

# Chapter 4



## **The Bitter Roots of Feeling Unloved (Conditional Love)**

**Bible Character – Esau – Genesis 25:19-34  
Symptoms – Effects – Causes – Biblical Cures**

## Summary of Feeling Unloved

Feeling unloved is the underlying cause of many of our dysfunctional emotions. The root of feeling unloved extends downward into inferiority, anxiety, anger, and depression. Its tentacles may in fact touch on all the other dysfunctions.

Probably an easier way to think about feeling unloved is to use other words to describe it—*“Love-starved, love-anemic, love-cheated, love-withheld, loved-less, love-missed, love-rejected, loved-little, love–short-changed, love unmet, or simply feeling unloved.”*

There is no greater detriment to the soul of anyone than to feel alone and unloved in this world. Psychologists tell us that feeling loved is a basic human need, akin to needing food and shelter.

We all need to be loved and feel loved. I say we need to “feel loved” because one can be genuinely loved by parents or spouse, but not feel loved. It is possible to be loved and cherished, but not be able to feel that love. This is love-anemia. Just like the blood stream needs oxygen, so too our hearts need a rich flow of love.

If you are physically anemic, it means you are lacking a normal amount of red blood cells. It means your body doesn't get enough oxygen-rich blood to feed the body's tissues. Your body feels tired and weak and becomes susceptible to other chronic diseases. There are many forms of anemia, some can be short term, others long term. It can range from mild to severe. In either case, it can be a warning sign of a serious illness.

Spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically, love-anemia leaves you with a subtle feeling of stress. You easily get irritable, tired, impatient, angry, and upset with life's difficulties. You don't bounce back after a crisis, but stress slowly simmers on the back burner of your mind, sending you into a tailspin of emotions.

The feeling of being unloved is a thinking disorder. It is an emotional disease of the soul. Living a life believing that love is conditional and must be earned is the same as living without love. It creates this love-anemia. It leaves an emptiness inside that nothing else can fill.

But what if you really grew up in a home that didn't love you? You'd have feelings of being unloved that are not imagined, but real. That is certainly possible, but in most cases, love-anemia happens to people with a normal upbringing. It is a perception of not being loved, not a reality.

There are lots of ways we can reinforce the idea that there is imperfect love around us. None of us have perfect parents. We all have flaws and we live in a fallen world. We all have imperfections and we communicate imperfect love. This is not new. It can be demonstrated in Scripture, as you will see in a moment. It is a human dilemma.

## **The Situation (biblical character)**

<sup>21</sup> Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. <sup>22</sup> The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, “Why is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of the LORD. <sup>23</sup> The LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.”

<sup>24</sup> When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. <sup>25</sup> The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. <sup>26</sup> After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau’s heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them. <sup>27</sup> The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. <sup>28</sup> Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Every one of our dysfunctional thought patterns can be found in a biblical character. The character that exemplifies conditional love or “feeling unloved” is Esau, Jacob’s twin brother. Like the Smothers Brothers comedy team, Esau could say, “Mom always loved you best.”

The story of Jacob and Esau is long. It takes up a good portion of the Book of Genesis, so we won’t be able to review the entire story. It is a sad story. It is a story of parental favoritism and dishonesty. It is a story of parental love poured out on one child while the other is less-loved.

Jacob and Esau were twins. Even in the womb, there seemed to be a battle for dominance. As the midwife was delivering the babies, they jostled each other. The first to come out was red and hairy, that was Esau, and the second was Jacob, who was grasping at Esau’s heel. That began a lifelong competition for parental love.

The boys were very different. Esau was an outdoorsman and hunter, therefore favored by his father, and Jacob was a quiet man, preferring to stay in the tent with his mother. The Scripture is very clear: “**Isaac loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.**” That’s not a good start for a happy home.

When they were full-grown, Esau came in from hunting, starving and asking for food. Jacob took the opportunity to negotiate food for Esau’s birthright. Esau agreed just to keep from starving. Later yet, when Isaac was lying in bed unable to see and dying, Rebekah suggested Jacob disguise himself as Esau to trick his father into giving him his blessing. It worked. Isaac thought it was Esau and blessed him. Then Esau came in, wanting his blessing, only to be turned away.

