

A Man After My Own Heart...and Soul

*“But the lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting...”
Psalm 103:17*

People in love certainly love Valentine’s Day, but it holds a particularly special memory for those of us who were engaged on February 14. I remember the day back in 1992 that happened to fall on a Friday, a good date night. I worked the usual hours at my job but somehow found time during lunch to run out and buy a leather outfit to wear later on. When John arrived, to my surprise he came bearing flowers and a tape recorder. Unbeknownst to me he had saved the messages I left on his answering machine during the time we were dating. Then on this special occasion he played them back to me in what I can only describe as a sort of “audio chronology” recounting the story of our courtship; this included interjections of his own humorous commentary along the way. Any embarrassment I felt quickly dissolved when this production culminated in his presenting an engagement ring with the proposal that marriage begin a new chapter of our story.

At dinner I was so thrilled that I phoned my family from the restroom to share the news (but not realizing they had placed bets on it). I also displayed my newly ringed left finger to everyone—the restaurant workers, patrons in adjacent booths, anyone who came near us that night. Though my exuberance bordered on silliness, this was definitely my best Valentine’s Day.

So marriage began the chapter of our lives that continues today. And I’ve kept all of John’s cards over the years as a sort of “paper chronology” of the special occasions we’ve shared. Moreover, I’ve also held onto the gifts he’s given me, except those that became dried up, used up or worn out. These are important because they remind me of the more valuable gift, him. After all, it’s the giver that makes the gift meaningful, not the other way around. Spiritually speaking this is also true; God gives all things richly to enjoy (1 Timothy 6:17) but Jesus asked the blinded Pharisees, “What is more important, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift (Matthew 23:19)?

But is the giver more important than the gift in every instance? For one Gift stands out above the rest that’s equally important as its Giver because it’s equally divine. Delivered freely not begrudgingly, John 3:16 declares that, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him may not perish but have everlasting life.” God gave Himself to us, and when we accept Him we get everything, including redemption, forgiveness and eternal life.

So in February we see Hallmark stores and See’s candy boxes decorated red in anticipation of many Valentine’s Day gifts that will be exchanged. However, though not all celebrate this holiday, all who partake of God’s grace can nonetheless enjoy the greater gift of a personal Savior. Thus the best valentine ever isn’t the one that comes wrapped in an envelope, but the One that came wrapped in swaddling clothes. Jesus Christ, our ‘Divine Valentine,’ can’t ever be compared to any human valentine, but its contrasts are great:

Human Valentine:	Divine Valentine:
Available February 14	Available every day (2 Corinthians 6:2)
For lovers	For everyone (1 John 2:2)
Inspired by man, sealed with a kiss	Inspired by God, sealed with the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21, Ephesians 1:13)
Its cost varies	It cost Christ everything, His Blood (Colossians 1:14)
Declares passionate, romantic feelings that might wane with passing time	Declares God’s perfect love that remains strong with passing time (Hebrews 6:19)
Ceases with death	Surpasses death (1 Corinthians 15:26)
Its veracity can be weakened by character imperfections	Incorruptible, based on God’s perfect character (1 Peter 1:18-19, Hebrews 6:18)
Can’t forgive sins or give eternal life	Provides total forgiveness and eternal life (Ephesians 1:7, Titus 3:7)
Can be given selfishly	Completely selfless (Philippians 2:5-8)
Given by sometimes-incompatible personalities sharing earthly life with each other	Given by perfectly compatible Father, Son and Spirit (Ephesians 4:5, John 17) sharing eternal life with us
Usually bestowed based on the receiver’s merit	Always bestowed to an unmerited receiver (Ephesians 2:8)
Its love leads to marriage that dissolves in eternity	Its love leads to an eternal marriage where God’s people are presented as the Lamb’s wife (Revelation 19:9, 21:9)

Receiving the gift of Jesus places us in union with God, the place where we receive the desires of our heart (Psalm 37:4). Many lose their heart to another on Valentine’s Day, but only those found by God gain infinitely more, their soul.