

EXTRAVAGANT LOVE, part 1

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Have you heard the story of Della and Jim? They were very poor, but very much in love. Each of them did have a single, precious possession.

Della had magnificent, long hair, which was her glory, her mark of beauty. Jim had a gold pocket watch, given to him by his father, which he cherished above all things.

It was the day before Christmas, and Della had exactly \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She so desperately wanted to express her love for Jim that she went out and sold her beautiful hair for \$20.00. With the proceeds she bought a platinum fob for Jim's precious watch.

When Jim came home that night and saw Della's shorn head, he was speechless!

Slowly he handed her his gift, a set of expensive tortoise-shell combs with jeweled edges for her lovely hair. He had sold his gold watch to buy them for her.

Each had given the other the most precious gift they had to give.

This story is a lesson of love, a love so deep and extravagant that it held nothing back nor counted the cost, but rather gave all that it had.

That is extravagant love.

But there is a love more extravagant than theirs. A love which we all may enjoy. Today, I speak to you about the extravagant love of God.

I do not speak of just any god, but of the one, true God, who has revealed Himself to human-kind in the text of the Holy Bible. The Lord is One God, who interacts with us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and thus expresses His extravagant love in three distinct ways—ways which fully embrace our lives. They are:

- The extravagant love of God the Father, which is MERCY.
- The extravagant love of God the Son, which is GRACE.
- The extravagant love of God the Holy Spirit, which is INTIMACY.

1. Extravagant Love of God the Father

1 John 3:1 (The Voice)

¹ *Consider the kind of extravagant love the Father has lavished on us—He calls us children of God! It's true; we are His beloved children.*

Joel 2:13 (MSG)

¹³ Change your life, not just your clothes. Come back to GOD, *your* God. And here's why: God is kind and merciful. He takes a deep breath, puts up with a lot, This most patient God, extravagant in love, always ready to cancel catastrophe.

Mercy is God's decision to NOT give us what we deserve. It implies that we have deserved judgment, and, in fact, that is true.

Romans 3:23 (NLT)

²³ *Everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.*

And the wages of sin are death (Romans 6:23).

But divine judgment has been suspended. God has forgiven our sins, canceled our moral debt, and justified those who have been unjust to others.

The standard of God's Law is glorious, but the evidence of His mercy is even more glorious! See what He has done!

- He sovereignly chose to be kind to us
(John 8, the woman caught in the act of adultery, Jesus alone could enact the Law's judgment, but because He was not "under" the Law (not a lawbreaker), He could choose NOT to execute the prescribed sentence.)
- He sacrificed His beloved Son for us
(Not us, nor another, but His own Son, His beloved—the only qualified sacrifice, the Lamb of God, who could take away our sin.)

The extravagant love of God the Father is seen in His MERCY to us.

2. Extravagant Love of God the Son

Romans 5:16-19 (MSG)

¹⁶ *There's no comparison between that death-dealing sin (of Adam) and this generous, life-giving gift (of Jesus Christ). The verdict on that one sin was the death sentence; the verdict on the many sins that followed was this wonderful life sentence.*

¹⁷ If death got the upper hand through one man's wrongdoing, can you imagine the breathtaking recovery life makes, sovereign life, in those who grasp with both hands this wildly extravagant life-gift, this grand setting-everything-right, that the one man Jesus Christ provides?

¹⁸ Here it is in a nutshell: Just as one person did it wrong and got us in all this trouble with sin and death, another person did it right and got us out of it. But more than just getting us out of trouble, he got us into life!

¹⁹ One man said no to God and put many people in the wrong; one man said yes to God and put many in the right.

Romans 11:33 (MSG)

³³ Have you ever come on anything quite like this extravagant generosity of God, this deep, deep wisdom? It's way over our heads. We'll never figure it out.