**That part of the story closes with Esau bitterly weeping and begging a blessing from his father. Genesis 27:34 “Do you only have one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father.’ Then Esau wept aloud.”**

## **The Symptoms (theirs and yours)**

The symptoms of conditional love were evident in the lives of Jacob and Esau. The two brothers harbored animosity towards each other for most of their lifetime, and it was only resolved when Jacob had an encounter with God at Bethel. Yet, according to the Bible, Esau is the progenitor of the Edomites. The family of Esau, the Edomites, continued to play a hostile role with the people of Israel constantly warring against them. The prophecies in the book of Obadiah are against the Edomites. When the Israelites were attacked and led captive to Babylon, the Edomites, though related, did not help them, instead, they captured fleeing Israelites and turned them over to Babylon. The consequences of the sins of the parents extend to the third and fourth generation, as stated in the Ten Commandments.

The reality of imperfect love is that sometimes we have experienced things in our childhood that made us question whether our parents loved us or not. Sometimes parents fail to communicate unconditional love because they too experienced conditional love while growing up. It is the case of the sins of the parents being visited on the children for three and four generations. (Exodus 20:5) We pass along our personalities, our bad habits, our weaknesses, our strengths, as well as some bad thinking patterns to our children and grandchildren. The symptoms of feeling cheated out of love and one's birthright are long lasting.

## **The Symptoms in Your Life**

If you subconsciously feel unloved, it will affect your life and relationships. Feeling love-cheated will affect your emotional development. Children that grow up with conditional love develop emotional handicaps.

There are several signs you can look for.

- If you felt like you had to meet the needs of your parents to be loved.
- If you felt loved only when you accomplished something.
- If you felt guilty when your parents were mad, like it was your fault.
- If you felt unloved when your behavior disappointed your parents.
- If you had to work hard not to need anything from your parents.
- If you did everything possible to get your parent's attention.
- If you played every sport in school to please your dad.
- If you did the household chores in order for your mom to love you.
- If you never were told you were loved without conditions.
- If your parents blamed you often for their troubles.
- If you were judged severely and often for your behavior.
- If you were taught love had to be earned.
- If you never or rarely heard "I love you."
- If your parents divorced and you feel guilty.
- If you sucked your thumb or cuddled a blanket into your teens.

Then you probably grew up feeling unloved, uncherished, and unprotected. Anemic love leaves you with unmet needs and wants. You are more likely to become addicted to some vice. It is the pacifier you need to fill a void. You will be a people-pleaser, even to your own detriment. You'll most likely search for love in all the wrong places and do almost anything to fill that void. You operate your life using at least 8 of the 10 Cognitive Distortions. Conditional love is a breeding ground for an unhealthy emotional life. You are susceptible to a plethora of psychological disorders.

- You have low self-esteem.
- You feel unworthy.
- You allow yourself to be abused or used.
- You are a very jealous person.
- You'll become a perfectionist.
- You'll be plagued by fear of rejection.
- You will tend to be compliant and easily manipulated.
- You will be anxious, worried and fearful.
- You will become a workaholic.
- You might even become a hoarder.

You name it, whatever psychological disorder there is it can be traced to anemic love, feeling unloved.

# The Sources (causes)

## Conditional Love Exemplified by Parents

We learn about love in early childhood from our parents. We pass it on to our children. If their love doesn't align with God's love, our perception of love will be distorted. It will create another generation of dysfunctional, love-starved families. My dad grew up in a home where emotions were rarely expressed. Saying, "I love you" was not a part of his family culture. Thus, I never heard my dad tell my mom that he loved her. I hope it's only because I wasn't around to hear it.

My mother grew up in a non-Christian home. My granddad had done some terrible things to my mother that we didn't know about until later in life. Granddad showed little or no love to my mother. He actually used words that made her feel that she was unworthy of his love. Granddad would say to my mom, "If you don't behave, I'm going to sell you to the junkman." Now, my mom, as an adult, knew that wasn't true, but she said, "I was only a little girl. I loved my daddy. I didn't want him to sell me to the junkman. That terrified me. I was afraid to go to sleep for fear of being put out for the junkman."

