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## Unconditional love



We are told in the Bible in chapter 3 of the book of Lamentations:

*<sup>22</sup> The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end;*

*<sup>23</sup> they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

This month (May 2020) Ellen DeGeneres interviewed celebrity couple, actress Gabrielle Union and retired NBA star Dwyane Wade, on her daytime talk show to praise them for their “supportive” decision to “transition” their pre-teen son into a girl. However,

that, of itself, is not news: Ellen DeGeneres stated what some in the Mainstream media actually also believe. What was different was that she attacked any parent who didn’t agree as wanting to “dispose” of their children (in her opinion). She accused parents who didn’t agree to allowing their child to do something so permanent at such a young age of NOT giving unconditional love to their children.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

If you have been a parent then you know that giving your child absolutely anything they want is not actually loving them at all. This completely false idea of unconditional love is truthfully being hurtful to your child, very hurtful.

If your child is anorexic then telling them they are eating too much just because that is what they personally want to hear is not actually loving them at all. There is no love in lying to your children knowing that they will be hurt.

My Father was an alcoholic. He was drafted at the end of WWII and spent time in the army in Germany after the war and my Mother blamed his alcoholism on his time in the army. I was only 6 at the time, and she may indeed have been right, but I still remember my Mother running into the kitchen whilst I was eating at the table and hiding a bottle of Whisky in the oven so my Father wouldn’t find it. Loving someone unconditionally did not involve allowing an alcoholic to have another drink. Instead you knew they were hurting themselves.

In the Bible we have many pictures of God as parent to God's children. In the book of Hosea, at chapter 11, we read:

- <sup>1</sup> *When Israel was a child, I loved him,  
and out of Egypt I called my son.*
- <sup>2</sup> *The more I called them, the more they went from me;  
they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and offering incense to idols.*
- <sup>3</sup> *Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,  
I took them up in my arms;  
but they did not know that I healed them.*
- <sup>4</sup> *I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love.  
I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks.  
I bent down to them and fed them.*

This is God as a parent to his children in Israel.

This is God wanting the best for his children. This is the same God that wanted his children to repent of their wrong-doing, when that wrong-doing inevitably hurts them.

In Lamentations chapter 3 we read:

- <sup>22</sup> *The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never  
come to an end;*
- <sup>23</sup> *they are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.*

This is unconditional love, caring love, and unconditional caring.

In the same book of Lamentations in the Bible we read in the same chapter:

- <sup>39</sup> *Why should any who draw breath complain about the punishment  
of their sins?*
- <sup>40</sup> *Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the Lord.*

This is the children admitting that they should be sorry for what they have done and return to God.

...and just before that, still in chapter 3, we read:

- <sup>31</sup> *For the Lord will not reject for ever.*
- <sup>32</sup> *Although he causes grief, he will have compassion according to  
the abundance of his steadfast love;*
- <sup>33</sup> *for he does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone.*

The image of God causing grief is just the same as a parent chastising their child.

So God will not, ever, reject someone outright and permanently, but if we simply admit that we are sorry for having behaved wrongly and return to God, then God will forgive us and allow us back.

It is the same for any parent with children: Sometimes you do have to say NO to your children precisely because you love them – that is real unconditional love.

Nor is this the first time any of that is said in the Bible. It is already stated many times before in the Bible. At the beginning of the Bible, amongst what are called the “Books of the law”, in the book of Exodus, we read in chapter 34:

*<sup>6</sup> The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed,  
‘The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,  
<sup>7</sup> keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation,  
forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing  
the guilty,*

Now our Lord Jesus Christ has completed the salvation started in the Old Testament and taken upon himself our wrong-doing, whether we know about our failings or not, and giving us salvation and reunion with God if we simply apologise for our wrong-doing and accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

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