

Dear Friend,

We all know that good parents love their children. Most parents when asked what they want for their children would say, "I want them to be happy." However, does that mean that good parents give their children whatever they want? Obviously not. Why not? Good parents realize that not everything that their children want is good for them. They know that children are often not wise and some things they want are not good for them. Loving parents often say no to their children's desires and actually seek to give their children things that their children may not initially desire.

For example, hardly any child naturally believes it is a good thing to spend a beautiful Saturday morning cleaning the house. But good parents know that children will be much happier in the long run if they grow up valuing hard work, the joy of contributing to the good of the family, and the happiness that comes from denying short term pleasure for long term gain. Loving parents want to give their children the best kind of happiness, not merely the temporary thrills of a self-centered existence. If we can generalize this to a principle, we would say that love seeks to give the beloved the best kind of happiness within its power to give.

What is the aim of God's love for us? In the most famous verse in the Bible, John 3:16, we are told, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." The goal of God's love in this verse is to rescue believers from an eternal hell and to give them eternal life. So the best thing that God can give us is eternal life. Now, what is eternal life? Is it an eternity of no suffering and no sinning lived with your best friends, enjoying all of your favorite leisure activities and eating all your favorite foods? Or is it something different? Jesus says, while praying, in John 17:2-3, "For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

The objective of God's love for us, the reason he sent Jesus into the world is to give us the best gift that he can possibly give us, himself forever. All of us, if we are honest, just let out a big sigh. "Well, he is God and so I suppose he knows what is best and he can do whatever he wants. But I was really hoping his goal was... to give me more money... to give me successful children... to give me good health... to give me... you fill in the blank." None of us naturally think the best thing we could ever receive is eternal fellowship with God. We tend to view him as more of an "add on" to life, not the goal of living. We want him to endorse our goals and get involved in supplying our needs, as we perceive them. But the reality is that God's love for us commits him to giving us the absolute best, himself. I appreciate how John Piper states this, "God's goal isn't to make much of us but to enable us to enjoy making much of him."

"Enabling us to enjoy making much of him" is the goal of God's love for us. This is why Jesus died and rose again. Today, as Jesus intercedes for us before the throne of God this is what he is asking his Father to do. This is why Jesus sent the Holy Spirit (John 16: 12-16) and this is the objective of the Holy Spirit's work in us today. This is the purpose that guides our loving Father as he ordains the circumstances of our lives. He knows what mixture of joy and pain we must experience if we are going to receive the gift he wants to give us. May God accomplish his goal in our lives today.

Seeking, by grace, to enjoy Him,