You can imagine what that builds into a child. It builds a foundation of insecurity. That insecurity in a parent's love passes into our subconscious and helps to create a feeling of unworthiness, low self-esteem, and feelings of rejection.

Unfortunately, those feelings get passed along to our image of God. We suspect God may feel the same way our parents did. We get the feeling that maybe God is waiting to trade us in on a new model if we don't behave or maybe He will throw us to the devil.

## God's Love Is Unconditional

God wants to settle that truth once and for all. God loves us with a love that's unconditional. God says He loves us with an everlasting love. He says His love cannot change. It's unassailable, unquestionable, undiminished, and unchanging. It can never be threatened. It can never be removed. Do you believe that? Or do you believe God's love is conditioned on your good behavior?

I grew up believing God's love was conditional because of what I heard. I heard the same things that my mom heard, not to that extent, but "*the sins of the parents passed on to the children*." Grandpa's sin passed on to mom. I heard my mom say, "If you don't behave, I'm going to beat you within an inch of your life." I don't blame her. We were six bad kids. We were noisy, disobedient, mean, and nasty.

That's not God's love. Yet, it was enforced in the home and replicated many times over. It's like the seeds scatter and multiply. Other children hear their dad say things like, "I'm going to divorce you. I hate you. I want nothing to do with you. I wish you were dead."

Kids grow up with a feeling that dad might divorce them too. If that's the love they see, is it any wonder they grow up feeling unloved?

Words hurt people because words mean things. But my dad didn't mean it. Grandpa didn't mean it and mom didn't mean it either. But those people that heard the words took them to heart and began early in life to believe that love was conditional and that dad and mom really didn't love them with an everlasting, never-ending love.

There are behaviors that reinforce conditional love rather than secure and unconditional love. Every once in a while we hear stories on the news of people who leave their children in a hot car while they go in shopping. Today you can't do that, you'll be arrested. My mom and dad often made us, their six kids, sit in the car while they got groceries. Fortunately, they left the windows open. They must have loved us. They left us in a car for a good reason. We would have torn that supermarket apart.

Fathers have a tremendous influence on their children and their understanding of God and His love. A father is the first image of God in their minds and in their tender hearts. Even though they might have been taught in Sunday school that our Father in heaven is love, what they see demonstrated is what sticks with them. The kids connect the title "father" to their dad. He is the visible one. If he is mean, ornery, cruel and unloving, then their perception of God is the same.

### **Inner City Kids**

My cousin started an after-school program for underprivileged children in an urban environment. Among their activities was a time of refreshments. Being a Christian after-school program, he taught the children to pray the Lord's Prayer before their snack. It begins, "*Our Father who art in heaven...*" Suddenly one of the adolescent boys stood up and ran from the room. When my cousin caught up with him, he asked why he had barged out of the room.

The boy responded, "I never want to hear 'OUR FATHER.' I have no father. My father abandoned us. He is never around. He hates us." It was a wake-up call to my cousin that not everyone has a good image of a father being good.

Children need a dad that is a superhero, a model of our Heavenly Father. But if you do not show affection to your children, or show limited affection that says to them that God doesn't show affection to His children either.

### **Conditional Love Conveyed by Fathers**

I remember one day my son Andrew and I were standing on an enormous cliff in Brazil at the edge of the ocean. The waves were crashing against the rocks below us. We were looking down on all of that. We were 300 feet above the water. Evidently the Brazilian government doesn't care about people like Americans do because they don't put fences up to protect people from falling over.

So, Andrew walked right up to the edge of this 300' cliff. He wasn't afraid of falling over. He walked right up to the edge, and I grabbed him. I said, "Andrew, don't do that. You' could fall down there into that swirling water. Look at that water. It's swirling. It's crashing. It would suck

you down and then out to sea. If anybody falls in, they're going to die. If you fall in, you'll die. There would be nothing I could do to save you. I can't swim well enough to pull you out of there.

He looked over the edge at the violent waves, then he looked up at me, and I'll never forget that look. He said, "Dad, if I fell in, wouldn't you even try to save me?" I looked at that water and I looked at my son and said, "Andrew, I want you to know that if you fell in, I'd be right behind you. We would die together because I will do everything and anything to save you. You're my son and I love you." – We need those kinds of experiences with our sons and our daughters.

