

## **KNOWING YOURSELF AS DEEPLY LOVED**

I am convinced that God loves each and every one of us with depth, persistence, and intensity beyond imagination. God doesn't simply like you. Neither does God simply have warm sentimental feelings toward you just because you were created in the Divine image. The truth is that God loved you with what some have called "a passionate absorbed interest". God cannot help seeing you through eyes of love. *[Because he is love.]*

Whether we realize it or not, our being is grounded *[created and rooted]* in God's love.

The generative love of God was our origin. *[creative love]*

The embracing love of God sustains our existence. *[faithful, intimate, persistent love]*

In inextinguishable level God is the only hope for our fulfillment. *[never dying love]*

Love is our identity and calling, for we are children of love.

**Created from love, of love, and for the love, our existence makes no sense apart from Divine love.**

Neither knowing God nor knowing self can progress very far unless it begins with a knowledge of how deeply we are loved by God. Until we dare to believe that nothing can separate us from God's love - nothing that we could do or fail to do, nor anything that could be done by anyone else to us - (Romans 8:31-39) - we remain in the elementary grades of the school of Christian spiritual transformation. *[Much of the Christian world never grows into maturity because it has failed to believe and receive the love of God. That failure inhibits spiritual growth, because all growth is secured in receiving the love and grace and purpose of a loving God.]*

In order for our knowing of God's love to be truly transformational, it must become the basis of our identity. Our identity is who we experience ourselves to be - the "I" each one of us carries within. And identity grounded in God would mean that when we think of who we are, the first thing that would come to mind is our status as someone who is deeply loved by God.

With sadness I confess how seldom this is true for me. Though I have always wanted to avoid being defined on my professional role, when asked to introduce myself, I am likely to resort to the common social practice of trotting out some vocational designations. But, even more telling, if my self-esteem is threatened and I feel my identity to be a bit vulnerable, by almost automatic first response is to think of accomplishments or of present or future projects. What this tells me is that much more than I usually care to acknowledge, my identity is based on what I do, not who I am.

Christ presents a particularly poignant contrast to this. His identity was defined by his relationship to his father. This was who he was. His whole life flowed out of this. What he did was not the basis of his identity but rather pointed to who he was: "the works my father has given me to carry out, these same works of mine testified that the father has sent me".[John 5:36]

At his baptism, Jesus heard a divine declaration of love for him as the son with whom God was well pleased. [Matthew 3:17] Jesus seem to never doubt this. His relationship to the father was the basis of how he experienced and understood himself. He was one with his father-in-law - God being in him and he being in God.[John 14:11] nothing was more certain for him than the love of his father, a love that he knew had existed from before the foundation of the world. [John 17:24] doing his father's will grew out of this relationship of love that was the basis of his identity.

Coming to know and trust God's love is a lifelong process. Making this knowledge the foundation of our identity- or better, allowing our identity to be reformed around this most basic fact of our existence- will also never happen instantly. Both lie at the core of the spiritual transformation that is the intended outcome of Christ-following.

***It seems to me that spiritual growth is dependent upon what we believe about God and ourselves and how we release that faith in a living and ongoing intimate relationship with Him. The fact that "Faith without***

***works is dead.” begins with a faith in a God Who loves us and who has a plan for our lives which includes intimacy with HIM resulting in a life that continuously manifests His presence, purpose, and power.***

It is not surprising that such a love is manifested by a constant reaching into the life of the loved one. The above paragraphs are from DGBenners book on The Gift of Being.....pages 48-51. **The Blue print are corresponding personal notes.** This is part of the conference stuff, but the material is invaluable even if you are unable to attend the conference. Still, it is particularly valuable to those of you who are speaking at the conference. So – if you are one who is involved in preparing to share in the conference, please consider these paragraphs along side of your assignment.

Super blessings and love\

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