

Cliff Notes – Why God Loves You

John 3:16; John 15:14-17

I. Introduction

A. Today we're starting a new series called "Cliff Notes."

- 1) Do you remember those little yellow and black books that got us all through college without actually reading those classic works of literature?
- 2) They would summarize the book, analyze the plot, examine the characters and boil everything down to simple and memorable points.

B. That's what I'd like to spend a few weeks doing.

- 1) I want to take a look at some basic ideas, some things that even "experienced" Christians ask about.
- 2) We'll try to answer some of those questions (acknowledging up front that we will never have all the answers).
- 3) My hope is that at the end of six weeks we will be more familiar and comfortable with our faith – and able to share it simply and easily.

C. In preparation for these next few weeks, I asked a couple of dozen Christian friends to answer five questions.

- 1) What are the things that hang Christians up the most?
- 2) What are the nagging questions that often get asked?
- 3) What are the basics of our faith?
- 4) What do you wish someone would have shared with you as you started following Jesus?

D. The fifth question was, "What do we need to know to get started following Jesus?"

- 1) The most common response by far was, "You need to know that God loves you."
- 2) And the next question is why.
 - a) It's hard for many of us to understand how God can love us in light of the way we act and behave.
 - b) One reason that the self-help sections of bookstores (even Christian bookstores) are so large is that we're not happy with ourselves – we see ourselves as unlovable.
- 3) But that isn't God's view of us at all – and this is why.

II. God loves you because God *is* love.

A. The Bible says, "And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. *God is love*. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him." [1 John 4:16]

- 1) Understand the depth of this. This doesn't just mean that God loves us, it means that he is love itself.
- 2) God is love, it's part of his very nature.

B. When we talk about God's nature we mean that it's an inseparable part of who God is.

- 1) For example, it's in my nature to be a goofball – I can't help it.
- 2) The same is true for God. It's in God's nature to love – God can't help it.

C. God's nature is made of many qualities: justice, righteousness, holiness.

- 1) But the absolute greatest is love.
- 2) God's first impulse is to love us – in spite of all the reason God shouldn't!
- 3) God loves us because God is love.

- III. This is a good place to point out that the love that God gives is unique in character and quality.
 - A. Human love is selfish and consuming.
 - 1) Think about the way we use the word.
 - a) "love" is usually preceded by the word "I."
 - b) We love the things and people who serve us and meet our needs.
 - c) We love what satisfies us.
 - 2) Love is a commodity that we use.
 - a) We say we love oranges, but when we're done with them we throw away the peel. That kind of love is disposable.
 - b) We want to know what we will get out of it (how we will be satisfied).
 - 3) God's love is very different.
 - B. God's love is self-sacrificing and giving.
 - 1) When God loves the focus is outward not inward.
 - a) Love is not about God as much as it is about the object of God's love.
 - b) God's love is not selfish, it is self-giving.
 - 2) God's love is an investment in us.
 - a) God's not interested in what He receives; God is interested in what He gives.
 - b) God sees love as something worth giving away, even at a very high price.
- IV. God loves you because God created you.
 - A. Kind of quaint isn't it; to find a pastor who actually believes that God created us.
 - B. You were created in the image of God.
 - 1) The Bible says, "²⁶ Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." [Genesis 1:26-27]
 - 2) "Image of God" means this: that the source, pattern and creative energy it took to make human beings had its origin *outside* of creation.
 - a) Human beings are not one more created thing like all other created things. They are unique.
 - b) There is something about us that no other created thing shares.
 - c) And that uniqueness is found in God's involvement.
 - 3) Scripture says that God "breathed into man the breath of life."
 - a) We are unique in that respect.
 - b) We have a level of awareness and a level of reverence that no other created thing possesses.
 - C. You were created for God's purpose.
 - 1) Scripture tells us that all of creation was created for the use of human beings.
 - 2) Human beings are created for the purposes of God.
 - a) Genesis 1:26 says Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."
 - b) The first thing God does is give human beings their purpose.

- 3) We make a mistake when we believe that we have been put here for our purposes and our fulfillment.
 - a) As we know by now, its not about us its about God.
 - b) The purpose of creation is to reflect the love of God.
 - 4) The purpose of human beings is to demonstrate that love of God in our work, our task, and in all we do.
 - a) Tomorrow at work, your most important job is to show the love of God to others.
 - b) Tomorrow at school, the best you can do is to learn how to show the love of God to others more completely.
 - c) Tonight when your kids are running all over the house, your job as a parent is to show them God's love.
 - D. God created you unique from all the rest of creation. You are God's masterpiece. That's why God loves you.
- V. God loves you because you are worth it.
- A. God gave Jesus for us.
 - 1) John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world, that ...”
 - a) Stop there – “that” is a very important word.
 - b) “That” is the motivation for all that follows.
 - 2) God loved – that.
 - a) There's only one reason that God gave his only Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.
 - b) That reason is love.
 - B. That's how much value you have.
 - 1) I've messed up – God saw more potential in you than that.
 - 2) Look at me – God saw far more value in you than that.
 - 3) So much so that perfection (Jesus) was offered for imperfection (you/me/us) because of love.
 - C. God gives love to us so that we can show love to others.
 - 1) As at creation, God gave human beings a job to do that would demonstrate the love of God for all of creation.
 - 2) Now at this moment, God gives all who follow him (all who apprentice themselves to Jesus) a job to do that demonstrates the love of God for all people.
 - 3) John 15:14-17 says, “¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ¹⁷This is my command: Love each other.”
- VI. God loves you because God is love.
- A. And that love compelled Him to create you in His image.
 - B. And to this day, God sees in you ultimate value and worth.
 - C. And asks that we help to spread this message to any who would hear it
 - 1) It's all about the love.
 - 2) “Not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”
 - D. And the Good News is that there is nothing you can do to get God to stop loving you. Even if you reject Him – His love will never end! TB2G.