### **Distant Dysfunctional Dads**

I grew up in a Christian home, but my dad grew up in a very non-Christian home where love was never expressed outwardly. Emotions were a taboo. Big boys don't cry. I remember only one time in my life seeing my dad cry and that was when his dad died. The rest of the time, he was unemotional. We served our first five-year term in Brazil as missionaries and learned to be expressive of our emotions, even in our greetings. Brazilians don't just shake hands, they give a big bear hug. When we arrived in Detroit after five years away, my mom was all tears, huggy and kissy. I saw my dad and went over to give him a bear hug. He just stood there stiffly with his arms straight down, not knowing what to do.

### **Little Brother on Daddy's Lap**

My little brother, Tommy, was probably two years old when I saw my dad do an unusual thing. It's fixed in my mind as a picture. I remember watching dad pick Tommy up in his arms and sit him on his lap. Then he rocked him in the rocking chair. I remember it so vividly. My little heart said, "Daddy never held me that way. Daddy never rocked me. Daddy never kissed me. Daddy never hugged me. Daddy never said 'I love you.'" That left an impression on me. Maybe I wasn't loved.

### **My Sister's Wedding Day**

Some years later when my sister got married, dad's aloofness was illustrated. Dad, being that tough macho guy who never showed emotion, went in to see my sister all decked out in her wedding dress. Just before she walked down the aisle, daddy walked over and gave her a peck on the cheek, and walked out of the room. My sister started to weep uncontrollably. Those that were around her tried to comfort and asked, "What's wrong? What happened? What did he say?" My sister, still sobbing, said, "That is the only time my dad ever showed affection to me. That's the only time my daddy ever kissed me."

Parents, you better be hugging and kissing your kids. God has given you those precious children as a gift. You better consider them precious, not just when they're babies in the cradle, but when they're teenagers, when they've got zits on their faces, rebellion in their hearts, and an earring in their nose or ear. They need to be told, "I love you." They need to be embraced. They need to be hugged. They need to be loved unconditionally. They need to hear you say how proud you are of them.



## Conditional Love in Discipline

Parents communicate conditional love through discipline. Let's talk about severe spankings. Some of us grew up with threats. We were left with a distinct impression of, "Obey or else!"

Dad was always working. He worked 12 hours a day, seven days a week. He was hardly ever at home. When he did come home, he would hide behind his newspaper.

Since dad worked long hours, most of the discipline in our home fell to my mom. We got spanked and hard. I don't blame my mom; we deserved it. She did the best she could and the best way she knew how. She did what her dad did. He spanked with an electric cord.

Mom could have used the belt, but I tell you, a belt is flat and it doesn't hurt as much as an electric cord. An electric cord stings and leaves welts. When I told a friend that my mother used an electric cord to spank us, he asked, "Did she plug it in?" No, she did not plug it in. Today, my mom would probably be arrested for spanking us and leaving welts.

Sometimes our mom would get so frustrated with us, she'd say, "You wait until your father gets home. He's going to spank you." We thought, "Oh no, God, don't let it happen! Lord Jesus, come quickly." Dad hated spanking as much as we hated receiving it. When he came through the door after work, he was tired and sweaty, with dust and ashes all over him. As soon as he'd walk in the door and put his lunchbox down, mom would say, "Norman, you need to do something about those children of yours! You need to give them a good spanking." Then she'd tell him about the day's troubles and what we had done wrong. Dad never gave good spankings. He gave bad spankings. He wasn't mad at us. I think he was mad at mom for waiting for him to come home and dumping it on him.

After mom and dad argued about him spanking when she could have done it, then the explosion started. I'll tell you, dad would take us into the bedroom and would really whip us hard. At least he used his belt and not the electric cord. But it still hurt. Sometimes, if we were sent to our rooms to await the final judgment, we would place padding or books in our behinds to soften the blows. I'm not against spankings. I think every child needs a good rump roast every once in a while, but they don't need to be beaten.

Harsh discipline communicates unloving messages. Mom often said, "This hurts me more than it does you." We didn't really believe that. We were left with the impression that being sinless was necessary to be loved. You could never disobey or you'd be rejected.

