

## 2-1-26 He Loves Me - Transactional Love Study Guide

### Overview

This message launches the series "He Loves Me" and challenges the common human tendency to view love—both with God and others—as **transactional** ("I am loved only if I perform/do certain things"). Using the Garden of Eden story, Scripture, and personal reflection, the sermon contrasts **transactional love** (performance-based) with **biblical love** (unconditional, rooted in God's character). It emphasizes the distinction between our **being** (who we are) and our **doing** (what we do), showing that sin separates us from God but **nothing** separates us from His love. The goal is to help listeners receive God's unconditional love, let it transform them, and live obediently **because** they are loved—not to earn love.

### Main Points

1. Humans naturally default to transactional love ("He loves me... if / He loves me not... because"), influenced by emotions, past experiences, and the Fall.
2. In Genesis 3, Eve (and Adam) interpreted God's protective boundary as withholding, making love transactional for the first time ("If I do this, I'll get that").
3. God responded to sin with **consequences** (sowing/reaping still applies) but also immediate grace (covering them with skins), showing He loves our **being**, not because of our **doing**.
4. Nothing can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:35–39), though sin does separate us from fellowship with God—creating a key distinction between relationship and love.
5. The Old Testament sacrificial system was a shadow pointing to Christ's once-for-all sacrifice, not a permanent transactional system; God's desire is heart change (law written on hearts/minds), not mere behavior modification.
6. God's kindness, mercy, and love are meant to lead us to repentance and transformation (Romans 2:4; Titus 3:4–5).
7. Obedience flows from love ("If you love Me, obey My commandments" – John 14:15), not the other way around.
8. Practical steps: Stop trying to earn/lose God's love; let His love change you; live daily in His love (honoring Him because you are already loved).

### Reflection Questions

1. In what areas of your life (with God or people) do you tend to view love as transactional? What past experiences contribute to this pattern?
2. How has seeing God as transactional affected the way you read the Bible (especially the Old Testament) or understand His actions toward you?
3. When have you felt separated from God because of sin? Did you mistakenly interpret that as God no longer loving you? Why or why not?
4. How does the distinction between your "being" and "doing" change how you see yourself and how God sees you?
5. Have you truly encountered God's unconditional love, or do you still feel you must "perform" to be loved by Him?

### Application

- **Receive** God's love as unearned and unlosable—meditate daily on Romans 8:38–39 and Ephesians 1:4–5 until it sinks in.
- **Stop striving** to earn love; confess areas where you treat God like an accountant keeping score.

- **Let love transform** you: Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal how God's kindness is meant to lead you away from specific sins or habits.
- **Obey from love**, not fear of losing love—choose one area of obedience this week motivated purely by gratitude for God's love (e.g., forgiveness, generosity, purity).
- **Cultivate closeness**—increase time in prayer, worship, and Scripture to feel and respond to His pursuing love rather than distance caused by sin.

### **Group Discussion Prompts**

1. Share a time when you felt you had to "earn" love from a parent, spouse, friend, or even God. How does that experience still affect your view of God's love?
2. Read Romans 8:35–39 together. What phrase or truth in this passage is hardest for you to fully believe, and why?
3. How would your daily thoughts, emotions, and choices change if you truly believed nothing could separate you from God's love?
4. The sermon says obedience should flow from being loved, not to be loved. Where in your life is obedience currently motivated by fear/guilt rather than love? How can the group pray for that shift?
5. End with prayer: Invite anyone who wants to receive or re-experience God's unconditional love to pray the suggested prayers from the sermon (salvation, releasing anger at God, asking for a new heart).