

## **STRONG FOUNDATIONS**

LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO CHANGE OUR WORLD

# **God Says: I Love You**

What does God want to say to you? "I love you."

First and foremost, He wants you to accept that you are loved. Believe it, know it, rest in it. Feel it, enjoy it and revel in it if you can, just hold on to it if you can't. Never forget it. Without this, nothing else matters, nothing else makes sense.

As you know His love, then, as you are able, love the people around you, the people you meet. You are only asked to give what you have received, to do what you are able to do.

Yes, you are damaged, broken, dysfunctional. Everybody is. But you are still capable of being loved, and you are still capable of sharing His love - not perfectly, but that doesn't matter. You are only asked to do what you can do.

Yes, you are a failure, but that's what qualifies you: God only collects failures. He only comes to the sick, because only the sick know they need His healing.

Know you are loved, just the way you are: you don't have to do anything, you don't have to become anything first. God loves you, not because you are good and nice and strong, but because that's what He is like.

You have obligations which make demands of you, you have relationships with people who have expectations of you: some of those demands and expectations are reasonable and some are not, some you are able to satisfy and some you are not. But none of this is imposed upon you by Jesus. What does He ask of you? Love God, love your neighbour, love yourself, love your enemy ... even love other Christians.

God's commands matter because, when we understand them correctly, we understand that His commands are an expression of His love. He wants the very best for us, and His commandments help us to understand what is best for us.

We should be diligent in seeking to obey God's commands, when we understand them correctly, but this obedience only matters in the context of our relationship with Him, and that relationship is based on love and unconditional acceptance. The Prodigal Son's older brother was obedient, but obedience without love is empty.

It doesn't matter that we are damaged failures: what matters is that God loves us and we can love in return. Our love may be weak, but a little love goes a long way.

As we live, we change; the way we live determines the way we change. As we seek to receive and give God's love, so we learn to know Him and trust Him and love Him better, and we learn who we are, made in His image.

We grow in what we practice: as we practice love, so we grow in love. As we grow in love, we grow more like Jesus, and we grow into being the people we were created to be, because we were created for love, nothing else.

## ***Next steps***

This was written by Paul Hazelden as a contribution to the *Strong Foundations* exploration. You are welcome to use it and distribute it how you like, but feedback would be appreciated.

- Is it helpful?
- Would you change anything?
- Would you like to talk about how we can learn from each other about how best to follow Jesus where we are?

You can contact me through the web form at mad-bristol or join the conversation on the *Strong Foundations* site.

- Web form: <http://mad-bristol.org.uk/contact/>
- Strong Foundations: <http://strongfoundations.pbworks.com>

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