

PART 1: NO SAY IN THE MATTER

Somewhere along the way, many of us began treating God's love and approval as something to earn. Guilt, shame, or the way we were raised can leave us wondering where we really stand with God. But the good news of Jesus is that God's love for us is not contingent on anything we do or don't do. We don't have a say in the matter.

CONNECT

What's a gift you received that you felt like you didn't deserve? How did you respond?

LEARN

You will watch a shortened version of a message from this series to set up your group discussion. Watch the full message sometime this week as a reminder of what you talked about today.

APPLY

After sharing what stood out from the video, discuss the following questions as a group:

1. Andy described people who agree that God loves everybody but quietly doubt that he loves them as individuals. Why do you think it's easier to believe God loves people in general than to believe he loves you specifically?

2. What experiences (church, family, your own choices) have shaped the way you think about where you stand with God?

3. In the video, Andy said, "You can't give what you haven't received." How have you seen the way someone experiences God's love affect the way they treat other people? Why might we be quick to admit we're not perfect but still be quick to judge others?

4. Read Romans 8:38–39.

   For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

   - Paul once worked his entire life to earn God's approval. Why do you think he was so convinced that nothing could separate us from God's love?
   - Which part of Paul's list is hardest for you to believe applies to you? Why?

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5. Andy said that God's unconditional love, not his demands, is what melts our resistance and changes us. What would it look like for you to stop trying to earn God's love and simply receive it?

BEFORE NEXT TIME

This week, read Romans 8:31–39 each day. Each time you notice guilt, shame, or the sense that you need to earn your way back to God, pause and remind yourself: God's love for me doesn't depend on me. Then look for one opportunity to extend that same kind of grace to someone else.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank you that your love for us doesn't depend on us. Thank you that nothing we've done and nothing we will do can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus. Where we've been trying to earn what you've already given, help us to stop, believe, and rest in your love. Move this truth from our heads to our hearts, and teach us to love others the way you have loved us. Amen.

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