The authoritarian approach to discipline often conveys conditional love. "If you obey, I will love you." We parents make up all these rules and we rule with a rod of iron. It's a form of dictatorship and legalism. If it's not absolutely according to my rules, you're wrong and I'm right. It's my way or the highway. I've heard of parents that actually kicked their kids out of the house saying, "You don't do it my way. Get out and never come back." or "If you don't do this, then I won't love you."

## Conditional Love in Legalistic Christianity

My mom was a wonderful Christian lady and loved the Lord with all her heart, but she was so bound up in laws that she taught us the doctrine of insecurity. I suppose it is what she was taught.

One of my brothers posed the question; "If we were going 65 miles an hour in a 55 mph zone and our car slid off the road and we hit a telephone pole and we died, would we go to heaven or hell?" My mom responded, "I guess you'd go to hell."

Why? Because you broke a law. You died while sinning. I'll tell you, that's a pretty slim margin for getting into heaven. It's like one misstep and you're going to hell. I'm not sure mom thought that through, but that's what we picked up in her church. I'm not sure that's what the pastors taught. I hope it's not, but that's what mom picked up and passed on to us.

I remember as a young child hearing another verse to *Jesus Loves Me*, and thinking, "That can't be right!"

*Jesus loves me when I'm good,  
When I do the things I should,  
Jesus loves me when I'm bad,  
Though it makes Him very sad.*

*Chorus:  
Yes, Jesus loves me!  
Yes, Jesus loves me!  
Yes, Jesus loves me!  
The Bible tells me so.*

That Jesus loves me when I'm bad was not part of my childhood upbringing. So, we grew up with that little insecurity inside of us that God's love depended on our behavior. His love was not an everlasting love. God's love was tentative. It could easily be withdrawn if we didn't measure up. Salvation was not full and free. It was costly.

## Conditional Love Is Subtle

Conditional love is subtle. It's not always obvious. It is possible to live much of your life denying you are love-anemic. You don't consciously think you are unloved. Conditional love is unhealthy. It is tentative. We are left with the feeling that love must be constantly earned, or it will be withdrawn. It is only in the crucible of a crisis that this anemic, love-starved disorder appears.

## My Story

If you asked me in 1982 if I felt loved, I would have responded a healthy "Yes, definitely!" I would probably have given you a theological and biblical answer about God's unfailing love. But all that changed in an instant when a speeding car hit and killed our 12-year-old daughter while

she was crossing the street near our home in Brazil. We were serving as missionaries and had just returned to Brazil from a year of furlough. Prior to leaving, during my morning devotions, the Lord had impressed me that returning to Brazil would bring us great trials and trouble. So strong was that impression that I asked my wife, Marilyn, to come into my study. I sat her on my lap and told her what I felt the Lord was warning us about. I asked her and myself if knowing that great trials were ahead, would we still say yes and go? We both said yes.

Two weeks later, our daughter was dead. The depth of my grief was deeper than anything I could imagine. It was a living nightmare. Every night I would sit by the fireplace staring at her picture and asking God to tell me it didn't happen, and that it was all just a bad dream. It was gut wrenching despair. We stayed on and plowed ahead with the work of ministry, trying to pretend everything was alright. It wasn't alright. Nothing was right. Life made no sense. God failed us. God didn't raise Aimee from the dead. People didn't come to Christ through her death. It seemed to me a cruel and meaningless hoax.

After two years my health broke. The stress became unbearable and my emotions crashed. I couldn't cope. I returned to the States defeated and discouraged. Our mission superiors told me I needed to see a psychiatrist or a psychologist. It didn't matter to me what label they wore. It said to me I was crazy. I was useless. I was a failure. I truly was a basket case.

Weeks into the counseling, the Christian counselor, a former missionary, tried again and again to get me to open up with what was happening inside of me. I couldn't describe what was going on. It alluded me. Then one day he asked me a question I was not ready for. He asked, "Dick, if you could stand before God and say anything without fear of being reprovved or punished, what would you say?" It took me about five seconds to answer. Out of my mouth flowed a flood of hurt and anger that God didn't really love me, that he was punishing me when I had done nothing wrong. God was not loving. He was unfair, unjust, temperamental, aloof and uncaring. In a moment, the floodgate was broken and my pent-up emotions poured out. The counselor said, "Thank you, Dick. Now we can get somewhere."