Grace is God's choice to give us what we HAVE NOT DESERVED. Wiping our slate clean and dismissing our sentence for sin is one thing. But God did not stop there. He set the captives free and raised those once dead (because of sin) to everlasting life. He not only put away the liabilities of our past, but renewed the hope of our future.

And, how did He do this?

- He was the Friend of sinners, with no condemnation.

I already mentioned the woman caught in adultery, and how Jesus, though He did not defend her sin, also did not condemn her guilt.

Jesus received and ministered to young children and military leaders, lepers and lame persons, blind, deaf, and immoral. He saves Democrats and Republicans, religious people and atheists, and all those who are oppressed, marginalized, or forgotten.

John 6:37 (NLT)

³⁷ Those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them.

- Above all else, Jesus committed Himself to do the Father's will, whatever it might cost Him. And He did this *for us*, so that we might run our race successfully.

Hebrews 12:2-3 (NLT)

² We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

³ Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up.

Grace is the fruit of this kind of commitment—the kind that says, “Though I wish it were not so... not what I want, but what You want be done” (Matthew 26:39).

In grace, Jesus took our place in death. He was crucified for us. Died for us. Buried for us. And He arose for us, conquering death, hell, and the grave. He gave us victory in life.

The extravagant love of God the Son is seen in His great GRACE.

3. Extravagant Love of God the Holy Spirit

Ephesians 5:1-2 (MSG)

¹ *Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behavior from their parents.*

² *Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that.*

Spiritual intimacy is the gift of the Holy Spirit's presence and warm fellowship. His compassion and comfort never come to an end. If you want to know a Friend who sticks closer than a brother, get to know the Holy Spirit.

- He is our Advocate, always for us. You don't have to go it alone! When you need a defender who will plead your case against the devil's accusations, call on the Spirit of God.
- He is your Helper, who will help you cast down evil imaginations and obliterate strongholds of darkness.
- He is a comforting presence, who will shield you in the storm and lift you up when people or things have got you down. He's your Super Friend.
- He even provides a secret language—just between you and Him—to build trust and intimacy in your spiritual life. Talk with Him.

The extravagant love of God the Holy Spirit is seen in the INTIMACY He stimulates with His people.

Tota Flux (Almost)

1 John 4:9-10 (NLT)

“God showed how much He loved us by sending His one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him. This is real love... He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.”

Everything in life changes — relationships, jobs, fame. One minute you're a hero; the next minute you're a zero. There's only one thing in the entire universe that won't change: God's love.

Knowing that God always loves you, *no matter what happens to you*—whether people’s neglect or unkindness, or contrary circumstances—and *no matter what you do*—your own selfishness, your failures, your brokenness, your sin—God’s extravagant love makes a clean sweep of your *past*, provides a secure foundation for your *present* life, and shines the light of hope upon your *future*.

Consider the words “so much” as the measure of God’s love for us in the Bible’s most famous verse:

John 3:16 (NLT)

¹⁶ *“For God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.”*

God loves you with an extravagant, lavish love that can never be taken away. It’s beyond comprehension, but it’s not beyond experience. He loves you on your good days and your bad days. He loves you when it’s raining and when the sun is shining. How does that make you feel?

God doesn’t want you to just recognize this lavish love intellectually. He wants you to experience it emotionally. Love is God’s *nature*. God created the universe—and everyone in it—in order to love us. God created you so He could love you, and so you could experience His love, and love Him in return.

In Jesus Christ, God shows us what real love—*His kind of love*—looks like: *“God showed how much He loved us by sending His one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him. This is real love... He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins”* (1 John 4:9-10).

Many people may say they love you. But God *shows* you how much He loves you. He loved you so much it hurt. He sacrificed his Son. When Jesus died for you, He was saying that He loved you so much He’d rather die than live without you.

That’s what real love—the kind of love that you can build your life upon—looks like. Real love makes sacrifices. Real love endures to the end. Real love gives all.

That’s the kind of love God has for you. And He’s waiting with open arms to show you.

Then you can become a lover of life, just like Him!