

Valentines Day

Valentines Day is one day when people send cards or surprise gifts to a special somebody in their life. It's an opportunity to take an easy risk and tell someone you like them without them knowing who it is! Or it's an opportunity to tell someone you do love, how much you love them!

Romantic Stories

The parents of one of my friends first met at a church. The man walked in to the church and saw the girl and knew that they would be married (he felt God tell him) – and they were! Thirty years later and they're still married happily! Another person I heard about met his wife at church and they were engaged to be married within 9 weeks! Again they are happily married today and are worship pastors at a large church!

Ask – Do you have any romantic stories that you want to share? (Ask around the group and see if anyone is willing to say anything about them – probably not – or their families or friends?) Sometimes it's nice to tell other people encouraging stories like this.

Valentines Day? Meh!

Or maybe Valentines Day isn't such a great day for you. Perhaps you haven't had a girlfriend / boyfriend? Maybe you had a bad experience when a relationship didn't work and it hurt you, perhaps the other person rejecting you which can be very painful. Or perhaps your parents are no longer together. Sometimes these kinds of things can be harder to deal with on days like Valentines Day, especially when you see other couples smiling and floating along happily!

A Different Love – The Boat

Here's a story which a famous Bible teacher called Derek Prince once said to a group of Polynesian Maoris. The story shows how there is another love which is much more powerful, much stronger, totally faithful, 100% loving whatever you do. It's God's love for you. (I'll summarise the story to help):

There was a boy who carved out an amazing little sailing boat from wood. One day he took it to the ocean to sail it but the tide took it out to sea. Thinking he'd lost it he went home without it. But the next high tide brought the boat back and a man walking on the seashore found it. He saw it was beautifully made so he sold it to a shopkeeper who cleaned it up and put it in his window for sale. Some while later the boy saw the ship for sale in the shop. He knew it was his but had no way to prove it. He wanted it back and knew he'd have to earn money to buy it back. He set to work washing cars, mowing lawns and other tasks for people. When he finally had enough money he went to the shop and happily bought back his boat. He clung it to his chest saying, "now you're mine – I made you and I bought you!"

God, in a way we don't understand, exists outside of time and was not created. It takes a lot to get your head round this but just know that God is awesome and way beyond what we can understand. He is all-powerful and all-knowing. He created the whole world – he

created every person that has ever been and knows everything about all our lives. He made every plant, every tree, every cloud, every blade of grass, every animal, every organism. But one day God created you because he wanted to.

God wants to hang out with you. He loves you with a burning passion. In the last book of the Bible called Revelation, we see a picture of Jesus and his eyes are burning like fire. One of the reasons is because he burns with love. When he sees you, he loves you. He may not love all you do but he loves you! In fact he even helped shape you and create you uniquely in the womb of your mum. You are no accident!

Psalms 139:13-14 (the writer of the Psalm is talking to God about himself and about each one of us and he says to God) – “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

But God didn’t just make you unique and incredible. He didn’t just make you for a purpose. He didn’t just give you life, hope and plans for a great future. He did something even more. Just like the little boy who lost his ship, we as humans got ‘washed out to sea’. But God rescued us. And then because he had to pay a price to pay for all the wrong stuff in our life, Jesus voluntarily gave his own life for us because of his love for us. Like that boy, he not only made you but he then went out and did whatever it took to buy you back. He died for you and says this to you:

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed (paid the price for) you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.”

South Africa used to be a place where there was a lot of racism from a few white people towards the black majority. Some terrible things happened. Many of the white people who did terrible things were brought to justice. But one true thing happened that was just incredible...

A woman whose husband and son had been killed horribly by a white police officer stunned everyone in court when the judge asked her what she wanted done to this man. The lady was a Christian. Apart from wanting to know where her husband and son were buried so she could say goodbye to them, she said she not only forgave the man who killed her family but she wanted to take him home and be her adopted son. Everyone was amazed and crying.

We have also seen a number of stories like this in Egypt (and other nations like Nigeria) where the Islamists set fire to churches and even killed Christians. But time after time, Christians have publicly said they forgive their attackers and even wanted God to bless them.

These are just mini pictures of God’s love for you. Even though we do wrong and act really badly at times, God loves us. He wants to put things right between you and do good for you. So if you don’t know God, today is a great time to publicly ask Jesus to forgive your sins, come into your life, change you and fill you with his Holy Spirit. Or if you are a Christian, maybe today is a day to get right with God again and ask him to fill you with the Holy Spirit (like God’s power source in you!) and help you be all he wants you to be.

Pray

Take time to pray now or ask someone you trust to pray with you.

Action – Get Valentining Differently!

1 John 4.16-21 – “And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: in this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

Our love for God should lead to action! A top man in the Bible called James said that if we say we have faith but don't do anything then our faith is pretty pointless!!

Valentines Day is all about buying things for loved ones. But Jesus summarised being a Christian into just two things (not all the rules that people like to make up!) Jesus said – love God and love people. So this Valentines Day, why not go buy some candy and chocolate and go out into your local community and put Valentines Day cards and chocolate through their doors or give out to people in the street. Don't do this because you're trying to get them to come to your church, do this because you want to love them as Jesus loves them!

So what are you waiting for?!! Get making / designing / printing some Valentines Cards and be a Valentine's Day gift for someone – as the Bible says, be God's love letter to the world !!