

Snapshots of God

I had trouble trying to put a title on this article. I didn't want to use *God Is Love* because everyone seems to know that, at least to a point, and they might decide this is just the same old "God Loves You" article. In the letter of 1 John we find that three word sentence twice—God is love. We cannot get around it, and I don't think we will ever completely understand it or be able to explain it. So, I am choosing the title—*Snapshots of God*.

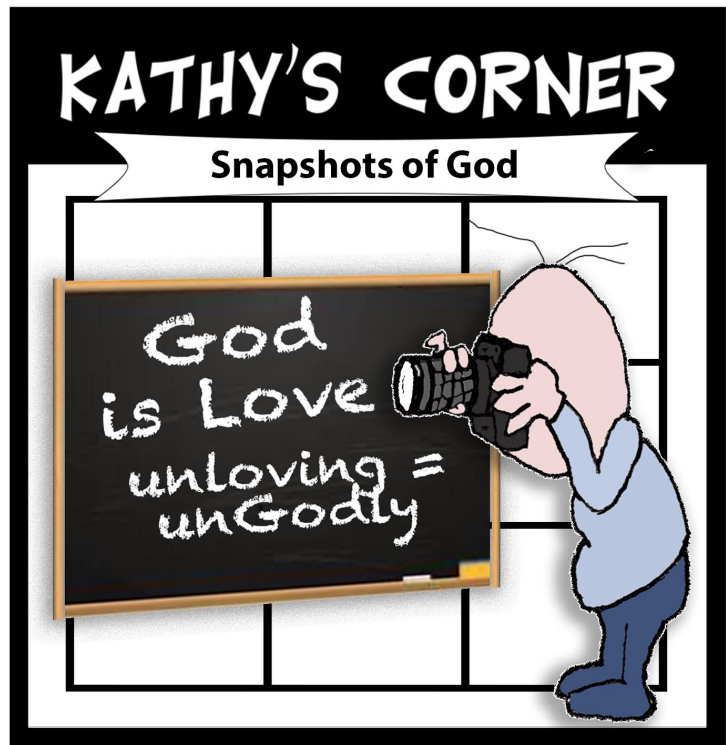
As we spend time with our heavenly Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, through prayer and the word, there are moments where life flows into what we are studying. It can be difficult to express. Somehow we are affected, even changed, by what the Holy Spirit shows us. The word that we have read many times before nourishes us like food and becomes a part of us that no one can separate from us. It is from these moments that many of the articles I write come. I cannot express it the way the Holy Spirit can, though I try. I pray that the Holy Spirit Himself will touch what I write and make it meaningful and life-giving to you. May we all grow in intimacy with our God.

There wasn't a lot about High School academics that I enjoyed, but I loved Algebra. It was so logical—it just made sense! In applying that algebraic logic to the phrase God is love, it looks like this:

God = Love
or Love = God
unLoving = unGodly

This seems simple and logical to me. From the Apostle Paul who described in detail in 1 Corinthians 13 the love that he said was "the more excellent way," to the Apostle John—probably the most intimate disciple/apostle—they both had an understanding of love that many teachers and disciples do not have. Still, I doubt that either of them would claim to understand God or Love completely, so I think what they have given us are some nice snapshots of Love to help us understand. Then there is Jesus! He is more than the snapshots. He is more like the High Fidelity, full color video of that Love lived out for our eyes to see.

Doug delivered a sermon on motives Sunday. It was convicting, as are the two greatest commandments. Jesus said, **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.**" (See Matthew 22:37-40 CSB) If we love and deal with people through love, our motives will be pure. We cannot love perfectly in our flesh. This love comes from the Holy Spirit, as do pure motives. Living in God's love is very different from our natural love. We love family members,



spouses, friends, or “*Besties*,” even Pagans do that. We are commanded by Jesus to “**Love your enemies.**” This is probably one of the hardest commandments. He also said, “**If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?**” (From Matthew 5:44-47 NIV)

Snapshot #1: Love Is Bigger Than Forgiveness

“Love your enemies.” That’s a hard one! It is equally an important one. Many of us who have some understanding of deliverance have seen the importance of forgiveness to receiving the freedom Christ desires for us or for anyone who is bound. **Love is bigger than forgiveness!** Love is the essence of God. We need to let the God *in* us be God in every relationship, even the broken relationships if at all possible. When we see a person as an individual, not just one of the many; when we see a person as a “*beloved*” of God, the God who isn’t wanting any to perish, but for each to come to repentance; when we see a person the way God saw us when we still needed repentance, maybe we can begin to understand the importance of loving our enemies. (“But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”--Romans 5:8 CSB). Love is bigger than forgiveness. Don’t withhold what heals. I can speak for myself, but I think also for many others, that the love I found at NUMA has been and continues to be a healing power in my life.

