wasn't coming back. Peter likely replayed again and again and again the last thing he'd said that Jesus had heard – "I don't know this man." He recalled his bravado when he'd earlier said he'd never deny Jesus and was willing to die with Jesus. How could he be so cowardly? How could he turn his back on the one who meant everything to him? How? Why?

Then Jesus appeared. He met Peter on the day of resurrection, that wonderful and glorious day and then in the days after that. Now the Lord had some personal time with the disciple. The topic – "Do you truly love me more than these?" There are differences of opinion as to what Jesus meant. Was he referring to Peter loving him more than he loves his buddies, or more than he loves the things that surrounded him like the stuff of fishing or more than the other guys loved Jesus? The question may have included all of these.

Nothing like being put on the spot...and more so since Jesus used *agape*, the kind of love God shows, the sacrificial kind of love. An NIV Study Bible note makes this distinction between the two kinds of love. "*Truly love* refers to a love in which the entire personality, including the will, is involved. *Love* refers to spontaneous natural affection or fondness in which emotion plays a more prominent role than will...The important thing is that in so serious matter as the reinstatement of Peter, the great question was whether he loved Jesus" (NIV note on 21:15 – 17).

I can picture Jesus and Peter walking side-by-side as they're talking, having a pleasant conversation, and then Jesus, without looking at the disciple, simply asks, "Do you truly love me?" Peter definitely isn't looking at the Savior as he said he did with the human affection, brotherly love kind. The question and answer the second time are identical. The third time, I think Jesus stopped...so Peter stopped. Jesus turned and looked intently at Peter as he posed his question. Jesus had changed his question to match how Peter had responded. Do you have brotherly love?

Jesus accepted the answers and told Peter that he should demonstrate his love by caring for the other disciples and those who would come to know Christ as Savior. It wasn't enough for Peter to merely verbalize his love for God. He needed to practice his love by showing concern for those who were his brothers and sisters in the Lord. He was to love people through his actions of service.

We know Peter wasn't only thinking of himself. The disciple turned his attention to his pal John and wondered about what was going to be required of him. No worries. Jesus said that was between him and John. Peter just needed to be concerned about what he was doing, how he loved Jesus.

We're a lot like Peter. We wonder about what God has for other people to do, what he has for them to experience, what twists and turns will be in their lives. It's a form of self-absorption where we wonder why we need to do something others might not need to do. Our primary role is to be concerned about our love for God. We can affect and urge other people to love God but, it has to start with us. Peter needed to nail down that he loved God before he could be able to do anything else.

3. Each new day we have the opportunity to love people.

Jesus often gave people more than they asked. He did that with the teacher of the law who wondered about the greatest commandment. Jesus cited loving the Lord God...and then added, "The second is this: 'love your neighbor as yourself'" (Mark 12:31).

There's weight in the commandment. It's something we "must" do. It isn't optional. We're to love others, especially those who are brothers and sisters in Christ.

Jesus gave Peter a second chance. More like 57<sup>th</sup> chance with all Peter said and did and what we imagine he did and said. Who cares how we did in the past, our successes or failures? Each new day is a new day to receive God's love and give love back to him and to people.

It could be a new person who briefly comes into our sphere of awareness and influence or it could be the same one that's been there for years and years and years. It could be a relative stranger. It could be someone we know very well. It could be someone of our age group. Could be somebody of a different age group. No matter who it is, what they look like, if they know Jesus as their Savior or not, whatever class distinction might identify them, we're to love people because God loved them. It starts the moment our worship service is done.

"And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them" (1 John 3:23, 24).

During WW II some American soldiers wanted to bury one of their buddies inside a fenced church cemetery. The village vicar told them it was only for church members. The soldiers buried their friend just outside the fence. The next morning they returned to visit but couldn't find the grave. One of them asked the pastor who assured him it was still there. The soldier was confused. The vicar explained that he felt sorry that he'd told them no. He got up during the night and moved the fence.

Sometimes we need to move the fences of our lives...reach out to allow people into our lives. Show love.