



God Really Does Love You

Whenever I drive on an interstate highway, I can't help but notice billboard advertisements that do their best to be humorous, cute or outrageous in order to influence me to take some action. They want me to buy something, visit something or maybe hire someone when I am in need. Two billboards in particular caught my eye and gave me pause for thought. The first billboard cries out in huge letters "God Loves You". The other billboard claims "Jesus is the answer to all your problems".

I am trying to imagine someone driving on the interstate, seeing the "God Loves You" billboard, thinking "Wow! I never knew that!" and then deciding to go to church. I don't denounce the billboard, it has a great message. However, I am not sure that coming to the knowledge of God's love is as easy as that. Believing in God's love can sometimes be a challenge. It's even more of a challenge when one looks for Jesus to be the answer to all their problems, then He isn't.

I think most people at some point in their life question God's love. Humans are wired for things to make sense; but in real life, they don't always make sense. We look out at an evil and suffering world and wonder "How can a truly loving and all-powerful God allow the world to be like this?" When bad things happen to us or prayers don't seem to be answered, we wonder "Why is God allowing this to happen to me? If Jesus is not the answer to all my problems is that because He doesn't love me?"

Many claim to have the answer. There is no lack of articles and videos available on the internet that authoritatively give you the answer. But most of these answers do nothing to provide comfort in God's love. Rather, they just elicit more questions. Consider the following:

God gave people free will. He allows everyone to make their own choices and does not interfere with free will. So what...I try to protect my children from the world and from making bad decisions. If I am truly God's child, why doesn't He do the same for me?

God is testing your faith. Jesus said if we had the faith of a mustard seed we could move mountains. Pray for more faith. So what...I pray for faith and go to healing Masses. If faith is the issue, why doesn't God give me faith? I ask for it.

God has a higher purpose. He knows what's best. So what...I don't see a higher purpose to God allowing a drunk driver to kill my child. What higher good came out of that?

God wants to get your attention. Maybe God is teaching you something or punishing you for a sin so you will repent. So what...I thought Jesus forgave all my sins on the cross. Jesus suffered for me. Why do I also have to suffer? Am I not really forgiven?

Evil is attacking you. So what...I thought God was more powerful than evil. I pray the Saint Michael prayer. Why isn't God protecting me?

These "generic" answers can't be applied to every person in every situation. God doesn't work that way. He also doesn't fix all the problems or let us know what is on his mind.



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I would almost like to stand before the throne of God and demand some answers. My fear is that His response would be something similar to the entire 38th chapter of Job, starting with “Where were you when I founded the earth?”

If God will not give us answers or fix all our problems, how can we know for sure that He loves us? The answer lies in understanding how God’s love is not the same as the world’s love.

Worldly love (in Greek: philostorgos and phileo) tends to prove itself by showering the other person with worldly gifts and kindness. And so, for example, we shower our children with gifts and protect them from the badness of the world. We want the best for our children...in this world. But worldly love is only concerned about the quality and happiness of life in this world. It does not consider what happens when this life ends.

God’s love (in Greek: agape) is proven through mercy and sacrifice. “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” (John: 15:13) The greatest act of God’s love is to consider one’s life in this world as nothing and give it up so that another can have happiness in the next life.

That is exactly what Jesus did and nothing can take that away. Aside from the bad things that happen to us, we sometimes feel like we are so far astray and terrible that God cannot possibly love us. But he already did love us! Jesus cannot go back and “undie” because we do not deserve His sacrifice. It is finished. In fact, it is exactly because we do not deserve His sacrifice that His offering of love is so great. “God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) Jesus knew at the time of His death we would never deserve His love. Yet, He loved us anyway.

Now, we just need to accept his love. Our response, and obligation, to accepting His love is to be holy by separating ourselves from the blessings of the world (health, wealth, love, power, etc.) and only consider God’s blessing of eternal life.

“For all the promises of God are ‘Yes’ in Christ. And so through Him, our ‘Amen’ is spoken to the glory of God.” (2 Corinthians 1:20) God never has and never will break a promise. However, there is nowhere in Scripture that God says “I am the answer to all your problems in this world.” And yes, I am not fond of the message on that billboard.

Being holy or being a Saint is no guarantee of happiness in this life. Saint Bernadette of Lourdes was told by our Blessed Mother “I cannot promise you happiness in this life, but the next.”

Blessed Alexandrina Maria da Costa, at the age of fourteen, jumped out of a window to escape rape. She damaged her spinal cord and became paralyzed. At first she prayed for healing and made all kinds of promises to God if she got well, but that that was not God’s will. She cooperated with God’s graces and for thirteen years survived eating only the Eucharist and nothing else. On her tombstone is inscribed “Sinners, if the dust of my body can save you, walk on it, kick it around until it disappears. But never sin again, offend Jesus no more...Don’t risk Jesus forever because he is so good.”

Where sin and unworthiness is the stumbling block, consider Saint Mary of Egypt. She was a prostitute for seventeen years before being called into holiness by God. Maybe read the life of Saint Augustine,



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who had many worldly vices before beginning his life of holiness. “[God] desires all men to be saved.” (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

“God freely created mankind so we could share in His own blessed life. God draws close to us. He invites us, through the Holy Spirit to be heirs of His blessed life.” (Catechism, 1) This is God’s purpose and His will for us...everlasting life. Everything else including sin, pain and suffering is temporary. “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4). If everything was roses in this life, why would we seek the next?”

“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39)