We began exploring those emotions that were based on hidden internal thoughts that ran my life. I remember on one occasion, frustrated, the counselor said, "Dick, everything you say about God indicates you believe His love is conditional. You really don't believe God loves unconditionally. Dick, you are a student of the Word. I challenge you to revisit the Bible cover to cover and ask God to show you his unconditional love."

I did that over the period of a year. Even now, I remember weeping as I discovered passage after passage of God's unconditional love being shown and stated clearly. It changed my life. It changed my thoughts. It changed my feelings. It healed my broken heart.

**Conditional love lies secretly buried in the depths of our thoughts that sometimes only a major crisis can bring to the surface.**

## Sayings (self-talk)

*Self-talk is what we think but perhaps never say out loud. They are the stinking thoughts that pollute our emotions and damage those around us. **Have you ever thought any of these things?** Conditional Love is about feeling unloved.*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nobody loves me.                      | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm ugly.                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Everybody hates me.                   | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm hopeless.                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm no good to anyone.                | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm a failure.                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How can God love me?                  | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm such a slouch.              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How can God stand me?                 | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm a basket case.              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> God's patience will run out on me.    | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm a bad person.               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I can't stand myself.                 | <input type="checkbox"/> I deserve to go to hell.        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe I'm not saved at all.           | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't deserve to be forgiven. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If I were God, I wouldn't love me.    | <input type="checkbox"/> I've failed too many times.     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If you knew me, you wouldn't like me. | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't think my dad loved me.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't like me.                      | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't think my mom loved me.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I hate myself.                        | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't deserve grace.          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not important.                    | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't deserve heaven.         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm a poor Christian.                 | <input type="checkbox"/> I'll never find true love.      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm a bad person.                     | <input type="checkbox"/> I've failed God too many times. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm abandoned by everyone.            | <input type="checkbox"/> I've done the unpardonable sin. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not good enough for heaven.       | <input type="checkbox"/> I think I'm going to hell.      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm so dumb.                          | <input type="checkbox"/> I wish I'd never been born.     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm stupid.                           | <input type="checkbox"/> I wish I were dead.             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm uninteresting.                    | <input type="checkbox"/> No one will ever marry me.      |

***What thoughts are echoing in your brain? They either accuse you or excuse you. Keep them in check. Remember, there are the 10 Common Distortions. Which of them are you most frequently using?***

## Solutions (God's truth)

The most important love to understand is God's love. Let me give you some of the most important Scriptures that brought me peace concerning God's love for me. You'll find more in our Appendix.

The first is found in **Romans 8:28-39**

*<sup>28</sup> And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. <sup>30</sup> And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*

*<sup>31</sup> What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. <sup>35</sup> **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?** Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” <sup>37</sup> **No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.** <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, **nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

The literal Greek word for “more than conquerors” is *hyper-nikeo*, sounds like the sneaker brand, *super-Nike*. It literally means super conqueror.

We ought to get excited about God's love because it's not like daddy's love. It's not like mommy's love. It's not like the love that we've had built into us in the church. It's God's love. It's unique. It's unconditional. It is love He lavished on us.

**The word of God overflows with affirmations of the love of God, even for sinners. Study the Word. Memorize the Word. Hide it in your heart.**

**1 John 3:1** See **what great love the Father has lavished on us**, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

**Ephesians 3:14-19 NIV**

*<sup>14</sup> For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup> I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, **to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,** <sup>19</sup>*

and—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. **to know this love that surpasses knowledge.**

**Romans 5:8** “But God **demonstrates his love for us** in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”

**John 3:16** “For **God so loved** the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

**1 John 4:16** “We have come to know and to believe in **the love God has for us. God is love,** and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.”

**1 John 4:18** “**Perfect love casts out fear** for fear has torment.”

**1 John 4:19** “We love him because **he first loved us.**”

**Ephesians 2:4-5** “God who is rich in mercy, for his **great love** wherewith he loved us.”

**John 15:13** “**Greater love has no man** than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

**Jeremiah 31:3** “Yes, I have **loved you with an everlasting love,** therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.”