Snapshot #2: Love Penetrates and Permeates

Love penetrates and permeates even the hardest hearts. Gang members like Nicki Cruz, who couldn’t get the words of David Wilkerson—“Jesus loves you,” out of his head, when faced with the love of God finally had his hardened heart penetrated. Nicki became a preacher himself eventually. Some hearts have become hardened as the consequence of our own choosing because we have chosen to go down the wrong path willfully or because we were deceived. Others have been hardened because of misuse or neglect from people over time, especially those who should have been there for them. Lack of love is devastating to the human heart. **Love heals.**

Snapshot #3: Love Is Bigger Than Tolerance

The world calls for tolerance. Tolerance puts up with, whereas, Love cares and wants the best for a person. Those calling out for tolerance are looking for something far inferior to what the Love of God has to offer. May God open their eyes and grant them repentance before their time runs out.

Snapshot #4: Love Or Intimacy

I know God desires intimacy from us. He is already intimate with us. He knows all about us—every thought—every secret—every problem—every action—every joy—every hope. He is involved in our lives long before we are aware of His involvement. In human terms, I think of love as more inclusive than intimacy. Although God is intimate with us and desires our trust, it takes time and a deliberate pursuit of Him, using the measure of faith He has given to each of us, to grow the intimacy with Him that many of us desire to have. Oxford Languages defines intimacy as *close familiarity or friendship*. Webster.com defines it as *something of a personal or private nature*. In intimacy we can experience or feel love. We choose people we trust to be intimate with. As we allow people to get to know us there is opportunity for either intimacy or betrayal. In betrayal we experience or feel hurt. If we love as God loves, we cannot betray. God never will betray! He is bound to His covenant. Betrayal is a deep wound. It penetrates even to the human soul and spirit, deeper than any physical wound. It is a weapon Satan loves to use. Satan is not that cute little horned red guy that tempts us; he is a being that

delights in inflicting wounds and enjoys watching our pain. He is totally devoid of love. Don't let him use you through betrayal.

*Snapshot #5: **Love Is Costly***

It was costly for Jesus. It will be for us, but it also guarantees the greatest reward when it is sincere and it is for the Lord. It will cost time, resources, and even rend our hearts for those we love. It may even cost our physical lives in extreme circumstances. Nevertheless, we are to be as He was in this world. **“The one who says he remains in him should walk just as he walked.”** (1 John 2:6 CSB) Spiritually speaking, it should have already cost our lives. “A life for a life.”

*Snapshot #6: **Love Is Our Assurance***

“We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers and sisters. The one who does not love remains in death.” (1 John 3:14 CSB)

“God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him. In this, love is made complete with us so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because as he is, so also are we in this world.” (From 1 John 4:16-17 CSB)

*Snapshot #7: **God Is Love***

God and Love are way higher than human comprehension. No article written by man could possibly cover every aspect of His Love. The Bible inspired by the Holy Spirit shows His Love. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,” shows His Love. His death, His atonement, His suffering by our hands, His resurrection, His “ever living to make intercession for us” shows His Love. His mini-miracles in our daily lives show His Love. His creation, His all-inclusive Christ, His Holy Spirit within us, all show His Love. **Will you show His Love?**

I could go on and on and never touch on the size and strength of God's Love which is as big as eternity itself, and yet cares for something as small as man.

These are just snapshots, nothing more.

Knowing Christ's love surpasses head knowledge alone. It is also knowing through personal experience. Ephesians 3:14-19 CSB:

“For this reason I kneel before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. I pray that he may grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power in your inner being through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love, and to know Christ's love that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”