



# RESPONDING

“WE, THOUGH, ARE GOING TO LOVE—LOVE AND BE LOVED. FIRST WE WERE LOVED, NOW WE LOVE. HE LOVED US FIRST.”

1 John 4:19 MSG

Consider the moon. It has very little to recommend it—cold, dusty, and airless as it is. The moon’s landscape is pockmarked

by craters and is lifelessly gray. Among the celestial spheres, it is a mere pebble, responding to those with greater gravitational pull. The moon has no light of its own—flat, dark, unremarkable. If it were not for the sun, we’d never even notice it. But the sun is there, and the moon responds beautifully to its light. The dull, dusty surface is transformed, and we see a shimmering silvery disk in our sky. We admire the play of shadows across its surface, and trace the familiar rings of its craters with fascination. The night sky is filled with its gentle light.



## CLEARING ★ THE ★ COBWEBS

Which came first, the chicken or the egg?



We're not so very different from the moon. When we were lost in sin, our hearts were dark and lifeless. Our prospects were filled with dusty rubble and pockmarked with pitfalls. We lived in the darkness of ignorance, with no expectations of change. But when the light of God's love washed over us, we were transformed. In response, we beamed back, and others could see the love of God clearly reflected.

**1.** God loves us, and we cannot help but respond to His love for us. What does 1 John 4:16 say our response is?

**2.** Just as the moon only glows because the light of the sun bathes its surface, we only love God because He loved us first. John, the beloved disciple, tells us so in 1 John 4:19 (NKJV):

"We \_\_\_\_\_ because He \_\_\_\_\_  
us."



3. God loves all His creation, but not all respond to Him. What does Deuteronomy 30:20 encourage people to do?

4. Our church services are filled with praise choruses telling of our love for the Lord. But it's surprising how few times the Scriptures speak of our love for God. Mostly, they speak of God's love for us! But here's one, and it's not surprising that it's one of David's—Psalm 18:1. Write out this verse here.

*Our family enjoys good gospel music. We have discovered that praising God in song lifts our spirits, clears our heads, and opens a place for the Holy Spirit to speak to us.*

Thelma Wells

5. We are urged to love God, and not in a half-hearted way. How are we commanded to love the Lord according to Luke 10:27 and Joshua 22:5?



## Receiving God's Love

It's an old saying, a riddle of sorts, and a familiar enough question: "What came first, the chicken or the egg?" For many, this poses a real puzzler, because without eggs there would be no chicks, and without chickens there would be no eggs. It's difficult to separate the two.

The same could be said of God's love for us and our love for Him. It's difficult to separate the two. There we were, walking along, oblivious to God's very existence. But then we heard of Him, believed in Him, and loved Him. For us, that love was the beginning of a lifelong relationship. We loved God and He loved us. But which came first? John tells us that we could not have loved God if He hadn't loved us first. Whether we knew it at the time or not, our heart was responding to His.

6. We respond to God's love by loving Him back. And when we do so, our lives reflect that love.

- What was the prayer of the psalmist in Psalm 119:5?
- How did Paul urge Titus to live in Titus 2:1?
- What should everything we do reflect, according to Titus 2:7?



7. Love is not the only thing we can reflect. What does Paul compare us to in 2 Corinthians 3:18?

8. What encouragement does Paul offer in 1 Corinthians 8:3?

9. What is rather startling about our love for Jesus, according to 1 Peter 1:8?

*But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

2 Corinthians 3:18 NKJV



## DIGGING DEEPER

Our hearts respond to God's love and mercy in individual ways. God's love may be changeless, but our love for Him changes and deepens as we grow. Read Luke 7:40–47. What was the difference in the two individuals' responses to forgiveness? Why was the love of one stronger than the love of the other? Does this parable help you understand some of the basis for your own love for God?

## PONDER & PRAY

This week, take the time to consider just how long you have been loved. God knew you when you were small. He knew you before you were born. He knew you before He'd even created the first man and woman. He knew you before time had begun. And all that time, He loved you! Thank God this week for this startling love, and ask that your life might reflect that love. Respond to God's love in the transformation of your heart.



## TRINKET TO TREASURE

This week's trinket is a mirror, to remind us that the love in our hearts is a reflection of the love of God for us. Our heart responds to the heart of God. We love Him because He first loved us. His love transforms us in visible and invisible ways. Our love echoes His. Our lives reflect His place in our hearts.