The Lord longs to lavish his love on you and take you in his everlasting arms and hold you close. For those of you today who are especially wounded, who have experienced a nervous breakdown, who have been institutionalized because of it, who have been beaten up in the church, and for those pastors who feel like nobody in your church loves you, do you feel unloved? Do you feel like running away?

God wants you to know that his love for you is unconditional. His love is not like the love of that church. His love is higher, wider, and greater than any love you've ever known.

We have provided an Appendix with exercises and quizzes to help you evaluate your own thinking patterns to begin the process of identifying your Stinkin' Thinkin', so that you can start telling yourself the truth as God sees it. It is not easy. It is a battle against ingrown thinking patterns. Our goal is to “*bring every thought into the obedience to Christ.*” (**2 Corinthians 10:5**)

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A friend of mine is a dog lover. In one of our classes as we talked about the love of God, she shared this poem by Wendy Francisco. On first hearing it I thought it was scandalous to compare God's love to a dog's love for his master. But on further reflection, I realized it was an excellent illustration. Maybe it will help you.

## **DoG and GoD, by Wendy J. Francisco**

*I look up and I see God,  
I look down and see my dog.  
Simple spelling G O D,  
same word backwards, D O G.  
They would stay with me all day.  
I'm the one who walks away.  
But both of them just wait for me,  
and dance at my return with glee.  
Both love me no matter what –  
divine God and canine mutt.  
I take it hard each time I fail,  
but God forgives, dog wags his tail.  
God thought up and made the dog,  
dog reflects a part of God.  
I've seen love from both sides now,  
it's everywhere, amen, bow wow.*

### **Learn Who You Are In Christ**

One of the best and greatest things you can do to counter conditional love is to search the Scriptures for the truths concerning who God says you are in Christ. In our Appendix we have included highlights and biblical references.

We have also written two books on this theme, *Who I Am Before the Throne*, and a devotional on the same theme. Both are available online at [www.PrayerToday.org](http://www.PrayerToday.org).

## **Who I Am In Christ**

**I am not who I feel like I am. I am not who I think I am. I am not who others think I am. I am what God says I am! Therefore I will declare His truth concerning me.**

**“I am the head and not the tail. I am a victor, not a victim. I am strong and not weak. I am a saint, not a sinner. I am a child of God, not a child of the devil. I am free, not a slave to sin. I am clean, not dirty. I am above and not below. I am whole, not broken. I am rich, not poor. I am wise, not ignorant. I am adopted, not abandoned. I am strong, not weak. I am kept by the power of God. I am able, not disabled. I am seated in heavenly places with Christ. I am an heir of God. I am a joint heir with Christ. I am more than a conqueror. I am a warrior, not a wimp. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. No evil can strike me, and no plague can come near my dwelling. I am safe and secure, kept in the palm of His hand. He has begun a good work in me and will perform it until the day Jesus comes again. I am a temple of God. I am indwelt by the Holy Spirit. I am a clean vessel, sanctified and ready for the Master’s use.”**



# Stop Here!

**Don't read any further until you have digested, applied, and used what you've just read.**

**Avoid overload. Read only one chapter a week.**

## **Personal Response to Feeling Unloved**

1. How did this subject make you feel? Sad, confused, upset, depressed, guilty, condemned, enlightened, happy, hopeful, etc.?
2. Was this chapter helpful in identifying some of your own Stinkin' Thinkin'? If so what specifically?
3. What 3 negative thoughts do you need to change? What are they and why are they distortions of truth?
4. What 3 or more biblical truths, verses, or promises do you need to digest and make a firm part of your thoughts and beliefs?

## **Group Discussion Questions**

1. Have you ever felt unloved, rejected, unwanted? When?
2. Can you remember any derogatory name calling in childhood? What names? Describe you home life.
3. Can you remember ever being severely disciplined as a child? What was the worst?
4. How sure are you of God's love? How secure do you feel in your salvation? Do you ever worry about God's love and care?

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Download our helps and tools at go to [www.PrayerToday.org/Stinkin.htm](http://www.PrayerToday.org/Stinkin.htm)

**10 Sermons on Stinkin' Thinkin'**  
**365 Promises of God**  
**Exercises & Forms in 8.5x11 PDF format**