

2-15-26 He Loves Me - The Godly Choice

Overview

This message contrasts **transactional love** (conditional, based on what someone does or provides) with **unconditional love** (based on who a person is, modeled by God's love). Sin creates separation and feelings of distance from God, but His love remains unchanging and unearned. The speaker explains why we struggle to receive and give unconditional love due to lifelong "muscle memory" from living in a transactional world. Three essential practices are presented to retrain our thinking and help us love like Jesus: determining value appropriately, understanding strengths and weaknesses, and choosing the godly option.

Main Points

1. **God's love is unconditional** — not earned; sin separates us (Isaiah 59:2), but conviction from the Holy Spirit is good and shows we are His children.
2. **We often feel distant from God** after sin because of separation, not because His love stops; we must stop self-condemnation and extend grace to ourselves as we do to others.
3. **Transactional thinking is muscle memory** — deeply ingrained from lifelong habits; shifting requires intentional retraining (like Tiger Woods' repetitive practice).
4. **Three essentials to love unconditionally:**
 - o **Determine value appropriately** — Value people based on inherent worth as God's creation (Ephesians 1:4–5; Romans 8:38–39), not on what they do or provide (Parable of the Good Samaritan – Luke 10:30–35).
 - o **Understand strengths and weaknesses** — Don't expect strength from someone's weakness area; respond with empathy and compassion instead of anger (David & Saul's armor – 1 Samuel 17).
 - o **Choose the best (godly) option** — Choose what builds up holiness, relationships, and trust rather than what is merely lawful or feels good (1 Corinthians 10:23; Deuteronomy 30:19). Forgiveness, trust, and love are unconditional choices.

Reflection Questions

- When you sin or fail, do you feel God's love has decreased, or do you recognize it as the separation sin causes? How does that distinction change your response?
- Where do you still think transactionally about yourself, others, or God (e.g., "I must earn love" or "They must deserve help")?
- How has "muscle memory" from past hurts or patterns made unconditional love feel unnatural or difficult?
- In what relationships do you assign value based on performance/benefit rather than inherent worth?
- Where are you expecting strength from someone's weakness, and how does that lead to frustration or devaluation?
- Think of a recent situation: Did you choose the "right" (fleshly) option or the godly (building/restorative) option? What was the outcome?

Application

- **Self:** Practice receiving God's unconditional love daily — when convicted of sin, confess quickly, accept forgiveness, and refuse self-disgust beyond healthy conviction.

- **Others:** Identify one person (spouse, child, friend, coworker) whose weakness frustrates you. Choose empathy + compassion instead of anger: offer help to grow stronger rather than criticism for failing.
- **Value shift:** When tempted to devalue someone (or yourself) based on behavior, pause and remind yourself of their inherent worth as God's creation.
- **Daily choice:** In conflicts or hurts, ask: "Will I choose to be right or restored?" Actively forgive, trust, or show kindness unconditionally — even when undeserved.
- **Muscle retraining:** Pick one small, repeatable action this week (e.g., speaking grace over yourself in the mirror, helping without expecting return) to build new "unconditional" habits.

Group Discussion Prompts

1. Share a time you felt God's love seemed distant after sin. How does understanding sin's separation (not love withdrawal) change that experience?
2. Which of the three essentials (value, strengths/weaknesses, godly choice) feels most challenging for you personally, and why?
3. In the Good Samaritan parable, why do you think the "least likely" person showed the most value and compassion? Where might God be calling you to value someone society (or you) devalues?
4. How have others' wrong valuations of you affected your self-worth? How can godly people in your life help provide accurate valuation?
5. Share an example of expecting strength from someone's weakness (or your own). How could empathy + compassion replace anger there?
6. "Be right or restored" — discuss a real-life situation where choosing restoration over being right changed (or could change) the outcome.
7. What is one practical step your group member could take this week to practice unconditional love, and how can the group support/accountability?