

# Giving and Receiving Love

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When your ability to trust God allows him to help you, you are closer to eternal life. To me eternal life is the complete presence of love. Love and trust are very closely related, and trusting God, who is love itself, is what is best for all of us. He is our father in heaven, and he cares for us. We know deep down how vulnerable we can be. Sometimes we build a protective shell. When that breaks down we are more vulnerable than at other times, also more beautiful and open hearted. Whom to trust in that situation? There is no better than our creator, the giver of life. You can't always trust other people when you are extra vulnerable, well you can to a certain extent trust those who love you, but you can always rely on God. Turn to him in prayer. In God we find love for ourselves and others. Self-love allows us

to accept support and help from those who care for us.

I find this difficult. I thought that it was more blessed to give than receive. What is really true is that it is in giving that we receive, and what we put out into the world comes back to us. Therefore it can be important to swallow your pride and allow others to help you when you need that help. This does not mean giving up your independence or stopping helping others altogether. Jesus taught that the kingdom of heaven does not come in such a way as to be seen, but rather the kingdom of heaven is among us. If you are always giving you might well become resentful, because there is nothing left over for you. Perhaps the better option is a balance between the two. Accepting help when we need it, and it is offered in a gracious way,

is receiving love. How can people give to others if no one is prepared to receive? Giving and receiving love is the best way to experience God's love and care for us.

Self-love is also important. Caring for and loving yourself is often misinterpreted as selfishness. Certainly it is important to find a balance. I once read a beautiful piece on the subject of self-love. It was written by a recovering alcoholic. He said that loving himself was a way of thanking God for the gift of his life. I have often thought of his words. People in the past have commented that I did not love myself, however, my lack of self-love was based on a misinterpretation of the Christian message. I'm working to correct this, with some difficulty, I might add.

I genuinely thought that if I was not always doing things for others, I was wrong. I did indeed become angry

and resentful at having so little left over for myself. There are many good things in life, and Jesus died for all of us. He must have thought us worth it. Someone pointed out to me that that love extends to all of us, including me. There are so many things in life to be enjoyed and to be grateful for. I love to paint and draw. It brings to my attention all the beautiful things in nature. Any season is a good time to capture in paint or words the beautiful things in nature: birds, animals, flowers and also people are great subjects for a painting or poem. God was good to me in that way, and I don't always appreciate it enough. What are your gifts? Gifts of personality and of education: simple, like a sense of humour and the ability to listen, and many others. We all have them. Use them as a way of thanking God, being generous to others and loving yourself.

# Petitions

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